



**Emerging as an agentic-empathic leader:  
The effects of a leadership empathy intervention**

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# Gutachter

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The dissertation seeks to explore the qualitative changes in leadership behavior after an empathy development intervention has been visited.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Literature on empathy, empathy development, emotional intelligence, leadership and leader-member-exchange was used to build a theoretical background for observing changes in behavior of the participating leaders. Results from the literature on empathy and emotional intelligence development were taken to conceptualize an empathy development intervention which was then facilitated for 11 participants, 6 of whom were leaders. Qualitative, unstructured interviews were held with the participants in leadership positions which were then analyzed using Grounded Theory.

**Findings** – The emergence of an agentic-empathic leadership style was identified in 4 out of 6 participants. These participants used behavioral emotional intelligent skills taught in the intervention to actively shape their own behavior, their team cultures, and their followers' behavior in an agentic yet empathic way reporting various positive effects from a reduction to sick days to an increase in compliant behavior and motivation. The changed leadership behavior helped them to build up their self-efficacy in situations which they formerly perceived as challenging.

**Research limitations/implications** – The number of participants that contributed to the building of theory was relatively small as only six matched the criteria for inclusion into the sample. The whole research project was undertaken by a single researcher. Though this is not unusual for a doctoral thesis it entails certain limitations since possible distortions and biases in the qualitative design cannot be ruled out. A number of measures have been taken to improve study quality.

**Practical implications** – The results help to better understand the impact of an empathy intervention on leadership behavior. While it is expected that participants become more empathic afterwards, the occurrence of instances of agentic behavioral traits were surprising. It greatly increased the range of application of the behavioral emotional intelligent skills. A leadership style balancing agency and empathy can be very useful in leading a team of highly skilled individuals, motivating them to high performance as well as retaining them.

**Originality/value** – As far as I know, the effects of an empathy intervention on the quality of leadership behaviors have not been researched before. Previous held hunches on the effect of empathy/emotional intelligence on leadership behavior were not confirmed.

**Keywords** – Empathy, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, LMX, Empathy intervention, Leadership styles, Agency

**Paper type** – Dissertation

## Zusammenfassung

**Zweck der Arbeit** – Diese Dissertation möchte die qualitativen Veränderungen des Führungsverhaltens nach der Teilnahme an einem Empathietraining untersuchen.

**Design/Methodologie/Ansatz** – Die umfangreiche Literatur zu den Themen Empathie, Empathieentwicklung, Emotionale Intelligenz, Führung, und Leader-Member-Exchange wurde gesichtet, um den theoretischen Hintergrund der Arbeit zu schaffen. Auf Grundlage der Ergebnisse mehrerer Meta-Studien über Empathieentwicklung wurde ein Empathietraining konzipiert, um es später mit insgesamt 11 Teilnehmern durchzuführen, von denen 6 Führungspositionen innehatten. Mit diesen sechs wurden vier bis fünf Wochen nach dem Training qualitative, unstrukturierte Interviews zur Datenerhebung durchgeführt, welche mit Hilfe der Grounded Theory analysiert wurden.

**Ergebnisse** – Bei 4 der 6 Teilnehmer aus der Stichprobe konnte nach dem Training das Auftreten eines Führungsstils festgestellt werden, der Agency (Handlungsfähigkeit) und Empathie im Gleichgewicht hält. Die teilnehmenden Führungskräfte nutzen die im Training gelernten emotional intelligenten Verhaltenstechniken um aktiv auf ihr eigenes Verhalten, das Verhalten ihrer Mitarbeiter\*innen und die jeweiligen Teamkulturen einzuwirken. Positive Effekte wie Reduzierung der Krankentage, erhöhte Motivation des Teams und eine Steigerung von regelkonformen Verhalten wurde von den Teilnehmern beobachtet. Mit Hilfe des agentisch-empathischen Verhaltens konnten die Teilnehmer ihren Handlungsspielraum in Situation erweitern, denen sie vorher hilflos gegenüberstanden.

**Beschränkungen der Studie** – Die geringe Größe und die relative Homogenität der Stichprobe schränken die Aussagekräftigkeit der Studie ein. Wie bei vielen Dissertationen üblich wurde das gesamte Forschungsprojekt von einer einzigen Person durchgeführt, was zu einer Verzerrung der Ergebnisse geführt haben könnte. Eine Reihe von Maßnahmen wurden ergriffen, um die Qualität dieser qualitativen Studie zu erhöhen, wobei der Einfluss von systemischen Verzerrungen nicht ausgeschlossen werden kann.

**Praktischer Nutzen** – Das ein Empathietraining unter bestimmten Umständen die Handlungsfähigkeit von Führungskräften erweitern kann, war ein überraschendes Ergebnis, welches sowohl für die Führungsforschung als auch für die Entwicklung von Führungskräften von praktischem Nutzen ist. Im Hinblick auf die Wichtigkeit der Bindung von High Potential und der Ausgestaltung einer wertschätzenden Organisationskultur kann eine agentisch-empathisch handelnde Führungskraft ein Gewinn für die jeweilige Organisation sein.

**Originalität der Arbeit** – So weit ich weiß, wurde die Auswirkung eines Empathietrainings auf die Qualität der Führung noch nicht untersucht.

**Keywords** – Empathie, Emotionale Intelligenz, Leadership, Führung, Führungsstile, Empathietraining, Handlungsfähigkeit, Agency

**Art der Arbeit** - Dissertation

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My heart-felt gratitude goes to my father, Prof. Dr. Horst Bosetzky, with whom I first discussed the idea for a doctoral thesis after visiting a theater play early 2015. He has always listened to my ideas and motivated me on the way. I don't know whether a passion for the social sciences is hereditary or whether his dinner table talks in my childhood and youth were the reason for my interest in them. Regardless, I am happy to have shared this passion with him and am very sad that these dialogues have been discontinued when he left his body.

I am grateful that Dr. Klaus Lassert helped me with his professional network to get in touch with potential participants for this study which turned out to be a lot harder than initially expected. Many thanks to researchers like Carl Rogers, Nancy Eisenberg, Marshal Rosenberg, Tania Singer, Kirsten Neff, Sharon Salzberg, Bernard Bass, Anselm Strauss for sharing their knowledge and wisdom in the form of their books with me which helped me to build the necessary knowledge for this project and beyond.

Most of all I would like to thank my wife for all her support during these intense two years of writing this dissertation. It was of great help to have somebody beloved close by to discuss ideas and get feedback when needed. Heart-felt thank also to my daughter who had patience with her daddy when his theories were discussed. I hope that not too much of that most precious time was spent on this work that could be spent together since childhood is so fleeting. At least, I am confident that the consequences of writing this dissertation will be to her advantage as well.

*bījam māṁ sarva-bhūtānām  
viddhi pārtha sanātanam  
buddhir buddhimatām asmi  
tejas tejasvinām aham*

Bhagavad-gita VII.10

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi  
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya  
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam*

Bhagavad-gita IX.27

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbr.</b>	<b>Full text</b>
AG	Agreeableness
BMT	Behavioral Modeling Training
BU	Butters 2010
CCT	Compassion Cultivation Training
CI	Critical Incident
CQR	Consensual Qualitative Research
DE	Dexter 2012
EI	Emotional Intelligence
FFM	Five-factor-model
FTE	Full-time employee
GT	Grounded theory
HQ LMX	High quality leader-member-exchange
KI	Kiosses et al. 2016
LKM	Loving-kindness mediation
LMX	Leader-member-exchange
MBSR	Mindfulness-based stress reduction
NVC	Non-violent communication
PAM	Perception-action-model
PTE	Part-time employees
PEA	Positive emotional attractor state
VT	van Teding Berkhout et al. 2016

# 1 Introduction

This dissertation is contributing to the research on empathy/emotional intelligence interventions as well as on leadership by connecting these two fields. As to my knowledge, the effects of an empathy/emotional intelligence intervention on leadership behavior have not been researched to this date. I am attempting to find an answer to the research question “How does an empathy development program influence the quality of leadership behavior” by employing a qualitative research design.

The research design includes the conception of an empathy development program based on the findings of a literature review of relevant meta-studies, narrative reviews and selected qualitative studies on the topic to get an idea which moderators contribute most to the effectiveness of an empathy intervention. The intervention was facilitated three times by me for altogether eleven participants. Those six, who were available and in leadership positions, were interviewed by me four to five weeks after the intervention to investigate the effects of the intervention on leadership behavior. I used Grounded Theory as described by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (2015) to analyze the data and build a theory explaining the observed changes in leadership behavior. The application of Grounded Theory was very insightful and yielded surprising results.

The reader is invited to follow the whole process from the first page or just jump to the section 7 where the results of this research project are discussed. As this work is a doctoral thesis, quite an extensive literature review has been undertaken covering the empathy concept (section 2), empathy interventions (section 3), leadership and leader-member-exchange (section 4.1), emotional intelligence (section 4.5.1) as well as the interrelation of empathy/emotional intelligence and leadership (section 4.6). In section 5 the research questions are presented, and the methodological approach is being discussed. Being a qualitative study, prominent researchers are quoted who present different ideas ensuring quality criteria for qualitative research. Discussing these, I am trying to apply as many as possible in this privately funded solo research project which is somewhat a challenge.

Part of section 5 contains a detailed description of the empathy intervention employed for this study. Though the elements of this training were taken from different sources like Nonviolent Communication (2013), it is the blend of different activities, reflection phases and group discussions following the didactic approach of Behavioral Modelling Training, that is uniquely mine. Readers are welcome to use this training design for non-profit purposes. Profit-related purposes should be discussed with me prior to using it.

The procedure of data analysis with the help of the Grounded Theory paradigm is discussed in section 6. The results are reported in three stages: after the first stage of the coding process the descriptive results of the analysis are presented which give an indication whether the empathy intervention has had an effect on the leadership behavior of the participants (section 6.3.1.2); the second stage encompasses the results of the next level of coding which becomes more abstract and directed at the inner experiences of the participants (section 6.3.2); in the

third, the final stage the building of theory is attempted with the help of the stages one and two (section 6.4).

Grounded Theory will have it that the theory is grounded in the data meaning that every step of the process can be traced by multiple quotes from the participants. I was very lucky that so many highly interested people attended the three programs who were eager to apply what they have learnt in the training. Their experiences with the emotional intelligent behavioral tools presented a wealth of information. The effects of the application of these behavioral skills was very surprising and took an unexpected turn. For me, this presents itself as proof that it is worthwhile to apply qualitative methods and especially Grounded Theory with an open mind since this unexpected turn would have been hard to notice with quantitative means.

Of course, this research design has its limitations which are discussed at length in section 5.3.1 as well as summarized in section 7.4. These limitations led me to only venture at formulating a short-ranged theory. I hope that other, better funded researchers attend to this topic as it is highly fascinating and of great practical use. From the perspective of the participants, I feel free to say that this project was a success because they had many wonderful stories to report and were able to achieve a variety of personal, professional, and organization successes with their changed leadership behavior.

English is not my first language and since the research project was quite costly considering travel costs, transcription costs, and the time spent researching instead of working, contracting a professional editor was out of the question. Please bear with me should you be irritated by grammatical and spelling mistakes that Word wasn't able to weed out.

The document was planned right from the start to be published online as an PDF. All the references are linked with the publication bibliography for your convenience. Moreover, the references to sections and bookmarks are linked with the respective places in the document. Pressing ALT and LEFT-CURSOR will bring you back to the place where you started. For layout purposes specific to MS Word, the endnotes had to be placed at the very end of the document which is unusual but for an internet document no issues as they are all linked and easily accessible.

I would appreciate collegial feedback on this work. Please contact me under the email-address given on the front page. For negative feedback, please use the process of Nonviolent communication as delineated in section 5.3.3.5;-)

The whole process of writing this dissertation has been very exciting for me and I have learnt a lot – academically and, maybe most importantly, personally. During the time this dissertation was written, my mother as well as my father fell terminally ill and died. The theories on self-compassion and compassion (see section 2.7) came really handy at that difficult time and helped me immensely. I hope that this work will serve to be useful for other people, too.

## 2 Empathy – a multidimensional concept?

In spite of – or maybe because of – recent advances in empathy research there is little consent in the scientific community about what empathy actually is and how it can be defined (Wispé 1987; Eisenberg and Strayer 1987, p. 7; cf. Preston and de Waal 2002, p. 1; Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004, p. 163; Decety 2011, p. 93; Bernhardt and Singer 2012, p. 2; Zaki 2014, p. 1608; Altmann et al. 2015, p. 1894). In this section I want to review the existing literature regarding the different biological, neurological, psychological, and social phenomena that the scientific community defines as empathy or as empathy related using either broad or narrow definitions of the concept at hand.

As of today, empathy is not an independent research field. Many different academic branches are contributing to the empathy research like psychology, psychotherapy, sociology, medicine, and neurobiology. The variety of different angles that empathy is looked at might be one of the reasons, why a unitary definition is lacking. Considering the multitude of viewpoints what is empathy and what not, I want to review only the most influential definitions and, at the end of this section, come to a pragmatic conclusion which definition will be most beneficial to use in the light of the topic of this dissertation – empathy training interventions for leaders.

The following phenomenon are either called empathy, are seen as part of the empathy concept or are related to empathy by various researchers. Although many researchers are using different terms in a synonymous way, the corresponding definitions may vary in detail. For the sake of creating an overview, I am listing the different terms that are describing roughly the same phenomena or terms describing phenomena that are closely akin:

1. Emotional/affective empathy, experience sharing, or – sometimes just – empathy
2. Cognitive empathy, perspective-taking, Theory of Mind, mentalizing
3. Motor empathy, mimicry, or mirroring
4. Empathic concern, compassion, sympathy, personal distress, and perceived empathy
5. Self-empathy and self-compassion

After discussing the empathy construct, the dispositional nature of empathy and how to measure empathy and other aspects of empathy, I will review the discussion whether empathy is automatic, motivated or both.

### 2.1.1 Emotional/affective empathy

*Emotional empathy* might as well be the smallest common denominator of all empathy research and has been in the focus of researchers for a very long time (Wispé 1987).



Hoffman defines emotional/affective empathy in the following way<sup>1</sup>:

*These evolutionary requirements appear to be fulfilled by empathy, which may be defined as a vicarious affective response to others: that is, an affective response appropriate to someone else's situation rather than one's own. (1981, p. 128)*

Hoffman's definition is plain and simple and concentrates on the most important aspect of the empathy concept – the vicarious experience of another person's feelings. Maybe because of its simplicity and most certainly because of the prominence of the researcher this definition was used as a basis for other definitions by many researchers (eg. Eisenberg and Strayer 1987; Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004; Bernhardt and Singer 2012; Blair 2005; Davis 1983a; Preston and de Waal 2002; Wispé 1986).

Eisenberg und Strayer are building on Hoffman's definition but are also including *cognitive empathy* ("inferring another's state on the basis of indirect cues") in their definition which will be described in the section 2.2:

*In our view, empathy involves sharing the perceived emotion of another — »feeling with« another. This vicarious affective reaction may occur as a response to overt perceptible cues indicative of another's affective state (e.g., a person's facial expressions), or as the consequence of inferring another's state on the basis of indirect cues (e.g., the nature of the other's situation). Thus, we define empathy as an emotional response that stems from another's emotional state or condition and that is congruent with the other's emotional state or situation. (1987, p. 5)*

The definition above contains another important aspect that is missing in Hoffman's definition and is considered to be of great importance:

*We believe that the most useful definition of empathy would emphasize the ability to detect accurately the emotional information being transmitted by another person. (Levenson and Ruef 1992, p. 234)*

Other authors, too, see *empathic accuracy* as pivotal to the concept (eg. Hogan 1969; Rogers 1975; Wispé 1986; Davis 1983a; Ickes et al. 1990; Vignemont and Singer 2006) and demand that the emotional responses of the subject have to be congruent with the observed emotions of the target for the first to be called empathy. Moreover, being accurate in one's estimations of a target's internal state is an important social skill (Côté et al. 2011; Gesn and Ickes 1999; Klein and Hodges 2001) and is also part of the *emotional intelligence* concept (see 4.5.1) and empathy interventions in leadership development programs (see 5.3.3).

Batson and Coke stress that congruency (or, in other words, *empathic accuracy*) between the internal states of the target and the observer is a prerequisite condition for empathy:

*Empathy, as we shall use it, is an emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else. (1981, p. 169)*

Congruency distinguishes *emotional empathy* from related concepts like sympathy (Wispé 1986) and compassion (Goetz et al. 2010). Here, emotional empathy serves as a trigger for both if these phenomena to occur but is altogether different from them (Batson and Coke 1981) since the observer has other feelings than the object.

Another mark of *emotional empathy* is that the empathizer is aware of the fact that the emotions are stemming from another person whose emotional state is being attended to (Preston 2007). That differentiates empathy from *emotional contagion* which describes the ripple effect of emotions among persons or within groups (Barsade 2002) where persons are not aware that they are experiencing another person's emotion. They are simply "infected" by it. Section 4.5.2 will explore this phenomenon in regard to emotional management on part of leaders as their mood is invariably affecting the mood of their subordinates. *Emotional/affective empathy* is always a conscious effort on the part of the observer. It can happen, though, that the emotional *self/other-distinction* (Preston and de Waal 2002) is lost and empathy turns into *personal distress*, a form empathy turned to *emotional contagion* that will be discussed in section 2.4.4.

In newborns, the *self/other-distinction* develops between the first and the second year. Before the development of a *Theory of Mind* which facilitates the *self/other-distinction* (Frith and Frith 2003; Striano and Reid 2006), infants are not capable of empathy but only of emotional contagion (Zahn-Waxler et al. 1992; McDonald and Messinger 2011). This fact shows the importance of the *self/other-distinction* for the concept of empathy. When empathy is used as a tool for exploring the world of another person as it is done professionally in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, the *self/other-distinction* prevents the observer from getting lost in the emotions of the target (Rogers 1975) and become emotionally effected to the extent of experiencing *personal distress*.

The above-mentioned field gave important impulses in the research of empathy and used especially the emotional part early on for diagnosis as well as for the actual therapy process. Carl Rogers went so far as calling empathy *a way of being*:

*The way of being with another person which is termed empathic has several facets. It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments, sensing meanings of which he/she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover feelings of which the person is totally unaware, since this would be too threatening. It includes communicating your sensings of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful. It means frequently checking with him/her as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his/her inner world. By pointing to the possible meanings in the flow of*

*his/her experiencing you help the person to focus on this useful type of referent, to experience the meanings more fully, and to move forward in the experiencing. To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice. In some sense it means that you lay aside yourself and this can only be done by a person who is secure enough in himself that he knows he will not get lost in what may turn out to be the strange or bizarre world of the other, and can comfortably return to his own world when he wishes. (1975, p. 4)*

Rogers' definition is a very pragmatic one as he is more concerned with the utility of empathy for psychotherapy and with the effects of an empathic way of being both for the patient as well as for the therapist than with a concrete definition. Even outside the patient-therapist dyad, the definition captures the very essence of empathy's importance for all kinds of social relationships – like between leaders and their followers (see section 4.6)

Heinz Kohut is arguing in the same pragmatic vein and stresses the importance of empathy as a means of data collection for psychoanalysts (Wispé 1987). In contrast to Rogers' definition, the cognitive aspect of empathy, i.e. the exploration of the other's mind, seems to be equally important to him:

*Only when we think ourselves into his place, only when we, by vicarious introspection, begin to feel his unusual size as if it were our own and thus revive inner experiences in which we had been unusual or conspicuous, only then begins there for us an appreciation of the meaning that the unusual size may have for this person and only then have we observed a psychological fact. Similar considerations apply also with regard to the psychological concept of action. If we observe only the physical aspects without introspection and empathy, we observe not the psychological fact of an action but only the physical fact of movement. We can measure the upward deviation of the skin above the eye to the minutest fraction of an inch, yet it is only through introspection and empathy that we understand the shades of meaning of astonishment and disapproval that are contained in the raising of the eyebrow. But could not an action be understood, without recourse to empathy, simply by a consideration of its visible course and its visible results? Again the answer is negative. (1959, p. 461)*

The last two very influential definitions of empathy from the realm of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis are both pragmatic as well as utility oriented. Empathy here is not as much a phenomenon that has to be scientifically described and researched but a given fact that has been useful in the therapeutic context for many decades (Agosta 2015). As such, not so much the neural, psychological or social mechanisms of empathy are in the limelight but its function in the therapeutic and the analytical process.

The utility of empathy is also seen by many researchers of altruistic and helping behavior (Rushton 1981; Batson et al. 1981; Eisenberg and Miller 1987; de Waal 2008) though its role

is also debated (see Dovidio (1991) and Stocks (2009) for a summary of this discussion). Though both *cognitive* and *emotional empathy* are mentioned by the above authors as being conducive to trigger altruistic and helping behavior, it is the emotional part of empathy, the felt vicarious experience of a target's pain, that seems to play the most important part in inducing altruistic behavior (Batson et al. 1981; Stocks et al. 2009; Hein et al. 2010). The last cited source as well as numerous others (Mathur et al. 2010; Chiao and Mathur 2010; Cikara et al. 2014) point out and have shown experimentally that this is not an automatic process and empathy might very well turn into *Schadenfreude* when certain parameters are met and/or when there is no motivation to be empathic (see section 2.9).

Batson and Coke highlight the utility of empathy in triggering helping behavior by expanding their definition of empathy accordingly:

*Empathy, as we shall use it, is an emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else. We have chosen to focus instead on emotional response to the perceived welfare of another because, while the other's welfare is often reflected in his or her emotional state, it is not always (as, for example, when an accident victim is unconscious). We believe that to feel concern and compassion in response to the perceived distress of an unconscious victim, as presumably the Good Samaritan did, should be included in our definition of empathy. (1981, p. 169)*

Some researchers propounding a broad view of empathy see *emotional empathy* as just one dimension of a multidimensional concept. Davis reviewed the literature up to the early 1980s (1983a) and concluded that:

*Recent years have seen increased movement toward an integration of these two hitherto separate research traditions. In fact, it is a growing belief among empathy theorists and researchers that our understanding of empathy can improve only with the explicit recognition that there are both affective and cognitive components to the empathic response ... (Davis 1983a, p. 113)*

As cited above, Eisenberg and Strayer (1987) are arguing in a similar vein that empathy is having a cognitive as well as an emotional component. This stand was adopted by Preston and de Waal (2002) who described empathy like Davis (1983a) as having multiple layers/dimensions. As has been ventured by other researchers before (Feshbach 1975; Adolphs 1999), Preston and de Waal proposed a "unified theory of empathy" building on the *perception-action-model* (PAM) that evolved with the discovery of the mirror neurons in Macaque monkeys (for a summary of the research, see Iacoboni 2009):

*A Perception-Action Model of empathy specifically states that attended perception of the object's state automatically activates the subject's representation of the state, situation and object and that activation of the representations automatically primes or generates the associated autonomic and somatic responses, unless inhibited... (Preston and de Waal 2002, p. 4)*

In contrast to Hoffman, Preston and de Waal concentrate in their research more on the empathic process than on the empathy triggered response of the subject/observer (2002). In this model, all empathic phenomena are subjected to the same process, the PAM. By attending to the state of the target, a representation of the state arises in the observer more or less *automatically* (see section 2.9). The same neural mechanisms are at work that are also responsible for representations activated when objects are observed performing actions. De Waal likens his concept of empathy to be like a Russian Doll model:

*Because of this layered nature of the capacities involved, we speak of the Russian doll model, in which higher cognitive levels of empathy build upon a firm, hard-wired basis, such as the PAM (de Waal 2003). The claim is not that PAM by itself explains sympathetic concern or perspective-taking, but that it underpins these cognitively more advanced forms of empathy and serves to motivate behavioral outcomes. Without emotional engagement induced by state-matching, perspective-taking would be a cold phenomenon that could just as easily lead to torture as to helping (Deacon 1997, de Waal 2005). (2008, p. 287)*

Though praised by peers for creating a parsimonious theory of empathy that made use of advances in neuroimaging technology (Anderson and Keltner 2002; Bernhardt and Singer 2012), the PAM-model of empathy was critiqued on a variety of points. Anderson and Keltner see the PAM as a precursor to empathy but not as isomorphic with the latter (2002). They also question the automaticity of the empathic process as opposed to the PAM and feel, that more about “the boundary conditions in which empathy will occur and when not” (2002, p. 21) needs to be said – a point, that other authors have criticized as well (Davis 2002; Hoffman 2002).

The need for a unitary system explaining empathy is felt by quite a number of researchers. Blair questions whether the PAM is that unitary foundation of all empathic process and rather speaks of “dissociable systems for social cognition” (2002, p. 28) as does Eslinger et al. (2002). Hoffman agrees with this criticism and – pointing to the necessity of multiple empathy related processes – states that “Empathy is thus a multi-determined, *largely though not entirely automatic and representational*, highly reliable human response...” (2002, p. 39).

Apart from the criticism, many peers largely support Preston and de Waal’s hypothesis that there could be a unitary base for empathy that might very well be the PAM (Iacoboni and Lenzi 2002), that the PAM plays at least a very important role in the empathic process (Decety 2011), or that the approach is going in the right direction but needs a lot more experimental support (Zaki and Ochsner 2012). While others accept the idea of a unitary base, but see it not in the PAM but in the neural systems that the *simulation theory* describes (Gallese et al. 2002; Gallese 2003).

The decades old dispute regarding the components of empathy is not settled yet, though quite a number of scientist have picked up on the idea of looking at empathy as a at least three-fold construct consisting of *motor*, *cognitive* and *emotional empathy* (eg. Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004; Blair 2005; Hodges et al. 2010; Zaki 2014). Other researchers, however, define

empathy in a narrower way focusing solely on the emotional part, the *self/other-distinction*, and *empathic accuracy* demanding, that the observer's affective state needs to be isomorphic to the effective state of the target:

*There is empathy if: (i) one is in an affective state; (ii) this state is isomorphic to another person's affective state; (iii) this state is elicited by the observation or imagination of another person's affective state; (iv) one knows that the other person is the source of one's own affective state. (Vignemont and Singer 2006, p. 435)*

A "broad definition of empathy", that labels *perspective-taking*, *empathic concern*, etc. as empathy as well, is not possible in their opinion because all of the above stated conditions are necessary prerequisites for empathy. Hence, only *emotional empathy* can be rightly called empathy which both authors are attempting to prove using neuroimaging techniques (2006).

As Preston and de Waal (2002), Vignemont and Singer find evidence for the more or less automatic activation of shared representation when perceiving emotions in an object, but put more emphasis on modulatory mechanisms:

*We now provide neuroscientific evidence suggesting that empathy is not merely the consequence of the passive observation of emotional cues but that it is subject to contextual appraisal and modulation. (2006, p. 437)*

## 2.2 Cognitive empathy, perspective-taking, Theory of Mind, mentalizing

After having reviewed some of the most influential definitions on *emotional empathy*, I would like to turn to another aspect of empathy that authors call *cognitive empathy*, *perspective-taking*, Theory of Mind, or mentalizing and discuss whether these terms can be used synonymously. As mentioned in the previous section, it is disputed within the scientific community whether *perspective-taking* (and Theory of Mind and mentalizing) is a form of empathy or simply a cognitive ability that most human beings are capable of. Theory of Mind is characterized in the following way:

*In the case of knowledge of other minds, we appear to begin with much the same information as for nonsocial objects—perception of a face, say—but then go on to make inferences that are unique: We infer emotions, intentions, and beliefs of the other person, none of which we can directly observe because they are internal, relational, or dispositional states in some way. (Adolphs 2009, p. 696)*

In order to do so, one has to differentiate between self and other (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987), set aside one's current mental state, and attribute a mental state to that of another person (Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004). Knowledge of social norms and situations help greatly in the process of inferring how a person might think and feel in a particular situation (Lieberman 2007).

Whereas behavior that is based on experience sharing is observable in animals (Preston and de Waal 2002; Bekoff 2002), it is doubtful whether animals can develop a Theory of Mind of other beings (Adolphs 2009; Decety 2011), though chimpanzee show at least some of the prerequisites for that ability (de Waal 2008). In humans, *perspective-taking* develops between the fourth and fifth year as is shown by false-believe-tasks (Wellman et al. 2001), an age where prosocial behavior is also starting to develop (Zahn-Waxler et al. 1992).

*Perspective-taking, mentalizing and Theory of Mind*, a term that Premack and Woodruff have coined (1978), are used synonymously across different publications by different authors as label for the above outlined process of inferring another's state of mind, beliefs, and desires (eg. Bernhardt and Singer 2012; Adolphs 2009; Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004; Blair 2005; Lieberman 2007; Zaki and Ochsner 2012).

Other use the term *Theory of Mind* more literally, describing it as a being's knowledge that it has a mind of its own as well as other members of the same species (Premack and Woodruff 1978; Baumeister et al. 2011; McDonald and Messinger 2011) and sometimes *Theory of Mind* is used to describe both (Mar 2011). Decety, on the other hand, considers the cognitive aspects – i.e. *perspective-taking* – of empathy closely related to the *Theory of Mind* processes but different (2011).

*Perspective-taking* seems to be the term used by most researchers in the field of empathy, though I have not done an exact count. The term has the benefit of staying out of the discussion whether the process of inferring another's state of mind actually is a form of empathy, or not. The term, *cognitive empathy*, on the other hand, clearly takes a stand. *Theory of Mind* is used more in the general research on social cognition of which empathy is, of course, a part, though not the main focus.

Drawing insights from their neurobiological research Vignemont and Singer claim, that *perspective-taking* may be a phenomenon related to empathy but not the thing itself:

*Cognitive perspective-taking, for example, does not meet the first condition. One represents the mental states of others, including affective states, without being emotionally involved (e.g. based on my knowledge of you, I infer from your behavior that you are anxious, but I do not feel anxious). ...*

*However, it does not meet the condition of isomorphism (e.g. I feel sorry for you because you feel jealous, depressed or angry but I am not jealous or depressed myself). (2006, p. 435)*

Other researchers see the generation of motor representations of other persons as the foundation of *perspective-taking*, i.e. of inferring reasons and intentions behind the observed actions (Adolphs 2009, p. 706). This stance would be directly supporting Preston and de Waal's proposition, that *perspective-taking* basically shares of the same mechanism as effective empathy and also has some emotional content (Preston and de Waal 2002). De Waal actually

considers the PAM to be the underpinning of all empathic processes and states, that perspective-taking without emotional engagement has little to do with empathy coining the phrase “empathic *perspective-taking*” to denote the difference (de Waal 2008).

Considering current neurological research it is doubtful, whether analytical *perspective-taking* without an emotional component is even possible (Damasio 2005) nor useful. Experiments show that this might not even be preferable since *perspective-taking* in a cold affective state leads to less understanding and displayed empathic concern for the target resulting in an *empathy gap* (Ruttan et al. 2015). On the other hand, *perspective-taking* might also be obscured when desensitization has occurred due to too many similar emotional experiences (Campbell et al. 2014).

Other authors, which Zaki (2014) reviews and agrees with, speak of a hydraulic relationship between *perspective-taking* (which he calls mentalizing) and *emotional empathy* (which he calls experience sharing), i.e. the more a person engages in *perspective-taking* the less experience sharing can be done. Interestingly, in an earlier publication Zaki portrayed the relationship between perspective-taking and emotional empathy not as hydraulic but as working sides by side in a complimentary fashion:

*Together, data from naturalistic models have allowed scientists to begin moving past ‘either/or’ conceptualizations of empathy’s processes as distinct, and toward a ‘when/how’ model, which posits that perceivers flexibly deploy multiple, interactive processes when they are relevant to current social goals and cues. (Zaki and Ochsner 2012)*

Especially relevant – also for this work – is Zaki’s focus on *naturalistic social inference* stressing the point that earlier empathy research used “highly simplified cues” (Zaki and Ochsner 2012, p. 676) that were either designed to explore cognitive *perspective-taking* or *experience sharing* processes but were not complex enough to show the interworking of both of these kinds of processes when solving real life social tasks.

Regardless of the relationship between *emotional* and *cognitive empathy*, the latter plays an important part in inducing altruistic and helping behavior (Eisenberg and Miller 1987). When participants of psychological experiments are asked to take the perspective of another person, it becomes much more likely that helping behavior is displayed towards the latter (Goetz et al. 2010; Batson et al. 1997), though in competitive situations perspective-taking might turn to *schadenfreude* (Weisz and Zaki 2017). These considerations will become important when discussing different methods for training empathy (see section 5.3.3).

### 2.3 Motor empathy, mimicry, imitation or mirroring

The term *motor empathy* and the underlying concept have been mentioned quite early in empathy research (Wispé 1987; Hess and Blairy 2001). It is a phenomenon that is – contrary to emotional and mental forms of empathy – a lot easier to observe. Hatfield et al. have defined *motor empathy* as the automatic synchronization of postures, facial expressions, movements between observer and target (1994).



The neural processes at work lie at the very core of the perception-action-model and, as such, have been described a while ago (Chartrand and Bargh 1999). When observing an action, neurons in certain regions of the brain are firing as if the action was actually executed by the observer and not by the object (Iacoboni and Lenzi 2002; Iacoboni 2009). Under certain conditions behavioral synchronization between observer and objects happens on the ground of the activated representation in the observer's brain (Preston and de Waal 2002; Niedenthal and Brauer 2012).

*Motor empathy* is regarded by some as a more basic form of empathy that helps primates as well as human beings to learn by imitation (de Waal 2008). As an innate human tendency, mimicry of facial expression, body language, vocal tones can be observed a few days after birth (Barsade 2002; Decety 2011; McDonald and Messinger 2011). Chartrand and Bargh found in their research, that *mimicry*, though largely happening unintentionally, has a very important social function as it "facilitates the smoothness of interactions and increases liking between interaction partners" (1999, p. 893). Furthermore, they found out that the chameleon effect (which term they used to label the phenomenon under discussion) was exhibited more strongly by empathic person than by person less disposed to (trait) empathy<sup>2</sup> (Chartrand and Bargh 1999). Especially, facial mimicry is exhibited more strongly by highly empathic persons than by less empathic persons (Sonny-Borgstrom 2002).

On the other hand, there is evidence that facial mimicry actually "generates" vicarious emotions in the observer via the above mentioned perception-action network as persons, who through the injection of Botox were inhibited from moving their faces in a synchronized fashion with the target, reported less feelings of at least some emotions (Niedenthal and Brauer 2012). However, earlier experiments have found little evidence for this notion (Hess and Blairy 2001).

Not all author agree with Blair (2005) and Preston and de Waal (2002) that the phenomena called mimicry, imitation, synchronization, and mirroring are actually all forms of empathy. Bernhard and Singer (2012) argue, that mimicry is not empathy since it does not require *self-other distinction* and is thus more akin to *emotional contagion*. Hess and Blairy, on the other hand, have found that mimicry and *emotional contagion* are two separate processes with little connection (2001; 2014). They do agree with Bernhard and Singer, though, that *mimicry* is not empathy but for another reason:

*Thus, whereas mimicry and contagion require empathy (or at least a basic willingness to engage empathically with the other), empathy is more broadly defined and does not necessarily require mimicry or contagion. (2014, p. 47)*

Regarding the fact that congruency between the emotional state of the object and the observer has been defined as a necessary condition for empathy by many (see discussion in section 2.1.1), it does seem that Hess and Blairy's definition of empathy and mimicry and the definition of empathy by many other authors are almost congruent, though Hess and Blairy mainly focus on the outward mimic display of emotions in what they call *emotional mimicry*<sup>3</sup> and not so much on the inward mechanisms (2014).

As Chartrand et al. (1999), Hess and Blair stress the importance of emotional mimicry for social interactions as it increases positive feelings between social actors and enhances the understanding of the objects' emotions as well as helping the observer to appear empathic to the objects (2014). As Zaki (2014) does for all empathic processes, Hess et al. stress the importance of the social context and of motivation on the part of the observer for emotional mimicry claiming that mimicry is in many cases not an automatic process (Hess and Fischer 2014; Hess and Hareli 2014).

Reviewing the literature, it seems largely a question of definition whether mimicry can be called an empathic process. Regardless of the discussion at hand, emotional, and for that matter behavioral, mimicry can serve as an important function in the empathic process as well as for perceived empathy (see section 2.6). When discussing the different methods for training empathy, it will be worthwhile exploring how the social functioning of mimicry can be employed in the training process.

## 2.4 Empathic concern, compassion, sympathy, and personal distress

### 2.4.1 Empathic concern

Many scientists in the history of empathy research have highlighted one particular function of empathy: it can trigger prosocial/helping and even altruistic behavior by generating emotional states like empathic concern, compassion, or sympathy (e.g. Batson et al. 1981; de Waal 2008; Dovidio 1991; Eisenberg 1991; Hein et al. 2010; Paulus and Zumkley-Münkel 1992; Penner et al. 2005; Rushton 1981; Stocks et al. 2009; Goetz et al. 2010; Hodges et al. 2010; Lamm et al. 2011; O'Brien et al. 2013).

Different terms and underlying concepts exist, some stemming from millennium old traditions, to describe the different phenomena surrounding this aspect of the empathy construct. Some of these terms have shaped the perception of empathy in the eye of the public to such a degree that they are sometimes taken to be empathy itself – a fact that is to be kept in mind when designing and implementing empathy trainings. For example, empathy did have a bad name at some times since it was mostly associated with the perception of other's pain that seemed to cause the observer to vicariously feel pain themselves (Wispé 1987).

As we have seen with other aspects of the empathy construct, there is a long-lasting discussion within the scientific community concerning the usage of the different terms and concepts (e.g. Wispé 1986; Goetz et al. 2010) and also, more fundamentally, about whether it is actually empathy that triggers altruistic behavior or just a sense of perceived oneness towards close kin (Cialdini et al. 1997; Batson 1997, 2011).

Batson and Coke, as other authors (Davis 1983b; Eisenberg et al. 1994), are a good example for the above mentioned scientific and cultural traditions that see empathy and empathic concern as identical. They define empathy by the very function of triggering prosocial behavior under certain conditions:

*Empathy, as we shall use it, is an emotional response elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone else. We have chosen to focus instead on emotional response to the perceived welfare of another because, while the other's welfare is often reflected in his or her emotional state, it is not always (as, for example, when an accident victim is unconscious). We believe that to feel concern and compassion in response to the perceived distress of an unconscious victim, as presumably the Good Samaritan did, should be included in our definition of empathy. (1981, p. 169)*

Bernhardt and Singer, as other authors (e.g. Decety 2011; Hodges et al. 2010; Konrath and Grynberg 2016), distinguish between empathy and empathic concern which they define as “an emotional and motivational state characterized by the desire to help and promote others’ welfare” (2012, p. 3). Moreover, they see differences between empathic concern, sympathy, and compassion. While they define sympathy not as a state – emotional and motivational – but as a benevolent feeling towards another person who could be better off or happier, they differentiate compassion from empathic concern by attributing the concept from the Hindu/Buddhist-traditions of loving-kindness to only the former and not the latter (Bernhardt and Singer 2012).

Decety (2011), as others (Penner et al. 2005; Nelson et al. 2003; Smith et al. 1989), while agreeing with Bernhardt and Singer that empathy and empathic concern are different states, considers both *empathic concern* and sympathy to be feelings of concern for other, suffering persons, as well as a motivation to help said persons in their plight, being triggered by the empathic perception of others’ emotional state.

Zaki pronounces the differences between empathy and compassion clearly by stating that “unlike experience sharing [which term he uses for empathy], compassion does not necessitate that observers feel emotions congruent with those of targets.” Nevertheless, he does not differentiate between compassion and empathic concern which he uses synonymously: “Broadly speaking, compassion and empathic concern can be thought of as observers *feeling for* social targets without *feeling as* those targets do.” (2014, p. 1632)

#### 2.4.2 Sympathy

Although empathy and sympathy were used synonymously for quite some time, in recent history the usage of the term empathy, within the scientific community at least, has been largely restricted to the sharing of a perceived emotion whereas sympathy is an other-oriented feeling for an object often accompanied by an “urge to take whatever mitigating actions are necessary...” (Wispé 1986, p. 318). Sympathy can be the result of empathizing with another person, but this emotional state can also be reached by perspective-taking, by putting oneself into another person’s shoes (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987; Eisenberg et al. 2002).

#### 2.4.3 Compassion

Though many researchers are using *empathic concern* and compassion interchangeably (Penner et al. 2005; Zaki 2014; Weng et al. 2013) or describe compassion as a feeling belonging to

*empathic concern* (Batson et al. 1981; Cialdini et al. 1997), others claim that these two terms actually describe different psychological phenomena. Goetz et al. define compassion as an affective state that arises when an object is observed suffering which, in turn, motivates the observer to alleviate the object's suffering (Goetz et al. 2010). Leiberger et al. differ from that view on compassion and liken compassion to an attitude (2011) attributing the state-like condition to *empathic concern* being a, by nature, short-lived emotion.

Their research has shown that empathic inductions invoking *empathic concern* do often not last longer than the experimental session, whereas compassion training interventions based on the Buddhist tradition of loving-kindness meditation produce lasting imprints in the neural structure of the brain (Klimecki et al. 2013a; Klimecki et al. 2013b; Klimecki et al. 2014). It enhances *empathic accuracy* (Mascaro et al. 2013) and increases altruistic behavior toward others (Weng et al. 2013), positive affects (Fredrickson et al. 2008) as well as one's well-being and even the immune system (Pace et al. 2009).

In the light of the above quoted statements expressing that compassion is an attitude/disposition, it has to be noted that viewing *empathic concern* not only as an affective state but also as a dispositional trait has a long tradition. Davis' self-report *empathic concern* scale "assesses 'other-oriented' feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others" as dispositional trait (1983a, p. 114). Other researchers, not belonging to the "compassion camp", also view empathic concern to be both – an affective state as well as a dispositional trait (Eisenberg et al. 1994; Konrath and Grynberg 2016).

It seems rather arbitrary to me to distinguish between *empathic concern* and compassion as both concepts are other-oriented, focused on alleviating the suffering of other people, and both can be triggered either by the direct perception of an object's suffering or by taking the perspective of a supposedly suffering person (de Waal 2008). The term compassion seems to be used by researchers who also employ mediational methods inspired by Buddhist traditions for compassion/empathy training interventions (Singer and Bolz 2013; Goetz et al. 2010; Leiberger et al. 2011; Neff 2003b) possibly owing to the fact that the old Pali and Sanskrit term *karuna* has been widely translated with compassion in the literature (Monier-Williams and Leumann 2006) and not with *empathic concern*. In this work, I will use the terms *empathic concern* and *compassion* interchangeably.

The very term *compassion* seems ill chosen for the concept that researchers like Singer, Wenger, Goetz, Leiberger, and Klimecki are describing as it literally means to suffer alongside with somebody which is exactly the opposite to what the research of the above listed scientists has brought to light: being compassionate towards the suffering persons reduces personal vicarious suffering (Klimecki et al. 2013b). That being said, in the context of empathy training interventions it might be preferable to use widely known terms such as compassion since laymen might easier relate to them as to terms predominantly used in the academic community like *empathic concern*.

#### 2.4.4 Personal distress

*Personal distress* is another important concept to be considered in regard to the topic of this work. De Waal considers it to be the oldest form of empathy and has observed this emotional state across different species witnessing conspecifics suffer (2008). When observing objects experiencing distress, empathy can turn either into *empathic concern* which may trigger pro-social behavior or, depending upon the circumstances and/or the personal disposition of the observer (see 2.8), turn into *personal distress* (Schwartz and Howard 1981; Archer et al. 1981; Davis 1983a), which most people consider to be an aversive state of mind:

*When perceiving cues related to another's distress, some people may experience an aversive state such as anxiety or worry that is not congruent with the other's state and, what is more important, that leads to a self-oriented, egoistic reaction or concern. (Eisenberg and Strayer 1987, p. 7)*

Being an unwelcomed state of mind, most observers seek to reduce these aversive emotions of *personal distress* by escaping the scene when given the opportunity (Batson and Coke 1981) or, alternatively, reappraising the situation to reduce the *personal distress* by concluding, for example, that the object “deserves” to suffer (Hoffman 1987). Another strategy adopted to reduce personal distress is actually mitigating the suffering of the target being the indirect cause of own’s own (mental) suffering (Hoffman 1981). However, for *personal distress* to become a cause for helping behavior the level of aversive feelings experienced by the observer of an object’s suffering should be below a certain level lest the observer becomes overwhelmed by these feelings (Eisenberg et al. 1994).

A decades old academic discussion has been centering on the question whether helping behavior triggered by empathy and directed toward a suffering object actually is altruistic or selfishly aimed at reducing one’s own *personal distress* (see Stocks et al. (2009) for a summary of the discussion). By manipulating escape options, it has been shown in various experiments that empathy more often than not triggers an altruistic motive to help rather than a selfish desire to reduce personal distress (Batson et al. 1988; Dovidio et al. 1990; Penner et al. 2005; Stocks et al. 2009). The empathic sharing of the joy of the person helped can, on the other hand, also be considered as reward for the helper (Zaki 2014).

Whether it actually is to be considered altruism, when suffering objects are being helped, is subject to another longstanding debate. Cialdini et al. (1997) and Neuberg et al. (1997) cite evidence that *empathic concern* is due to a perceived oneness with the suffering other – a self-other overlap. Batson, on the other hand, claims that, most importantly, the *empathy-altruism-hypothesis* explains the evoking of an altruistic motivation for helping through empathy and that it is not a causal relationship per se (1997). As will be discussed in section 2.9, there are quite a lot of factors determining what will come out of the empathic perception of an object’s suffering with possibilities ranging from *Schadenfreude* (Cikara et al. 2014), neglect (Epley et al. 2002; Shaw et al. 1994), racially biased callousness (Mathur et al. 2010) to pro-social behavior (Sober et al. 1999) and altruism (Rushton 1981; de Waal 2008; Weng et al. 2013).

Trainings aiming to increase empathic behavior (see section 2.5) in leaders will have to consider the possibility that an increase in empathy may produce an increase in *personal distress* in some of the recipients of the training which would make it harder for them to do their daily job. For that reason, empathy is sometimes portrayed as being dysfunctional as it can trigger these aversive emotional states like *personal distress* in the observer and may lead to emotional depletion and burn-out syndromes (Klimecki et al. 2013b; Klimecki et al. 2014). Approaching the object with *compassion/empathic concern* on the other hand, would not only save observers from stressful states of mind but would also put them in a better position to help the targets (Leiberg et al. 2011; Klimecki et al. 2014).

When discussing different interventions to increase empathy, it will be important to have a very close look at the factors that prevent empathy from turning into *personal distress*.

## 2.5 Empathic behavior

*Empathic behavior* is a term frequently used in the literature (i.e. Schumann et al. 2014; Decety 2011), but not very often defined. Of the 31 open peer commentaries on Preston's and de Waal's (2002) groundbreaking paper on empathy, 10 used the term *empathic behavior* without defining it, while Parr (2002) used *empathic behavior* as an umbrella term to denote the different phenomena that Preston and de Waal have described as being based on the PAM (see 2.1.1): *emotional contagion, sympathy, empathy, cognitive empathy, and prosocial behaviors*. Parr summarizes it in a way that agrees with Preston and de Waal's definition of a *perception-action-model*. According to this model, the perception of affects in others leads to actions contingent on various factors.

Any form of behavior, which is based on empathy would then be *empathic behavior*. The question remains whether *empathic behavior* automatically has to be *prosocial behavior* that is directed at the object of perception with a benevolent intent. Behavior based on empathy does not necessarily have to have that direction but can also have the intent to harm the other (Cikara et al. 2014). Nevertheless, in the bulk of the literature reviewed *empathic behavior* is considered to have a prosocial orientation often leading to altruistic actions (Batson et al. 1991), though, at times, limited by in- and out-group considerations (Hein et al. 2010). In this work I would like to adopt this understanding of *empathic behavior* and distinguish it from non-prosocial behaviors.

Others, less theoretical minded approaches, see *empathic behavior* as a variant of *empathic communication* Dexter (2012). Stepien and Baernstein (2006) define *empathic behavior* as "the ability to convey understanding of those emotions and perspectives back to the patient." (p. 524).

*The empathic physician is neither objective nor subjective, neither detached nor identified, but dialogically linked to the patient in a continuing cycle of reflexive interpretation that integrates the objective and subjective. (More 1996, p. 245)*

Here, *empathic behavior* is linked to the communication of the *empathic perceptions* of the observer to the object and engaging in a process of continuous sharing of emotions with the object much like the process of *empathic paraphrasing* that Carl Roger describes (1975) when delineating how empathy is part of therapeutic counselling.

While in the above described case *empathic behavior* flows unidirectionally from the observer/actor to the object as is mandated by the professional relationship actor and object share, Broom (1991) uses the term *relational empathy* when referring to the situation where both communication partners show *empathic behavior* targeting each other. Non-Violent Communication (see 5.3.3.5) has a similar understanding of *empathic behavior*, when the observer offers *empathic behavior* in the form of communicating observations, emotions, and needs as well as paraphrasing observed emotions and indicates a genuine interest and concern for the needs of the object with the goal of triggering a reciprocal process (Rosenberg 2013).

In this dissertation I would also like to use the term *empathic behavior* with the understanding that it encompasses *empathic communication* but is not limited to communication and includes other forms of prosocial behaviors. In the context of leadership, *empathic behavior* in the form of *empathic communication* plays the most important role as leaders engage constantly in verbal (and non-verbal) communication while leading. Nevertheless, scenarios are imaginable where other forms of *empathic behavior* are shown which are more hands-on like re-structuring an office-routine to adapt to the needs of different subordinates.

## 2.6 Perceived empathy

“... —how well understood the target feels—has received little attention outside of clinical work” (Hodges et al. 2010, p. 399). In the medical field, when patients started to rate the physicians, the question of when and how behavior is perceived as empathic became important (Silvester et al. 2007). For the work at hand this aspect is relevant, too. When it is expected of leaders to be empathic, it is equally important that an effort in this direction is perceived as intended so that the motivation to show this kind of behavior is kept up and has its desired effect on the recipients of the behavior.

The study by Hodges et al. (2010) has brought to light that having had a similar experience like the object and *empathic accuracy* are not correlated. Persons who have had a similar experience were no better at actually inferring objects’ feelings and thoughts than persons who have not had that particular experience (which, in this study was, child birth). While Hodges et al. have nonetheless found, that “having been there” at least increased *empathic concern* for the target, another study could not confirm this effect.

Ruttan et al. (2015) found that once observers have turned to a “cold” emotional state, their level of *empathic concern* was no better than that of persons who never “have been there”. On the contrary, persons who “have been there” displayed less compassion towards persons who somehow failed to go through with the experience than persons who never were in this situation (Campbell et al. 2014).

Ironically, *perceived empathy* increased when targets believed that the empathic actors have had similar experiences without an actual proof for this claim (Hodges et al. 2010). An implication for empathy training intervention could be to tell participants that it is important to signal to targets that they have had similar experiences to be perceived as empathic. It should also be made clear that this should not be a substitute for a truly empathic attitude. Especially, when object and empathic actor are in an ongoing relationship as is the case between leader and follower, bending the truth to signal that certain experiences have been made, will most likely backfire at some point.

As mentioned in the citation above, within the clinical context behavior that is deemed empathic by patients and thus perceived as such has been subject both to extensive research and developments efforts of training interventions (Stepien and Baernstein 2006; Riess et al. 2012; Hojat et al. 2002), which will be reviewed in section 3.1. As discussed in section 2.3, *emotional mimicry* does serve a similar purpose and has moreover the positive side effect, that it enhances the *empathic accuracy* of the observer.

## 2.7 Self-empathy and self-compassion

*Self-empathy* and *self-compassion* are important components of the empathy concept and could be very important when designing empathy training interventions in the context of leadership development. As addressed in the previous section, empathy may result in *personal distress*. Both *self-empathy* and *self-compassion* can help participants of empathy trainings to better recognize signs of *personal distress* in themselves and take good care of themselves, too.

*Self-empathy*, as a concept, plays an important role in Marshal Rosenberg's teaching of Non-violent Communication (NVC) which stresses that unless one is empathic towards one's own feelings it will be difficult to be empathic toward others (Rosenberg 2013). Empathy, as Marshall Rosenberg uses the term in the Rogerian tradition, carries a caring component with it and doesn't stop at vicariously experiencing other's emotions and feelings but includes acting upon that information to restore, maintain or enhance the other's or one's own well-being (Rosenberg 2013; Fritsch 2012).

The term *self-empathy* is somewhat contradictory as, by most definitions, empathy is always other-directed. The process of becoming aware of one's own emotions and feelings seems to be better described as introspection or emotional self-awareness which, as part of *emotional intelligence* concept will be described in section 4.5.1.

The concept *self-compassion* combines both aspects of being aware of one's inner emotional world (which could be labeled *self-empathy*) and of treating oneself in caring way (Gilbert and Procter 2006). Kirsten Neff has devoted much of her academic life to the development and the experimental validation of this concept which, according to her, is grounded in Buddhist philosophy (Neff 2003b) and was inspired by the works of Sharon Salzberg (2002), which I also had the pleasure of studying.



For her, self-compassion

*... involves being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness. Self-compassion also involves offering nonjudgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies and failures, so that one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience. (Neff 2003a, p. 87)*

Strong correlations between *self-compassion* and aspects of mental health have been found (Gilbert and Procter 2006; Neff et al. 2007). *Self-compassion* has been shown to reduce stress (Neff and Germer 2013), to motivate self-improvement after failure (Breines and Chen 2012) while correlating negatively with perfectionism (Neff 2003b), and to increase emotional resilience (Neff and McGehee 2010). Moreover, measurable increases in *self-compassion* after *self-compassion* trainings could be demonstrated (Baer 2010; Barnard and Curry 2011). All this indicates that self-compassion training could be an important element of empathy leadership trainings and should be part of the curriculum.

The discussion on the similarities and differences between *empathic concern* and compassion also pertains to the concept of *self-compassion* and *self-empathy*. In this case however, the term *self-empathic-concern* has not been used as far as I know, and I will use *self-compassion* instead throughout this work.

## 2.8 A disposition to be empathic

So far, empathy has been reviewed as a state that is triggered when conditions like attention on an object, familiarity with the object, and the motivation to feel empathy for the object are met. Another topic discussed in the literature reviewed for this dissertation is, whether individuals have different dispositions to get into empathic states and how to measure this disposition.

It has been assumed, that persons with a strong disposition towards empathy will naturally gravitate towards a professional field where this particular talent is valued and needed (Johnson 1990). Like other talents and dispositions, Johnson (1990) supposes that it becomes stronger when used regularly but also that it has a genetic basis setting limits to its development. Research with twins confirms the part of Johnson's assumption concerning the hereditary nature of dispositional empathy, that tendencies to experience *empathic concern* and *personal distress* are hereditary, while that has not been confirmed for cognitive forms of empathy (Davis et al. 1994). A recent study (Warrier et al. 2018) has found some indication that genetic dispositions might very well influence at least self-reported empathy. Empathy would then also be hereditary.

At this point, my impression from the literary review is, that also there might be some cases, where there is basically no disposition towards being empathic, in most cases, *empathic abilities* can be trained as the next chapter (see section 3) will show. It might, though, be the case, that training endeavors might not be equally successful for every participant. Those with a

“natural” disposition towards empathy might be more easily motivated to attend such interventions, listen and participate with more attention, and are more eager to put the learnt content to use in everyday life.

### 2.8.1 Measuring dispositional empathy

The task of measuring dispositional empathy has received a lot of attention over the years and has produced a series of different methods. The most widely used ones (in the original form and modified) are Hogan’s *Empathy Scale* (Hogan 1969), Mehrabian and Epstein’s *Questionnaire Measure of Emotional Empathy* (Mehrabian and Epstein 1972), Davis’ *Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)* (Davis 1980), the *Toronto Empathy Questionnaire* (Spreng et al. 2009) and quite a few others (Holz-Ebeling and Steinmetz 1994; Leibetseder et al. 2001; Gerdes et al. 2011).

Davis’ IRI is, perhaps, the most widely used scale and, very conveniently, has been translated into German (Paulus 2009). As already mentioned above, Davis has not only developed a widely-used empathy scale but also contributed significantly to the empathy concept by defining different dimensions. The IRI is measuring four different aspects of the empathy concept: *empathic concern* (2.4.1), *perspective taking* (2.2), *personal distress* (2.4.4), and *fantasy empathy*, which is empathy one experiences towards fictional persons in various media (Gasser 2014). Although Davis portrays empathy as a multidimensional yet coherent construct, the different subscales are not correlated with each other per se, but form a pattern: *perspective taking* and *empathic concern* are positively associated as is *fantasy empathy* and *empathic concern* while *perspective-taking* and *personal distress* are negatively correlated (Davis 1983a).

It may be important to note, that the IRI measures *emotional empathy* in the sense of “vicariously experiencing the feelings of another person” only marginal and that the greater part of the subscale’s items “assesses ‘other-oriented’ feelings of sympathy and concern for unfortunate others,…” (Davis 1983a, p. 114). While it is widely assumed, that in order to feel *empathic concern* for others, emotional empathy had to be experienced by the observer in the first place (see section 2.4), it is still a different concept. As the IRI has been used continuously for many years, exciting longitudinal studies are possible depicting changes in dispositional empathy in defined populations (e.g. Konrath et al. 2011; O'Brien et al. 2013). It has been widely used before and after empathy training interventions to measure their effectiveness.

The validity of empathy scales that are based on self-report have been under question (Mischo 2003). The cited study has shown that self-report and other-evaluation of *emotional empathy* and *fantasy empathy* are correlated but not *cognitive empathy*. When participants were tested on the *empathic concern* subscale after an empathy intervention it was found that the score correlated with the activation of a brain region (anterior insula) commonly associated with empathy (Hein et al. 2016), demonstrating that the self-reported empathy score are reflected by neural activations that are beyond the reach of willful thinking.

## 2.8.2 Dispositional empathy and observable behavior

Various studies have been done to examine how a disposition towards empathy and its different aspects like *empathic concern*, *perspective taking*, etc. translate into observable behavior.

Davis has hypothesized that “individual differences in empathic tendencies will significantly affect reported levels of empathic emotion and personal distress after exposure to a needy victim.” (1983b, p. 170) The experiments undertaken in this regard show a significant correlation between dispositional empathy and measures of self-reported *emotional* (rather than *cognitive*) *empathy* when observers were exposed to suffering objects. Consistent with previous research (e.g. Batson et al. 1981) only participants who reported high in *empathic concern* felt motivated to help the object while those high in *personal distress* did not. Later experiments (Fultz et al. 1986) found a similar correlation between dispositional *empathic concern* and a tendency to help.

Other research has partially backed up these findings (Archer et al. 1981): while it confirmed that dispositional empathy can, indeed, be seen as a mediator for helping behavior, social evaluation was found to be an additional, albeit situational factor. Persons high in empathy are also more concerned about what others think about them. Helping most likely occurred, when the persons were high in dispositional empathy and when the spotlight of social expectation was on the observer.

Persons who have a high disposition to experience *personal distress* are prone to experience great emotional arousal and try to avoid these distressing situations altogether, persons high in *empathic concern* have a better grip on their emotions and are prone to engage in prosocial behavior even when an escape is easily possible while persons with a great tendency towards *perspective taking* are least emotional (Eisenberg et al. 1994).

## 2.9 Empathy – automatic, motivated or both

After discussing different dimensions of empathy, an important question has to be touched before concluding the chapter on empathy: is empathy automatic, motivated or both? This question is especially important in the light of the topic of this work. If empathy is just an automatic process determined solely by personal disposition and circumstances, training empathy would be a futile attempt. Having empathic leaders would then be the sole responsibility of an organization’s recruitment department.

Though it seems to be largely accepted, that brain cells fire correspondingly when conspecifics’ actions are observed (Iacoboni 2009), that faculties of the brain like the amygdala constantly scan for emotions like fear and anger but also joy (Adolphs 2009; Spunt and Lieberman 2013), and that a mirror matching mechanism offers an understanding of an object’s state pre-reflexively (Gallese 2003), there must be more to the empathic process. It is painfully obvious, that we do not live in empathic societies. If empathy would be automatic, social phenomena like police brutality, corporate greed, wars for petty nationalistic reasons, etc. wouldn’t happen.

Preston and de Waal (2002) described the PAM as a process of automatic sharing of states which is triggered reflexively when the observer attends to the emotional state of the object and have been criticized for that (e.g. Ainslie and Monterosso 2002; Bandura 2002; Hoffman 2002; Vignemont and Singer 2006). Nevertheless, although both authors stress that core empathic processes do not require conscious awareness, they also mention inhibitory processes that prevent living beings from being empathically aroused all the time (Preston and de Waal 2002). Among them is the modulation of attention to the states of the object which is explained partially by cue salience and familiarity with the target and partially by the motivation to attend to the object (Preston 2007).

Empathy has been found to be subject to regulatory strategies determining whether or to what degree empathy occurs (Vignemont and Singer 2006). The motivation to be empathic plays an important role regarding the employment of such strategies (Shaw et al. 1994). People who choose not to be empathically touched when seeing suffering around them, will remain callous to the plight of others. Even having a preconceived idea regarding the nature of empathy will influence people's abilities to empathize with others (Schumann et al. 2014).

Factors like race (Chiao and Mathur 2010; Mathur et al. 2010; Avenanti et al. 2010; Cheon et al. 2011), group boundaries (Hein et al. 2010; Cikara et al. 2011; Gutsell and Inzlicht 2010; Stephan and Finlay 1999; Singer et al. 2004), narcissism (Konrath et al. 2011; Baskin-Sommers et al. 2014), gender roles (Yarnell et al. 2015; Klein and Hodges 2001; Ickes et al. 2000; Eisenberg and Lennon 1983), having had similar experiences (Batson et al. 1996; Hodges et al. 2010), and attachment to one's off-spring (Preston and de Waal 2002; Keltner et al. 2014; Goetz et al. 2010) are common deterrents of empathy. Only for children empathy is believed to be more or less automatic. The adult brain is able to regulate with whom it empathizes and to whom *empathic behavior* (see 2.5) like helping is displayed (McDonald and Messinger 2011; Zahn-Waxler et al. 1992).

What Shaw et al. (1994), Preston and de Waal (2002), Vignemont and Singer (2006), Batson (2011), Decety (2010) and many others have already described more or less explicitly, has been summed up conclusively by Zaki (2014) who has reviewed the scientific literature extensively and seemed to have struck such a good balance between opposing views on the subject of the automaticity of empathy, that the stream of publications on the motivational aspects of empathy has dried up since.

While empathy, or at least subprocesses as mentioned in section 2.3, can very well be automatic at times, most of time, empathy is motivated by a variety of factors that Zaki (2014) meticulously lists in his extensive paper. The main contribution of the above paper constitutes in putting together a grid of different motives for or against empathy and corresponding strategies by which these motives are realized. It seeks support for the existence of the different motives from a large variety of research papers. In most cases, Zaki is re-interpreting the results of the papers in the light of the motivational structure of empathy.

As automatic empathic processes are more likely to occur in experimental laboratory situation and not in real life (Vignemont and Singer 2006), it will be worthwhile in the light of the topic

of this dissertation to keep the different motives and strategies in mind, when designing leadership empathy trainings. Moreover, the motivational aspect of empathy could prove to be pivotal in leadership development trainings.

When discussing the different strategies for regulating empathy as well as the different motivational factors, I will revert to the review of the literature that Zaki and his team have done as well as adding resources to the discussion that I have stumbled upon during my own literature review.

### 2.9.1 Regulating strategies for empathy

Zaki (2014) identifies three regulating strategies for empathy: *situation selection*, *attention modulation*, and *appraisal*.

#### Situation selection

Situation selection is described as the personal choice of an actor to approach or avoid a situation where it will be likely to experience empathy (Zaki 2014). This concept has been mentioned in regard to regulating altruistic and/or helping behavior and in regard to regulating *personal distress* which can be a product of empathy (Batson et al. 1981; Krebs and Russel 1981). By selecting to stay at or to leave the situation, the observers chose to continue to experience empathic feelings and be motivated by them to either show possibly costly altruistic and/or helping behavior or to flee the scene (and having to cope with *empathic guilt* when violating accepted cultural paradigms of helping people in distress (Batson 1997; Baumeister et al. 2011; Bierhoff and Rohmann 2004)).

This raises another point, which has been subject to discussion: how much choice do observers even have to leave a situation of empathy once they have felt empathy with the object? When, in experiments, subjects are empathically aroused to a certain degree, many seem to be compelled to display altruistic behavior and leaving the situation is not an option anymore – even when subjects are absolved of social shame and guilt by the experimental design (Stocks et al. 2009; Batson and Shaw 1991; de Waal 2008; Penner et al. 2005).

*Situation selection* as used by Zaki (2014), on the other hand, refers to will- and skillfully avoiding situations where one would be exposed to emotionally charged beings<sup>4</sup>. Hodges and Biswas-Diener (2007), who use the term *exposure control*, point out, that of all regulatory strategies this is the easiest but requires fore-sight and knowledge of potential empathy inducing situations.

As with all regulatory strategies it can be used both ways: to approach or avoid empathy. Edgar Schein (1985) has designed an intervention for organizational development called *empathy walk* as a way to explore organizational and group cultures, where consultants and organizational leaders purposefully expose themselves to empathy arousing situations to experience, for example, the plight or joy of the worker at the assembly line. Other examples are watching a documentation on Holocaust survivors, avoiding the office of a colleague who is forced to clear her desks by the end of the day, watching dating shows to engage in vicarious emotional roller coaster riding, etc.

It would be interesting to see, whether participants of empathy trainings having learned that empathy doesn't need to hurt, and that *empathic concern/compassion* is benefitting both the observer as well as the object, expose themselves more often to situations where empathy will be experienced than before.

#### Attention modulation

Attention modulation is listed by Zaki (2014) as the second strategy for regulating empathy. This strategy works for first-hand emotions as well (Gross 2002) and has been shown to be an effective mechanism for regulating empathy (Preston and de Waal 2002; Vignemont and Singer 2006; Blair 2005) as well as for a resulting phenomenon like *personal distress*, which can be reduced when the attention is shifted away from the empathy inducing target (Eisenberg 2000).

Spotting a homeless person on the street, people can choose to avert their eyes and look the other way to avoid empathy or get a full glimpse of the miserable living conditions of a fellow citizen felling a share of their pain (Shaw et al. 1994). A more positive example for attention modulation might be when an observer purposefully shifts the attention away from the perceived suffering of the interlocutor having learned that this person does not want his or her maladies to be in the limelight.

#### Appraisal

Appraisal is the third strategy for regulating empathy that can be used in three different ways: to down-regulate empathy, to re-appraise the observed object, and to re-evaluate the suffering of the object as something positive for the observer (Zaki 2014). Re-appraising negative affect is supposed to be a far better strategy for emotional control than suppression (Gross 2002). Especially, when emotional cues are salient, suppressing them will be difficult. Re-appraising, or re-framing as Hodges and Biswas-Diener call the concept, does take some cognitive effort in the beginning but becomes second nature by practice (2007).

It seems that most examples given in the literature describe instances where this strategy is employed to avoid empathy - sometimes for the benefit of the target, in most cases not:

- When dropping bombs, soldiers are taught to label civilian casualties as “collateral damage”. The usage of technocratic language helps to inhibit any *cognitive empathy* for the suffering they have caused on ground zero (Hodges and Biswas-Diener 2007).
- In competitive situations between in- and outgroup members the perceived suffering of the latter is re-appraised and triggers *schadenfreude* and/or other positive affects in the observer (Cikara et al. 2014; Epley et al. 2006; De Dreu, Carsten K W et al. 2010; Lanzetta and Englis 1989).
- Dehumanization is a severe form of empathic re-appraisal and causes people to feel pleasure beholding the suffering of the ones they bereaved of their humanity (Zaki 2014).
- Ideology can turn normal human beings into fierce fighters that know little empathy (Bandura 2002).
- Parents often have to dial down their empathic feelings induced by their offspring in order to teach them a valuable lesson (Hodges and Biswas-Diener 2007).

- Physicians, who have to turn their attention to the suffering of others and are obliged to engage in situations like that, have sometimes been found to deal in a rather callous way with their patient (Decety et al. 2010; Corn 2014).
- At the same time, re-appraisal can prove to be an essential strategy for physicians who have to witness suffering sometimes all day long to down-regulate their empathy (Decety et al. 2010) – unless they employ alternative methods like specialized empathy-trainings (see Riess et al. 2012).

### Suppression

Suppression would be a strategy to regulate empathy (Hodges and Biswas-Diener 2007) which is not listed by Zaki (2014). In contrast to the three strategies described above, it can only be used to avoid empathy and it has been demonstrated to be rather ineffective as compared to other strategies for regulating emotions like re-appraisal as well as having negative physiological consequences for the person applying this strategies – especially, when suppressing *personal distress* (Klimecki et al. 2014; Gross 2002). It should therefore not be taught in empathy trainings and participants who naturally employ this strategy should be discouraged to do so as it is detrimental to their health.

### 2.9.2 Approach and avoid motives for empathy

Zaki's (2014) review of the literature has identified six motives approaching or avoiding empathy that will be listed and evaluated with regard to the topic at hand in this section. He points out, though, that the research he has reviewed is not equally distributed among the six empathy motives. Some motives have been subject to far more empirical research than others.

The studies cited have all used experimental designs that tested the motivation of individuals on an individual level to approach or avoid empathy. As an empathy training intervention for leaders will most likely be executed within the framework of an existing human resource development strategy, individual motives for or against empathy will have to be aligned with the organizational goals.

### Avoiding pain

While witnessing suffering in the news seems to be bearable to a large number of people and motivates many to donate a lot of money as it has happened after the Tsunami in 2014 and Hurricane Katrina, being one-on-one with a suffering person can be an intense experience. As discussed in 2.4.4, empathy can turn into *personal distress* which is experienced as an aversive affective state that most people will be motivated to avoid. Not surprisingly, people seem to find many reasons and develop strong motives against having to empathize with suffering persons.

Zaki (2014) has identified twenty-six studies that gave evidence that either of the three strategies (listed by Zaki) were employed for avoiding pain caused by empathy. Avoiding pain seems to be a powerful motive for people to shun situations that will presumably lead to empathic encounters, avert the attention, or re-appraise the situation in such a way that the

observed target has somehow deserved the pain, is an outgroup member, is to be derogated, is whiny and overly sensitive, etc. (Zaki 2014).

As mentioned in section 2.8.2, to some degree it is determined by personal disposition whether a person experiences *personal distress* or *empathic concern* when observing a fellow human being suffer. Persons with a disposition for feeling *personal distress* when beholding suffering should then have a much stronger motivation to employ empathy regulating strategies to avoid empathy and, thus, pain as persons who react with feelings of *empathic concern* – the latter being associated with pleasant feelings for the observer (Davis 1983b).

At the same time, many other factors play an important role, too, determining whether a person approaches and avoids pain. Socialization plays an important part, as many cultures have norms that strongly urge the individual to alleviate suffering when seeing it. Some of these norms have even been codified to actual laws in some countries as Germany where it is a criminal offense not to stay with a victim and notify the authorities. Many religions propound that helping a (human) being in need is a pious deed.

The motivation to avoid pain seems, on first inspection, to be relevant for the topic of this dissertation. Empathy development programs will have to address these concerns with participants and integrate strategies to avoid the effects that Klimecki, Leiberg et al. (2014) have measured in their experiment. Just increasing an individual's capacity for empathy is not enough; strategies to cope with the increased level of suffering are also needed. Learning how to cultivate feelings of compassion toward perceived suffering seems to be a promising way for dealing with such negative emotions (see 2.4.3 and 4.5.3).

#### Avoiding cost

Empathy can have a toll on the empathizer – be it monetary, emotional, time consuming, or even life threatening. Zaki (2014) has cited eleven studies that have provided conclusive experimental proof that people are motivated to avoid empathy to save costs. All the studies cited have designed experiments around avoiding monetary costs which were executed in laboratories.

Sometimes, out of *empathic concern*, individuals even risk or give their life to help a suffering being. This behavior has been witnessed many a times among human being but also among primates (de Waal 2008). In that sense, empathy has caused the individual to pay the ultimate price. Persons, having a heroic streak, might make a conscious effort to avoid the cost of empathy, though no studies exist as to my knowledge, to prove this hypothesis.

The avoidance of the emotional costs of empathy could be more relevant for designing empathy development trainings for leaders and should be investigated further. Especially in organizations that expect employees to perform a lot of emotional labor as it is (Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2012; Cossette and Hess 2015; Grandey 2000), avoiding the emotional toll of *personal distress* as a possible product of empathy (see 2.4.4) could be a strong motive for certain people and should be addressed during such a program. Considering that a culture of support is especially important in said organizations (Eisenberger et al. 1997; Howes et al. 2000), leaders that do not shun empathy are of great importance.



Empathy can be time-consuming – especially when *empathic listening* is involved<sup>5</sup>. This is not only true for laboratory situations where participants are kept for hours but for many real-life situations as well. Often, one has to make the choice whether to spend time and empathize with a colleague's plight or return to one's desk to get work done. In organizations that experience a heavy work load and where members are under constant pressure to get the work done in time, the motivation to avoid time consuming empathy, could play a major role and should be further investigated. In any case, good arguments should be presented in empathy development programs for leaders why time spent empathizing with employees and co-workers is time well invested.

#### Avoid interference with competition

To prove that avoiding interference with competition is a motive for avoiding empathy Zaki (2014) has cited forty-six studies, though many of those are not directly related to the field of empathy research. Only two studies have looked at *situation selection* as strategy for empathy avoidance in this context. *Attention modulation* and *appraisal* were investigated as strategies in the remaining forty-four studies.

When put in a situation of competition, especially between groups, most people seem to have a strong motive to avoid empathy or, on the contrary, resort to counterempathy (Lanzetta and Englis 1989). *Empathic concern* is displayed predominantly to in-group members and this mechanism works better the less is known about the out-group member (Hein et al. 2010)<sup>6</sup>.

The impact of these findings on organizational empathy development programs will have to be carefully examined. Depending on the type of organization (governmental, non-governmental, profit-oriented, non-profit oriented, multinational corporation, small to mid-sized corporation, cooperatives, educational institutions), it will be necessary to investigate what stance the organizational culture has on competition – among its members within the organization and towards outsiders (Schein 1985) in order to design an appropriate empathy development program for leaders.

Highly competitive organizations like international consulting firms where competition is very high among its members will have different opinions towards empathy trainings for their leaders than, for example, non-profit palliative care hospices. The former might be afraid that their leaders will lose their competitive edge when being trained in empathy while the latter might be more interested in very specific questions like learning how to avoid compassion-fatigue whereas competition, in- and out-group oriented, might not be an issue at all.

It will be interesting to see, to what extent leaders can switch from avoiding empathizing with negotiation partners in a competitive situation which could be harmful to the organizational goal of maximizing profit to approaching empathy when supporting a colleague which could be in line with the organizational goal of maintaining the employability of its members. This kind of mental flexibility, when applicable, must be considered an additional developmental goal of an empathy training program for leaders.

For organizations that foster a strong culture of inner-organizational competition increasing the empathic abilities of its members can be detrimental to organizational goals for other reasons, too. As has been shown in experiments, an increase in *perspective-taking* might result in more egoistical behavior in competitive contexts while in cooperative contexts this effect is dampened (Epley et al. 2006). Of course, the study is only concerned with the cognitive aspect of empathy and has not tested the hypothesis regarding *emotional empathy*.

#### Approach capitalization

For this motive Zaki (2014) has found empiric evidence in seventeen studies. These deal with the benefits an individual derives from capitalizing on positive empathy. That a joy shared is a joy doubled, is at least in Northern Europe proverbial and there seem to be scientific proof for it. Observers can be seen to shun unhappy or suffering objects and, similarly, be observed to approach targets that display positive emotions (Zaki 2014) – “leeching” on their good mood.

Following current discussions about empathy (Bloom 2013; Prinz 2011), it seems that empathy is mostly associated with negative emotions. As has been shown so far, motivation is the key to feeling and showing empathy. Instructing participants of empathy trainings about the possibility of capitalizing affectionately on the positive emotions of their targets could be a motivational booster to become more empathic. While precautions must be met when interacting with negatively affected targets to avoid *emotional contagion*, the latter effect will be welcomed by most observers when it comes to empathic joy. Except for some devotees of Hindu and Buddhist monastic traditions, who try to avoid any kind of affect, most people are in pursuit of happiness.

Whether capitalizing on the positive affects of targets has any effects on the display of helping behavior, has been examined closely by Smith et al. (1989) who presented a third way in the empathy-altruism/self-other-merging/negative-state-relief discussion (Batson 1997; Neuberg et al. 1997; Cialdini et al. 1997). Participants were either empathically aroused or primed to stay objective as far as possible and, alternatively, informed whether they received feedback from the subject they have helped or not. The expectation of seeing the subject happy after her sorrows had been alleviated only motivated empathically aroused participants to show significantly more empathic concern toward the subject.

Helping also occurred when no feedback of the subject was announced and when participants were primed to stay detached from the subject but was slightly higher when the “detached” participants were given a chance to experience empathic joy. Another study found a correlation between offering instrumental and emotional support to others and increased longevity (Brown et al. 2003).

The results of this studies will be important for this work as well. When an organization decides to employ interventions to become a more empathic organization as well as to increase the motivation for empathy and aptitude for *empathic behavior* on an individual level, it should make sure that empathically primed members of that organization get a chance to partake in empathic joy to reap the full effect of the measures taken (see 4.5.2).

### Approach affiliation

Twenty-three studies were consulted by Zaki (2014) to support his claim that people approach empathy with that motive. While *approaching capitalization* is focused on the rather self-centered desire to have a good mood, the empathic motive *approaching affiliation* caters to a fundamental human need – that of belonging to a social group. Human beings are generally motivated to form social groups with other beings (Maslow 1981) and empathy could be seen as a plausible means to attain this end. It has long been discussed that empathy has both ultimate and proximate bases (Preston and de Waal 2002) and from that viewpoint, a personal motive to approach empathy to be part of a group would not be surprising.

Zaki proposes that:

*A motivated model holds that observers should seek empathy even when it is painful, provided that such empathy allows them to approach affiliation and strengthen social bonds. Furthermore, observers should be most motivated to empathize with others when they feel socially isolated and thus crave affiliation. Finally, affiliative motives should be most salient when targets are desirable (e.g., high-status or socially close) affiliative partners. (2014, p. 1629)*

Unfortunately, not much research seems to have been undertaken that directly addresses the above theories. The research directed at the empathy regulation strategies of *situation selection* and *appraisal* is quite sparse – in Zaki's estimation (2014). I, too, did not come across studies supporting this point during my own review of the literature. More evidence was found for the *approaching affiliation* motive with regulative strategy *attention modulation* (Zaki 2014): the more affiliation is desired, the more attention is directed at targets resulting in more *empathic mimicry*, better *empathic accuracy* and intensified *empathic behavior*.

Hein's et al. (2010) research finds evidence for the *approaching affiliation* motive. They were experimenting with football (soccer) fans and found that *empathic concern* is predominantly displayed towards supporters of the same team which then led to costly helping behavior in favor of fellow team members. The paper was not researching the motivational factors of empathy but rather how empathy, once generated, motivates helping behavior.

Nevertheless, it also demonstrated how group affiliation motivates participants to *appraise* information about other participants empathically and maintain these social bonds, which has also be shown in other research (Levine et al. 2005). Interestingly, the parochial nature of empathy was transgressed in Hein's et al. experiments when personal information on the rival supporters were supplied which then increased the motivation to be empathic again.

### Approaching desirability

For the sixth empathy motive Zaki (2014) has found support in only six papers. *Approaching desirability* means that people seek empathy because they regard it as a desirable trait themselves. People, regarding empathy as a valuable trait, will act empathically even if it might be painful for them at times just to maintain the self-image of an empathic person.

In his definition of the motive *approaching desirability* Zaki includes the instance where people approach empathy because group culture deems it desirable. It is hard to distinguish this motive from *approaching affiliation*. If empathy is approached for the sole reason that a particular group or subsection of it regards empathic behavior as a desirable trait, acting this way would mean that an individual is seeking affiliation with that group. Somebody, who does not care to be part of a particular group, usually does not sacrifice individual values to conform to that group's norms. As the desire to be part of a group is most of the time greater than individual considerations of desirability concerning behavioral traits (Schein 1985), the motive *approaching desirability* will apply only to a limited number of instances in the spectrum of human behavior. As a matter of fact, five of the six studies that Zaki (2014) cites in this context are explicitly dealing with the effect social norms and categorizations have on *empathic accuracy* and *empathic behavior*.

Tarrant et al. (2009), for example, conducted three experiments to show the effects of social categorization on the experience of empathy towards ingroup and outgroup members. They did not examine how, when and with whom empathy triggers helping behavior, but whether empathy was experienced. When participants were told that it is the group's norm to be empathic toward an individual from an outgroup or towards the outgroup as a whole, experiences of empathy increased with the observers. It was not the empathy, that was desirable in itself, but conformity to group norms and the resulting reassurance that one belongs to the group.

While in the above reviewed paper the experience of empathy was under scrutiny, Klein and Hodges (2001) examined gender differences in empathic accuracy. After having established that *empathic accuracy* is determined by familiarity with the target as well as with the motivation to be empathic with the target, they researched how that motivation could be altered. When offering money as a reward to be empathic female participants became more empathic and male participants as empathic as their female counterparts.

The authors concluded that the motivation to conform to traditional gender roles motivated female participants to be more empathic than their male counterparts. By offering remuneration as incentive to be *empathically accurate*, motivation defined by gender roles changed. As in the paper above, it was not trait empathy that motivated people to be empathic but remuneration that changed people's gender roll defined motivation to be empathic. These findings have very interesting implications for the topic at hand. If remuneration is all it takes, to increase empathy in participants, empathy trainings may be unnecessary and bonuses for empathic behavior will do the job.

The study done by Thomas and Maio (2008) directly proves Zaki's (2014) point by examining the effects of desirability on *empathic accuracy* and not of the desire to conform to group norms. An increase in desirability of empathy increased the motivation to be empathic, which in turn improved the *empathic accuracy* for easy-to-understand objects but not for difficult ones. Nevertheless, empathy is still treated within the realm of traditional gender roles.

Studies have been done to show that altruism increases the attractiveness for potential mates (e.g. Farrelly et al. 2016), though not – at least to my knowledge - in connection with empathy.

Since empathy is one of the main factors that triggers altruistic behavior, it could have the same effect. For the approach motive *desirability* to work, it will have to become widely known, that empathy is (perceived) as sexy. Further research into this matter would be highly interesting as it could boost the demand for empathy trainings greatly.

### 2.9.3 Motivated empathy

Although empathy has automatic components, it seems safe to conclude, that the motivational aspect plays a great role in the experience of empathy. This fact can provide a viable angle to increase the quality and quantity of *empathic behavior* either for an individual or for whole group. Studies have also been reviewed, where a change in group norms was used to this end. When designing empathy development programs to work on an individual level as well as on an organizational level, these findings should be kept in mind.

Beside motives, the mindsets individuals hold about empathy greatly influences their ability to experience and show *empathic behavior* as well: people who believe that empathic abilities are fixed rather than developable, break down easy in situations where empathy is hard to show (as with out-group members), whereas people who believe in the malleability of empathy fare much better in similar situations (Schumann et al. 2014).

Working with the mindset individuals hold about empathy, could be yet another angle to develop the experience of empathy and *empathic behavior*. As Schumann et al. (2014) have shown, simply disseminating the information that empathy is not fixed but malleable has brought about a change in empathic behavior.

### 2.10 Empathy as a multidimensional concept

For this dissertation, I would like to use the broad definition of empathy that encompasses the different phenomena that have been described in this chapter.

*There is no doubt that the construct of empathy is useful at the phenomenological level—we need words to navigate the social world. Yet it may be too complex to be both meaningful and useful for sound research in affective and social neuroscience. (Decety 2011, p. 104)*

Though there are valid arguments for a narrow definition of empathy as proposed by Vignemont and Singer (2006), the review of the literature makes it clear that all forms of empathy – be they cognitive, emotional, on the motor level, directed towards oneself, or just in the fantasy – have their uses for the person employing them as well as for the objects.

As participants of empathy trainings will have different dispositions concerning empathy as well as learning styles, being able to employ a variety of interventions that are directed at different aspects of the empathy construct could prove useful. On a professional level and especially for leadership development, the development of *cognitive* and *emotional empathy* skills as well as subsidiary abilities like *emotional regulation*, *self-empathy*, and *empathic accuracy* make sense and help to create a well-rounded social skill-set.

### 3 Training empathy

Historically, Carl Rogers most likely gave the strongest impetus for the development of empathy trainings as he stressed the importance of empathy for psychological counseling (see 2.1.1). It was only logical, that counselors who started in this profession, received training in empathy and many such programs were developed thereon – especially in the early 1970s (Hill and Lent 2006). Roger’s disciples, Truax and Carkhuff, followed a systematic approach in designing said programs and carefully tested them for their efficacy (Baker et al. 1990). While in the beginning of training for empathy the focus was mainly on psychological counsellors, training programs for other professions were developed soon after – medical professionals like doctors, nurses, teachers, and social workers as well as for children and adolescents.

Applying more and more refined scientific methods of measurements, the effects of those interventions could be demonstrated better and better. Singer and Klimecki (2014), for example, used fMRI-machine to visualize the neural changes in the brain, that were effected by empathy and compassion interventions. Not all of the studies listed below, have used technological or, for that matter, quantitative methods of measuring the effect, which say little about the inner experience of the participants. To that end, qualitative method have been employed quite frequently.

#### 3.1 Overview over existing programs

Conveniently, in the last thirty years quite a lot of meta-analysis and narrative reviews have been done that put existing empathy intervention programs under scrutiny. For this review, I have excluded overview studies that focused on highly specialized studies on increasing empathy for children, sex offenders, etc. Hill and Lent (2006), for example, have extensively reviewed a large number of studies focusing on increasing helping skills in counselors. Empathy was only part of the curriculum of most studies and was tested very much in the context of the counselor-patient-setting. McKinstry et al. (2006) narratively reviewed studies that aimed at increasing doctor-patient trust. Here too, empathy was only part of a skill set to be increased by various interventions. I have also not included studies that were specifically tailored for client populations with empathy defects like autism and psychopathy.

The studies listed in Table 1 were found during my review of the literature on empathy and not during a systematic research on overview studies on empathy intervention – which – technically – would be a meta-study-review. I made use of the references given in the narrative studies and meta-analyses listed below – trusting that these researchers did their literature research well. In the light of limited time and the actual focus of this work – the qualitatively evaluation of the outcome of an empathy intervention for leaders – this shortcut seems forgivable.

In addition to reviewing narrative reviews and meta-studies, several selected training programs are reviewed to get a good insight into the methods of training and evaluation employed.

Table 1. Narratives studies and meta-analysis on empathy trainings

Author(s)	Kind of review	# of studies	Databases searched	Range	Client population	Discussion of efficacy	Effect of moderator on outcome
<b>(Batt-Rawden et al. 2013)</b>	Systematic review	18	Scopus, EM-BASE, PubMed, PsychINFO, Web of Science, CINAHL	2004 to 2012	Medical students	For 15 quantitative studies a mean effect size of 0.23 was calculated. 3 qualitative studies reported an increase in empathy	No moderators discussed
<b>(Brunero et al. 2010)</b>	Narrative review	17	CINAHL, Medline. PsychINFO, Google Scholar	1976 to 2009	Nurses both under- and postgraduate	10 studies reported significant increases, 3 no significant increases, and 4 were unclear	No moderator discussed
<b>(Butters 2010)</b>	Meta-analysis	24	CINAHL, ERIC, MEDLINE, PsychINFO, CSA Illumina, OVID	1977 to 2008	Mixed: couples, adolescent sex offenders, children, parents, prisoners, elderly, etc.	For the studies included a mean effect size of 0.911, though some outliers were included with large effect sizes of 1.793, 1.674, 2.271, and 4.104. One study included had negative effect on empathy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The way empathy is measured effects training outcome.</li> <li>- Individual trainings show greater effect than couple/group interventions.</li> <li>- Inclusion of positive empathy* increases effect.</li> <li>- Study quality moderates the outcome.</li> <li>- Programs with psychodrama, homework, too many ingredients, and video watching were less effective.</li> <li>- The more males were in the study the less effective it was.</li> <li>- A mix of training methods showed no effect on the outcome.</li> <li>- Duration of the intervention showed no effect on the outcome.</li> <li>- Trainer modelling empathy showed no effect.</li> <li>- Setting of the empathy training showed no effect.</li> </ul>

<b>(Chiu Ming Lam et al. 2011)</b>	Narrative review	29	Education Full Text, ProQuest Education Journals, Web of Knowledge, ERIC	1975 to 2008	Divorcees, students, medical students, social workers, couples, psychology students, lay persons in church, teachers	Of the 29 studies reviewed 25 reported significant increase in empathy, two studies were qualitative, and two reported no significant change	No moderators discussed
<b>(Dexter 2012)</b>	Narrative review and meta-analysis	29 in the narrative review and 94 in the meta-analysis	C2-Specter, CINAHL, CogNet Library, Dissertation Abstracts, Embase, ERIC, ISI Web of Science, JSTOR, LILACS, PubMed, NARIC'S REHBDATA, PEP, ProQuest, PsychInfo via OVID	1957 to 2010	Mixed:nurses, educator, psychologists, medical professionals, teachers, counselors, social workers	In the meta-analysis 47 studies reported significant increase in empathy, 21 reported no sig. increase, and 26 reported mixed results; in the narrative review 23 studies reported an increase and 6 no change in empathy. 17 studies were part of both the narrative review and the meta-analysis, so that a total of 77 studies were examined.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clients from all fields except counselors showed increases in empathy.</li> <li>- When empathic accuracy, e. understanding, e. behavior, and e. communication was used as e. construct, trainings were more effective.</li> <li>- Effect size is higher, when clients or observers rated the progress of trainee than self-rating.</li> <li>- Empathy measures strongly influence effect size.</li> <li>- Didactic and experiential training approaches produce largest effect; other approaches that included didactic and/or experiential elements were also significant, as is didactic alone.</li> <li>- Duration of training is not a significant moderator.</li> </ul>
<b>(Kelm et al. 2014)</b>	Systematic review	64	PubMed, EMBASE, Web of Science, PsycINFO	1977 to 2014	Physicians	42 studies reported significant increase in empathy, 14 no increase, and 8 some measures with increase and some not	Effect size of moderators were not calculated. The importance of study design quality is discussed at length.
<b>(Kiosses et al. 2016)</b>	Systematic review	17	PubMed, Cochrane Database of Clinical Trails, Scopus, PsychINFO	1979 to 2012	Physicians, oncologists, residents, medical students, nurses	10 of the reviewed studies supplied adequate data to calculate effect size. 8 of those reported significant increase in empathy. The overall effect size was 0.69.	Type of intervention and modality of outcome rating is analyzed as moderator of effect size. No conclusion regarding effectiveness of intervention is drawn. Behavioral training specifically for empathy shows the smallest effect in comparison with control group.



<b>(Stepien and Baernstein 2006)</b>	Narrative review	13	PubMed	1977 to 2004	14 studies with medical students, 1 study with medical students and physicians	7 studies analyzed the outcome quantitatively, of those 5 reported significant increase in empathy. 1 study where quantitatively no increase was found, reported increase using qualitative methods. 1 study reported quantitative as well as qualitative increases in empathy. 4 studies used qualitative methods exclusively and reported increase in empathy. For 6 of the quantitative studies effect sizes were calculated	Effect size of moderators were not calculated. Type of empathy interventions were discussed: 4 of 13 focused on empathic behavior and interpersonal skills, 4 on literature and theater, 1 on reflective writing, 1 on patient visits, 2 on audio-lectures, 1 on spirituality and wellness
<b>(van Teding Berkhout and Malouff 2016)</b>	Meta-analysis	19	PsychINFO, ProQuest, SAGE, Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses	1973 to 2012	University students, children with autism, religious lay-persons, teachers, physicians, patients, high school students, senior citizens, aggressive female teens, clergy men, medical students	All studies reported increase in empathy in comparison to control group. Overall effect size was 0.63 (Hedge's g) without an outlier: one study with religious lay-person reported an effect size of 5.83, in which morality and prosocial behavior was empathized prior to the training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training health professionals and university students was more effective than training youths or other types of adults.</li> <li>- Studies using other-reports short higher effect sizes than studies using self-reports. - Compensation was linked to higher effect sizes.</li> <li>- Empathy training studies involving all four components of behavioral skills training (instruction, modeling, practice, and feedback, had higher, but not significantly higher effect sizes than other studies.</li> <li>- Studies targeting cognitive and behavioral, or cognitive, affective, and behavioral showed higher, but not significantly higher effect sizes then studies targeting cognitive and affective empathy.</li> <li>- Training length is not as significant moderator.</li> </ul>

<b>(Weisz and Zaki 2017)</b>	Narrative review	19	Search parameters not revealed	1972 to 2015	Female college students, Arab students, medical students, physicians, adults with Asperger, adults, sex offenders, children with behavioral/emotional problems	The review reports outcome of the studies only qualitatively. All but two studies report an increase in empathy and/or empathic behavior. One study reports mixed results and one found no change in empathy after the intervention.	Moderators are not discussed. The paper stresses the importance that intervention not only tackle empathy and empathic behavior but also focus on the underlying motive for empathy to get more effective and lasting empathy interventions.
* The author does not define what “positive empathy” is.							

I have reviewed a total of 10 overview studies for this dissertation, which in turn reviewed a total of 234 empathy intervention studies. Many studies were reviewed by multiple authors. While some overview studies only included studies that were tested for study quality, calculated effect-sizes and discussed moderators (Butters 2010; Dexter 2012; Kelm et al. 2014; Kiosses et al. 2016; van Teding Berkhout and Malouff 2016), other studies simply gave a good overview over existing intervention describing client population and discussing the differences of these interventions.

The studies reviewed by the overview studies used quantitative as well as qualitatively methods to measure the outcome of the intervention – the former being the method used by the majority. Of these 175 studies 129 reported an increase in empathy in the client population. 29 studies reported no increase in empathy, 4 mixed results meaning that only some instruments assessed an increase in empathy while others did not, 4 studies only a slight increase, 2 studies reported no or unclear results. Not all of the 175 studies used randomized control groups to test for training effectiveness and eight studies used qualitative method to evaluate the outcome of the training.

### 3.1.1 Discussion of moderators

Four of the 10 overview studies listed in Table 1 (BU = Butters 2010; DE = Dexter 2012; VT = van Teding Berkhout and Malouff 2016; KI = Kiosses et al. 2016) discussed moderators of outcome calculating effect sizes. Table 2 lists the different moderators that were discussed in the above-mentioned meta-analysis of empathy trainings. I will review the moderator discussion in detail as valuable information for designing empathy trainings can be gleaned from that discussion and help designing an effective empathy training.

#### 3.1.1.1 Client population

DE examined altogether 77 empathy studies in a narrative and a meta-analysis

Table 2. Moderators identified

Moderator	BU	DE	VT	KI
Client population	N	Y	Y	
- Age	N			
- Gender	Y/N			
- Ethnicity				
Type of intervention	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Mix of training methods	N	Y	N*	
- Duration of training	N	N	N	
- Trainer modelling empathy	N			
- Group size	N	N		
- Modality (individual/couple/group)	N			
Different empathy scales	Y	Y	Y	Y
- Self-rating/other-rating	Y	Y	Y	
Empathy construct training is based on		Y	Y	
Training compensation			Y	
- Voluntary or compulsory attendance	N			

\*Effects were higher, but not significantly  
 Y = the moderator had an effect on the training outcome  
 N = this moderator did not have a significant effect  
 Blank = the author(s) did not discuss this moderator

with a varied client population from 8 different professional fields which all profited from empathy trainings except participants from counseling. As of the 77 studies under scrutiny only 2 were exclusively for (high school) counselors, this result might not be overly reliable.

VT identified the client population as a moderator for the effect size as well: “Studies that involved training health professionals and university students showed significantly higher effect sizes than studies with youths or with other types of adults.” (2016, p. 37)

### *Age*

The age of the participants was often not reported in many studies so that a detailed analysis was not undertaken (DE) or because, for example, the children subject to the intervention were rather not representative of the general population of children due to behavioral deficiencies (VT), while KI did glean such details from some of the studies reviewed but did (or could) not calculate the effect size for it. BU, on the other hand, has analyzed this moderator but found no relationship between the age of the participants and the effect of the intervention. As a matter of fact, he concluded that empathy trainings work well across all different kinds of client populations.

### *Gender*

For the same reason, that age was not part of the moderator analysis some authors also did examine gender as variable (DE) or did not mention this moderator at all (KI and VT). The most interesting finding in this regard comes from BU, who discovered a relationship between two different modes of measuring empathy – self-report vs. observer report– and the gender specific effect size. Only, when empathy was assessed by others, did female-only group or mixed-gender groups show more increases in empathy after the intervention. This effect did not hold up, when the empathy was measured by self-report questionnaires, which could be attributed to traditional social norms according to which females are expected to be more empathic than men (s. 2.9).

### *Ethnicity*

Only BU addressed this subject and mentioned merely that ethnicity as moderator was not examined by any of the studies, he reviewed but that it would be worthwhile to do so since different intervention might not have the same effect across different ethnicity. All the overview studies reviewed here only looked at English publications, although at least some of the studies were done outside the US.

A cross-cultural comparison of the effect of empathy training would be highly interesting – especially between countries where empathy/compassion are deemed as important cultural/religious values and countries where preference is given to other values like personal achievement over empathy/compassion.

### 3.1.1.2 *The intervention as moderator*

#### Type of intervention and mix of training methods

The influence of the type of intervention on the effect of the whole program was not analyzed in depth by all the authors. KI concluded that empathy training is most effective when empathy is not isolated as a skill but trained in the context of a broader communication training along with other communication skills.

Categorizing the different types of interventions employed in the studies under review along the line of behavioral skill training based on Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura 1977) was DE's approach: didactic (instructing participants about empathy and how to behave empathically), modeling (learning by imitation), experiential, and feedback. A combination of all the four ways of teaching empathy was most often found in the studies Dexter reviewed. It is the combination of didactic and experiential methods that produced the largest positive effects. Taken alone, only didactic methods were effective.

VT results did not match DE's a 100% as their analysis found that only when all the above-mentioned elements of a behavioral skills training were combined (didactic, modeling, experiential, and feedback) the effect of the intervention was highest and lower, when an element was missing.

BU, on the other hand, categorized the interventions employed in the twenty-four studies he reviewed as follows: audiotape, videotape, role-play, exposure to victims, visualization, homework, written assignments, reading materials, psycho education, and psychodrama. After partitioning the data into self-report and observer-report, all the different intervention ingredients except psycho education contributed to an increase in empathy.

Contrary to DE and VT in the above quoted works, BU found no increase in empathy when the trainer modeled it. Moreover, his meta-analysis showed that combining many training ingredients did not necessarily increase the effectiveness of the intervention: "Programs that provide only one or two empathy activities seem to be as effective as programs that have five or more activities. The lack of a relationship between the number of training ingredients and treatment effect suggests that programs need not be complicated and multifaceted to be effective. It could be that one or two empathy activities with depth, rather than breadth, may be most effective in increasing empathy." (2010, p. 117)

Hill and Lent, whose meta-analysis covered training studies aimed at increasing helping skills in counselors and was not included in my overview for covering too broad a range of training topics, are more in line with the findings of DE and VT:

*The results of our meta-analysis confirmed the conclusions reached in the narrative reviews about the effectiveness of instruction, modeling, and feedback for teaching trainees to use exploration skills. These 3 training methods, in the aggregate, produced a large effect relative to no training, with modeling outperforming instruction and feedback, and multimethod training outperforming single-method training. (2006, p. 162)*

Another important aspect in this regard, has been only mentioned by Hill and Lent (2006): the trainer plays an important part in not only providing the didactic frame but also by modeling the desired behavior and by facilitating experiential learning experiences.

For designing my empathy training, I will side with Hill and Lent, DE, and VT and also include modeling as part of the curriculum, especially since modeling is an important part of the Behavioral Modeling Training paradigm (see section 5.3.3).

#### Duration of the intervention

DE, BU, and VT found no relationship using meta-regression with the studies that provided sufficient information regarding the duration of the programs between the length of the intervention and the effect on empathy increase. Interestingly enough, the length of the intervention varied greatly, but was often not reported in detail. It ranged from as short as a third of an hour to courses spread out over multiple semesters.

BU hypothesizes that the length of the intervention might not be totally unrelated to its effect, but that the effect is often measured shortly after the intervention depicting more an initial rise in empathy than a lasting change. VT, on the other hand, speculates that the differences in client population might be responsible for this phenomenon – the length of an intervention appropriate for children and students might be too short for physicians and nurses. Unfortunately, there is not enough data to further explore this hypothesis. For the topic of this dissertation it would have been interesting to know what the ideal length of an intervention for the development of empathy in leaders would be. At least it is reassuring, that a one-day intervention as planned in this research project, will be well within this time-frame.

Researchers have experimented for a long time with empathy inductions in the form of text snippets or short audio/video material that produced (temporary) increases in empathic behavior (e.g. Batson et al. 1997), while Schumann et al. (2014) induced a fixed or malleable theory of empathy in participants by letting them read an essay to produce the same effect. Schumann et al. are positive that the manipulation of the theory of empathy (whether it is malleable or fixed) can produce lasting effects – when employed alongside behavioral interventions. Empathy trainings – even if very short – most certainly partake from the empathy induction effect by arousing empathic feelings, by increasing the motivation for empathy through informing about the benefits of empathy, by experiencing the benefit in role-plays, etc. Last but not least, an empathy intervention in itself (when participants actually know what they are taking part in) is promoting the belief that empathy is malleable since it would be somewhat unlikely to train for empathy if it could not be trained. By that logic alone (Schumann et al. 2014), empathy interventions are effective.

#### Group size and modality

BU found no indication that group size had any influence on the effectiveness of the intervention which matches DE's findings who did not identify group size as a moderator, as well. VT and KI have not mentioned group size, so it remains unclear whether they simply did not gather data in this regard or have not found it to be a moderator.

The modality of the intervention, whether the program is attended by individuals, couples, or group, which strongly predetermines the group size, has also been taken into close consideration by BU and the above quoted findings remain true. Though it might be more cost effective to teach a whole group empathy at once the interventions in itself are as effective as when done with individuals. Both group and individual training sessions are more effective than sessions for couples which might be bad news for couples' therapy. This is somewhat astonishing since Bandura's social learning theory (1977) suggests that learning new behavioral skills in groups is more effective. Here an increase in empathy might have been measured independently from its behavioral side.

As the group sizes differed in this research project (1, 2, and 8 participants), it is good to know, that this variation is not compromising the effectiveness of the interventions.

### 3.1.1.3 Different empathy scales – self-/other-rated – and effect size

All authors but KI who did not analyze this moderator found that the usage of different empathy scales had quite a strong relationship on the measured outcome of the intervention.

BU states that studies where the outcome of the intervention was rated by observers showed a much higher effect than programs where self-report questionnaires were used. Although there was some variance between the different empathy measures used, the difference between self- and other-rated measured was by far the largest and eclipsed the difference within these two broad categories. BU went so far as to partition the data into self-rated and other-rated.

*Once the data are sorted by self-report and observer-report, no moderators show significant heterogeneity in both partitioned data sets. The lack of a robust variable that remains significant in both sets of data supports the decision to view the data separately by outcome type and that the overall results reported in the previous section should be interpreted with caution. Within each set of outcome data there are some moderators that show group differences in either the self-report or the observer-reported data, but not in both. (Butters 2010, p. 96)*

DE supports BU statement that increases in empathy are rated higher by external observers than when self-rating instruments are employed. She also adds another category which produces an even higher effect than observers – client-ratings where the recipients of empathic behavior/communication rate the empathizer.

VT analyses brought another correlation to light: when the outcome measured only increases in empathy and not of other constructs, the effect was highest. That other-rated measures produced greater effect sizes than self-rated measures were also supported by her.

Among the meta-studies mentioned in this section 8 of the 243 studies used qualitative methods to evaluate the outcome of the intervention. These were not included in the meta-analyses by BU, DE, VT, and KI for obvious reasons, but yielded interesting results, too. Of these 8,

7 reported an increase in empathy. Out of these 7, in 6 studies interviews, essays, and group discussion were analyzed qualitatively by external observers. For rating the success of the intervention 1 study simply relied on informal feedback. The 1 study that did not report an increase in empathy used a qualitative self-report method.

#### 3.1.1.4 *Empathy construct the training is targeting*

As the review of the literature in section 2 has shown, the empathy construct is defined in many different ways which is reflected by the variety of training approaches. Two meta-studies have found the empathy construct to be a moderator for the effect size.

DE has identified different empathy constructs in the ninety-four studies she analyzed:

*... affective empathy, emotional empathy, empathic accuracy, empathic behavior, empathic behavior/empathic communication, empathic communication, empathic understanding, empathic understanding/empathic communication, multidimensional empathy, and trait empathy. (Dexter 2012, p. 70)*

The most frequently targeted construct was *empathic communication* which DE defines quoting Ickes (1993) and Rogers (1975). This concept corresponds with the *perceived empathy* (see section 2.6) that Hodges (2010) has coined and takes into account that *empathic understanding* (be it on the emotional or cognitive plane) is one thing, but only when that understanding is communicated the target of empathy actually knows that he/she has been empathized with. *Empathic communication* is part of *behaving empathically* (see section 2.6).

Of the 10 different constructs mentioned above DE analysis has shown that 4 constructs were responsible for significant effect sizes: *empathic accuracy, empathic behavior, empathic communication, and empathic understanding*.

VT found that studies that targeted *affective* and *cognitive empathy* showed the least high effect size. Studies concerned with all aspects of empathy (affective, cognitive and behavioral) had higher effect sized than the previous approach but lower effect sizes as when only *cognitive* and *behavioral empathy* was the focus.

On first glance, the results of both meta-studies partially coincide. Both have found that studies where at least part of the curriculum targeted behavioral empathy – as is also done by programs fostering *empathic communication* – produced the highest effect sizes. What the cognitive component are that the studies VT has analyzed trained for, remains open. DE did not mention *cognitive empathy* as a construct that was specifically targeted in the training studies. It might be argued that empathic behavior/communication needs an affective or cognitive empathic base to be more than play-acting (see 2.6) and that most training programs will most likely include module improving these skills.

Taking a hint from these findings, the training program of this project will also target all the components of the empathy construct and, most important of all, *behavioral empathy* as the intervention is supposed to help leaders in their daily behavioral routines.



### 3.1.1.5 Training compensation and voluntary vs. compulsory attendance

VT has examined the question whether participants show greater progress when being paid for attending the training than when doing it for free. Academic credits proved to be the highest moderator (and/or motivator) followed by monetary rewards. Luckily for this project, studies that did not provide any compensation still produced effect sizes of 0.49 Hedges' *g*. While it is only one third of the effect size that academic credits effectuated, significant increases can still be produced.

It might be worthwhile to investigate whether similar high effect sizes can be achieved when empathy training intervention are placed within training programs that serve a similar function as academic curricula and further the career advancement of participants like mandatory leadership development programs that prepare selected employees for managerial responsibilities.

BU has found that both participants that attended voluntarily and participants that were forced to attend empathy programs like prisoners and sexual offenders benefitted from training programs significantly. Nevertheless, the effect size for those courses were participants were voluntarily attending were almost twice as high.

This finding again is good news for this research work. Although motivation plays an important part for empathy (see 2.9), training effects can be seen even when the training is not attended voluntarily. In the setting of human resource development, employees are often mandated to take part in the organization's development curriculum especially when striving to enter the organization's higher management realms (Felfe and Franke 2014).

## 3.2 Empathy studies using qualitative evaluation methods

Out of the 234 studies that were reviewed in the above listed meta-analysis and review studies, 8 used qualitative methods to evaluate the effect of empathy interventions. As the present work will also employ qualitative methods, taking a closer look at the different methodologies employed is recommended to learn for one's own work (Yin 2011).

### 3.2.1 Nerdrum and Rønnestad 2002

#### Objective

Increasing empathy was only the secondary objective of the study. Primarily, the learning process itself was under scrutiny:

*How do Norwegian trainees experience their learning process and the pedagogy of a training program for therapist empathy? In launching an exploration into a sparsely researched topic, we were particularly interested in searching for common themes in the trainees' experiences. (2002, p. 611)*

When being asked to develop a program to strengthen the trainees' empathic communication skills, Nerdrum took up the opportunity to investigate the perspective of the trainees who

were on the receiving side of the program. The other programs exclusively measured the effectiveness of the interventions employed either for the participants of the program itself or, as in the case of teachers, therapists, medical professionals, etc., for the students/clients/patients of the participants.

#### Client population and trainers

Nerdrum's et al. much cited study was undertaken with twenty-three Norwegian lay and professional therapists who were randomly assigned to two training groups. The intervention itself was conducted in one group by Nerdrum and in the other group by an experienced social worker and trainer of helping skills.

#### Empathy intervention

The training employed a mix of didactic and experiential methods. A total of fifty-six training hours was divided into four monthly two-day training sessions. The didactic part contained lectures on the importance of empathy for the therapeutic process as well as on the empathy models of Barrett-Lennard (1981) and Goldstein & Michaels (1985) who view empathy as a multidimensional concept. Video-taped role-playing exercises combined with in-depth feedback from the trainers and the trainees were part of the experiential learning components. Actual practice with real clients facilitated the learning transfer.

#### Evaluation methods

The authors used "depth interviews" to collect data from 8 of the 23 participants of the training. The selection was done on the "principles of intensity sampling" (2002, p. 613): the chosen ones were deemed the most able to reflect on the training process.

One of the authors then coded the interview data according to basic principles of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1998) into categories and domains, which was then later discussed with the second author. Besides the grounded theory, Hill et al.'s (1997) consensual qualitative research was used for analyzing the data.

A couple of measures were taken to improve the credibility of the data: the interviews were transcribed by experienced research assistances and checked by the author. A summary of the interviews was read and approved by the participants. Interesting to note is the triple function of the primary author, who trained, interviewed and analyzed the data mainly by himself. The second author, though, helped him to "reflect his objectivity" (2002, p. 614).

#### Outcome

The study revealed highly interesting insights into the effects of an empathy training for the trainee him-/herself which will be very valuable for the work at hand. Participants, who were seasoned therapists, deemed the training a challenge as in the training process it became obvious to all interviewed that they weren't neither as effective nor empathic as they thought to be. Being more empathic proved to be demanding but seemed "to be perceived as necessary and important parts of the learning process" (2002, p. 618)

The training triggered deep reflection processes. Many interviewees reported to have made considerable progress after having gone through the training in comparison to colleagues who

haven't. Observing themselves in video-taped role-plays was mentioned often as a helpful method for improving one's empathic communication style. The trainer himself played an important role in the learning process as he was reported to have an "individualized, personal, noncritical, and empathic orientation toward the trainees" (2002, p. 621).

The authors conclude that a high level of program-intensity inducing the arousal of rather strong emotions facilitates the learning process of empathic communication.

### 3.2.2 DasGupta and Charon 2004

#### Objective

The study uses narrative writing to teach medical students empathy. What makes this approach novel is, that participants are not reflecting upon patient narratives but about their own/family medical history which, according to the authors, is a common reason for becoming a doctor.

#### Client population and trainers

The participants were all second-year medical students and all female which was probably due to the topic of the course – "Reading the Body, Writing the Body: Women's Illness Narratives." Eight took the course in 2002 and eight in 2003. The data collected in the courses was not analyzed separately.

The two authors assumed a triple role in the study: they designed the study, facilitated the course and analyzed the students' answers. Potential biases were reflected in the paper and the results deemed valid due to adhering to quality standards.

#### Empathy intervention

The courses were part of a larger humanities and medicine series. The students were asked to complete a "the reflective writing exercise [that] was designed to allow students to explore deeply their personal experiences of illness. In the initial assignment, participants wrote about either a personal illness experience or that of a family member or friend." (2004, p. 353) The facilitator requested the participants to continually rewrite their essays changing voice, for example, or adapting the plot to a new topic/ reading assignment.

Each week, students read aloud from their essays which formed the basis of the weekly group discussions. While in the first year five essays were written, in the following year the number was reduced to three.

#### Evaluation methods

Participants of both courses were asked to respond to a set of seven questions. The answers to these constituted the data of the qualitative analysis. The two authors independently analyzed the data according to content and themes. Afterwards, the results were compared and a consensus regarding major thematic issues achieved. The methodology underlying the qualitative analysis was not disclosed in detail.

## Outcome

In the light of the data collected, the authors concluded that by first reflecting on their own patient histories and then, later on, getting the chance to closely listen and discuss the patient histories of their fellow students, the participants honed their self-reflection skills and raised their awareness for their patient narratives resulting in increased levels of empathy for themselves and for the patient.

The study gave strong indication that reflecting on one's (or close one's) patient history is an effective way of teaching empathy to medical students.

### 3.2.3 Henry-Tillman et al. 2002

#### Objective

Testing a novel way to teach medical students empathy is the objective of this study. Instead of using a lecture to help students to understand patients better, an experiential learning approach was tried. Students were asked to help patients to navigate throughout the clinic as part of the learning experience and later on take part in a group discussion.

#### Client population and trainer

The client population consisted of one-hundred-forty-six first year medical students of an US American medical college. The group discussions were led by program evaluators. Further information on the program evaluators was not disclosed.

#### Empathy intervention

The participants were asked to function as a Patient Navigator and shadow a patient throughout his/her treatment. How long that would be, was not stated in the study. Supposedly, the students shadowed the patient for an afternoon. Not all students were able to shadow a patient as there were not always enough patients available. Instead, they were given other tasks like watching treatments.

#### Evaluation methods

A week after the visit to the clinic, students met in small groups to discuss their experiences and how they relate to empathy. A surgeon and a program evaluator led these sessions. The students were asked several standardized questions and were encouraged to engage in a group discussion which was videotaped and later analyzed by the program evaluator "using the principle components technique and a process outcomes matrix" (2002, p. 660).

The group discussion seemed to have served multiple purposes: to educate students about empathy, to help students understand their experiences and put them into perspective and to mine data for evaluating the outcome. The methodology for the latter was not described in detail. The results of the qualitative analysis are presented in a table. A quantitative analysis was also mentioned – not in detail, though, as it did not show significant results.

## Outcome

Of the 146 students, 62 answered the question whether they were learning about empathy. Of the 62, 70% “felt empathy with the patient”, 15% were “not sure they felt empathy, and 15% “did not feel empathy” (2002, p. 661).

Although, the evaluation of the training effect for empathy was not very thorough, the teaching tool of shadowing, that Edgar Schein introduced as *Empathy Walk (1969)*, was once again evaluated and yielded positive results. Medical students were getting a good idea what it means to be a doctor, what it means to bring bad news to patients, and how patients are feeling when receiving bad news and when treated in an unempathic way. Even the 21% of the students who reported to have had negative experiences were able to learn from them.

### 3.2.4 Shapiro et al. 2004

## Objective

A method from the humanities, i.e. the study of literature, was used to increase empathy in first year medical students but also to measure the influence of said method on the students’ attitudes toward the humanities. The intervention’s effect was measured both quantitatively and qualitatively.

## Client population and trainer

Twenty-two students voluntarily participated in the study which males and females attended equally. The course was taught by a psychologist and a physician. The group and follow-up interviews as well as all the data analyzation were conducted by the first author. The students were divided into two groups starting the course at different times to check whether the regular education influenced the outcome.

## Empathy intervention

Reading different kind of literature with special emphasis on taking different perspectives formed the empathy intervention of the course “that addressed the following topics: doctor-patient relationship, physical examination, listening to patients, pain, sexuality, cross-cultural issues, lifestyle modification/noncompliance and geriatrics.” (2004, p. 76) The curriculum’s eight hours in total were divided into one hour bi-monthly sessions.

## Evaluation methods

Different pre- and post-intervention quantitative and qualitative measures were taken. The quantitative measures, which 16 of the 22 participants completed, comprised three assessments: the Empathy Construct Rating Scale (ECRS) by La Monica, the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) by Mehrabian et al. and a self-developed questionnaire that measured the changes in attitudes toward the humanities.

The qualitative measures consisted of a focus group, which was visited by all the participants and a follow-up interview, which nineteen took. The students were asked the following questions: (1) What is empathy? (2) How can study of the humanities improve understanding of the patient’s perspective? (3) How can the humanities make you a better physician? (4) How can the humanities help students cope with the experience of medical school? (2004, p.77)

The interview data was analyzed by the first author using different content analysis tools including Grounded Theory. The analysis was reviewed by the second author.

#### Outcome

The authors noted that there were limitations regarding the validity of the study due to the small sample size and the fact, that all participants came from the same university. Nevertheless, very interesting results were produced. Both, the quantitative and the qualitative side of the study nicely complemented each other.

The quantitative self-report measures showed that the intervention produced a significant increase in empathy as well as a changed attitude towards the humanities. Though the two courses started at different times throughout the semester, effects were similar, so that “it is possible to infer that exposure to the standard cognitive-behavioral method of instruction did not appear to improve empathy, at least according to student self-report.” (Shapiro et al. 2004, p. 81)

As the students showed higher increase from pre- to post-testing on the BEES scale, the authors concluded that the intervention is better at improving the emotional aspect of empathy rather than the cognitive and behavioral side that is better reflected with the ECRS scale.

The qualitative analysis could substantiate these findings. Though students maintained their previously hold concepts of empathy, they reported that it was easier for them to take the patients perspective after the intervention than before. Empathizing with the patient as in understanding hopes and needs was easier after these literary excursions. Many participants concluded that they thought they would be better physicians afterwards.

#### 3.2.5 Yuen et al. 2006

##### Objective

In this study a similar approach is chosen is in the study by Henry-Tillman et al. (2002). Medical students were asked to accompany geriatric teams at home visits to chronically ill patients. The intervention’s objective was to explore new ways to better prepare medical students for the care of chronically ill patients which – as the study cites sources – is an area that is lacking in medical education. Increasing empathy was not a pronounced objective of the intervention.

##### Client population and trainers

Students from Weill Cornell Medical College of the classes 2004, 2005, and 2006 were approached to take part in the study. The selections process is not described but it seems that the authors couldn’t afford to be picky. Fifty students agreed to participate in total. The mean age of the participants was  $27 \pm 3$ . 28 of the 50 participants were females.

Trainers were not employed in this intervention. As participants were asked to shadow experienced colleagues their behavior toward the patients formed an important part of the intervention and greatly influenced the learning experience of the participants. The author team reflected this (2006, p. 1783) but could not provide a solution to standardize the intervention as, supposedly, different geriatric teams were shadowed.

### Empathy intervention

The intervention consisted of shadowing a geriatric house-call team made up of a geriatrician, a nurse practitioner and a geriatric fellow. All participants took part in at least one visit of 45 min duration, 90% took part in two or more.

Part of the students' curriculum was a creative project that was supposed to help them focusing on personal thought and feelings that arouse during the visits to patients' homes. To what extent the creative project influenced participants in processing the empathic intervention was, unfortunately, not explored in the study.

### Evaluation methods

Participants were asked both quantifiable as well as open-ended questions by one researcher. The former were being analyzed using descriptive statistics, the latter were transcribed and "coded as distinct themes" (2006, p. 1779) using Grounded Theory (Corbin and Strauss 1998) as well as other methods (Miles and Huberman 1994).

### Outcome

The participants reported to have learned a great deal about the benefits of home care and the dynamics of the doctor-patient relationship. Besides that, participants also reported increases in empathy and perspective-taking just by having the opportunity to shadow the geriatric team and observe both the medical personnel and the patients interact.

*Key themes included increased empathy and respect for patients with chronic illness and increased sensitivity to their needs as individuals. Several respondents reported that seeing patients in the home setting helped break down stereotypes they held about older patients, as illustrated by this comment. (2006, p. 1781)*

18% of the participants reported an increase in empathy, 20% an increase in sensitivity towards the patients. The quotes from the participants cited in the paper at hand give a strong indication that the ability take the perspective of the patients was also increased by this intervention though it was not specifically mentioned in the text. 36% reported that they experienced the merits of developing a good and fast rapport with patients, which might also fall into the realm of *empathic communication* but was not investigated more closely.

It shows that researching the possibilities of increasing empathy through interventions was not a pronounced purpose of this study. Other study analyzed participants' answers in much greater detail to show increases in empathy.

### 3.3 Studies not included in the overview studies

Several studies on empathy and compassion development have not been included in the list of overview studies and but will be reviewed here to complete the picture.

Lamothe et al. (2016) undertook a meta-study of thirty-nine studies on the effect of *mindfulness-based-stress-reduction* (MBSR) trainings on healthcare providers. Of this 39 studies 7

measure the effect of MBSR on empathy using the Jefferson Scale of Physician Empathy. Out of this 7, 5 found a significant increase in empathy. It seems safe to say, that MBSR also has an effect on empathy. Unfortunately, the strength of the effect was not reported in the study. It has to be noted, that self- and compassion training (see 5.3.3.10) also contain elements of a mindfulness training.

The effects of compassion training on healthcare workers was the focus of Scarlet's et al. (2017) study. The participants underwent an eight-week *compassion cultivation training* (CCT) and had to fill out questionnaires afterwards to measure the effect. The main research question of this project was to see whether CCT can reduce self-reported states of burn-out by increasing *self-compassion* and mindfulness. However, the study could not find that CCT decreases burn-out. It did increase – which should not come as a surprise – *self-compassion* and mindfulness.

The effect of ten-minute long loving-kindness meditations (LKM), which is also done approximately for the same time span by participants of this study (see 5.3.3.10), has been researched by Seppala et al. (2014). The experiment was done, as is often the case, with health care providers. All participants of the study were novices at meditation and had not used LKM before (as in the present study). The trial was executed with two control groups who were doing non-empathy related exercises in the same time span. *Social connection, ratings of strangers, and self-focus* were used as measures. The author saw a connection between an increase in feeling social connectedness, more positive ratings of strangers, and a reduced self-focus with the *compassion-construct*. Though this might very well be the case, it makes it hard to compare the study to other studies that used more wide-spread measures for evaluating the effect of an empathy/compassion intervention. The good news for this study and for all stressed-out and time-poor professionals is, that even extremely short LKM have an effect.

Whether money spent for an empathy intervention can be considered a long-term investment, was researched by Phillips et al. (2014) who followed up on the effects of an intervention one year later using a combined qualitative and quantitative approach. The participants showed greater knowledge of empathy which they still remembered a year after and could elaborate in various ways they implemented *empathic behavioral* routines into their daily practice as health care providers. Of course, the assessment session a year after is in itself an empathy intervention which the authors recommend as a standard to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the empathy training. Nevertheless, it is a comforting thought, that so much was remembered by the participants.

A study by Warrier et al. (2018) adds another aspect to the quest of increasing empathy through interventions. That this works, has been shown by a variety of different measure including fMRI. Nevertheless, the genes may also be at play, as Warrier et al. have found a correlation between certain genetic dispositions and self-reported empathy suggesting that empathy is also heritable. This opens up a series of questions about the potential different individuals have for increasing their empathy, if there are genetic influences that come into play.



## 4 Leadership and empathy

Although it is debatable, whether it is actually helpful for the purpose of this qualitative study to know much about the relationship between leadership and empathy (Yin 2011), the researcher already has been reading about the subject matter for some time as well as conducting leadership development programs where empathy development has been part of the soft skills training. Giving a review on the research on leadership and empathy will help the author reflect his knowledge on leadership and will therefore help the process of qualitative research.

It will remain to be seen, whether the participants of the planned empathy intervention for this dissertation have reflected their style of leadership in the past. Many might have been put in leaderships position without having had the opportunity to think about and develop the needed skill set and without having the chance to attend leadership skill development programs, though they are experts in their respective fields (Felfe and Franke 2014). In other professions, especially in the medical sector, the role of being a leader is just starting to be recognized (Collins-Nakai 2006).

After citing the most important definitions on leadership, the leadership literature will be reviewed with the topic of this dissertation in mind. This will somewhat limit the scope of the review but taking the bulk of publications on leadership into account, this limitation seems justified. These theories on leadership will be the center of this part of the review, that specifically focus on the social exchange between leader and subordinate (also called member or follower). It is this social exchange where an increase in empathy might affect the leadership behavior the most.

The review will also explore how much research has been done in regard to the impact of empathy and *emotional intelligence*<sup>1</sup> on the process of leadership, on leadership behavior and on leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, the direction of the impact is also of great interest: is an increase in leader empathy and *emotional intelligence* beneficial for the effective functioning of leadership in terms of the goals of a specific organization in mind?

### 4.1 Definitions of leadership

Since the 1970s leadership has been widely researched. While at that time, it often was not considered essential for an organization's success, that has changed considerably in the last decades (Day 2014a). As in many fields, the increase in scientific attention led to an increase in theories and definitions of what the subject of leadership research actually constitutes (Bass and Bass 2008).

Felfe (2009) defines the goal of leadership (*Mitarbeiterführung*) as the controlling of employees' behavior in accord with the goals of the organization in order to ensure the organization's success. While this definition sums up the objective-oriented nature of leadership very nicely, it is obvious, that these objectives do not necessarily require the direct presence of a human

being as leader and can be done by structuring workflows and hierarchies, and by managing objectives.

Other authors make a clear distinction between leadership (*Führung*) and management (Neuberger 2002; Wunderer 2011) and point out that leadership is a group phenomenon, is done with the intent to exert social influence over others, and has a clear objective to be achieved by communicational processes (Rosenstiel and Gebert 1995). The main job of a leader consists of “influencing and facilitating individuals and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (Yukl 2012, p. 66). In some ways, leadership is often seen as the successor of management in the sense, that it can provide solutions to the essential questions of organizational success (Ford et al. 2008).

Leadership has been described as a dynamic process of role sending and role expectancy (Staehle et al. 1999) where leader and team members influence each other greatly (Zaccaro et al. 2001) – following archetypical patterns that have not changed much during the millennia (Zaccaro 2014). Good leadership might often require the leader to adapt to subordinates and not simply resort to the same methods in all circumstances (Yukl and Mahsud 2010). Leaders are more often than not influenced by the expectancies of those that are lead – especially when those are more expert in their field than their leader (Wunderer 1996).

A manager is not automatically a leader but has to fulfill certain requirements like having an informal network, social power (Bosetzky 1991), and, maybe most importantly, has to be accepted as such by the subordinates (Chiu et al. 2016). Leadership is not created out of thin air but is embodied in the persona of the leader as a role that followers as well as the leader have “to buy” (Ford et al. 2017) and emerges by social processes:

*A major change that has occurred in the study of leadership is the move from a sole focus on the leader to a wider view that is more inclusive in terms of considering both leaders and followers or a context in which there is no formally appointed leader and leadership emerges through social interactions. (Day 2014a, p. 3)*

Whether somebody can rightfully be called a leader or should better be referred to as manager/supervisor largely depends on the importance the leadership function has for that person’s role and how that person is using the authority that comes with the office – for controlling and monitoring (when functioning as a supervisor) or sharing it with followers (as a leader) (Dansereau et al. 1975). Few set-ups are imaginable where supervising without a trace of leadership behaviors suffices – like working in a chain-gang.

The Leader-Member-Exchange-Theory (LMX) (see 4.3) can help to discern which environmental influences will favor which behavioral patterns from the superior – acting as a supervisor or as a leader (Bernerth et al. 2016). It has also been shown that superiors treat their inferiors quite differently and act as a supervisor towards some members of the unit and – at the same time – as a leader to others (Dansereau et al. 1975).

The fixation on the persona of the leader is sometimes considered to be more rampant in the USA than in, for example, Germany (Berthel and Becker 2010). Critical voices are also emerging which identify the ever growing call for leaders as a fad that wants to make ordinary managerial work sound more exciting by labeling it as leadership (Alvesson and Spicer 2014). There are also other ways of explaining organizational success than just looking at the leaders.

Wunderer's (2011) distinction between systemic/structural and interactional leadership (*Führung*) is also important for understanding leadership/management. While the latter happens through the direct interchange between leader and followers, the former is effectuated by working with the value system of the organization and/or with the organizational structure. Peter Senge (2010) among many others has philosophized in a similar vein to show how the systemic impacts of norms and value systems influence the behavior of members of an organization. Though these approaches are equally interesting, they will be neglected in this work as soft skills like *empathic communication* seem to be more important for interactional leadership than for systemic structural leadership. It is doubtful, though, that there are leaders who exclusively focus on just one of the two types of leadership. Behavioral traits and the respective organizational culture might play a crucial role to which side an individual leader is leaning in her/his leadership style.

An interesting side note is the huge success of sitcoms focusing – among the unavoidable love stories – on *do-nothing, non-transactional, or laissez-faire* styles of leadership (Bass 1997): The BBC series *The Office* and its US' NBC and German's Pro7 spin-offs all had fairly good performing teams but poor leaders whose incompetence actually caused the subordinates to excel in their own way. While these series are fictional and it is unclear, how much Ricky Gervais or his German counterparts actually studied the literature on leadership, in the scientific community some voice the concern that not so much is known exactly how leaders influence a team (DeChurch et al. 2010), though the research on LMX has been revealing more and more about this subject matter (see 4.3).

However, it seems to be clear, that the concept of leadership is much dependent on the context (Osborn et al. 2014), which – among many other variables – is defined by the surrounding culture (Lee et al. 2014; Scandura and Dorfman 2004) and by gender (Ayman and Korabik 2010). Global leadership, for example, requires different competencies than when the leadership function is limited to a cultural biotope – with empathy often counted among these competencies (Harzing and Pinnington 2015).

Leadership research has produced a variety of approaches that examine the different aspects of the social phenomenon of interactional leadership– its emergence, perpetuation, and non-occurrence as well as a variety of different styles. Many overview studies exist that are summarizing these trends in research and give a good overview (e.g. Avolio et al. 2009; DeChurch et al. 2010; Day 2014b; Dinh et al. 2014; Kerschreiter et al. 2006).

## 4.2 Transactional leadership and transformational leadership

The differentiation between transactional and transformational leadership has been around for more many decades (Bass 1997) and has provided a useful framework from categorizing styles of leadership – one leaning towards task-orientation and the other towards relation-orientation.

Transactional leadership has the *homo economicus* at the core of its believe system and focuses mainly on the functional side of leadership/management. Rational actors are given incentives and rewards by the leader who knows what has to be done by whom and recognizes a job well done while underperformers and free-riders are penalized (Berthel and Becker 2010). This kind of management is only working, if a) the employees actually want rewards, b) rewards can be handed out and are not given automatically in the form of scheduled pay raises, c) employees fear penalties (i.e. an employer's market exists) or can be penalized at all (work council). However, when it is working it produces only mediocrity (Bass 1990).

Much research since the 1990s has been directed at showing that the rational choice theory only accounts for a limited range of human behavior (Kahneman 2012; Ariely 2008). Considering that transactional leadership views the leader-follower exchange as a purely economic transaction, it is not astonishing that in a meta-analysis of the effectiveness of leadership methods this particular fell behind other methods (Burke et al. 2006).

Bass (1985) divided *transactional leadership* into basically two forms: *contingent rewards management* and *management-by-exception*. Later on (1997) he added the *laissez-fair* or *do-nothing-style* leadership. In the former method goals and objectives are defined for the follower who gets rewarded by the leader when performance and outcome match the agreement. The reward can be material gains like bonuses, etc. or immaterial gains like recognition, attention, etc. *Management-by-exception* again can be divided into an active form, where the leader actively monitors the followers to prevent and correct mistakes and deviations from the norm to happen, and a passive form, where the leader only becomes active when the follower has made a mistake. Concentration on mistakes is the mark of both forms of *management-by-exception*.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, has a different focus: it wants to transform employees into high performers (Bass 1990). Surfacing in the late 70s (Burns 1979), it picks up ideas of charismatic leadership from the beginning of the last century (Weber 1922) and adds other dimensions to the concept:

*Superior leadership performance - transformational leadership - occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group. (Bass 1990, p. 21)*

In a way, with the ideas of transformational leadership being around, it became much harder to be considered a leader – managing employees by formulating objectives and signing bonus checks was not enough anymore. The transformational leader is supposed to create a vision and a sense of mission, inspire subordinates, gain their trust, stimulate them intellectually by challenging them just enough, and be a coach, mentor, and adviser who knows how to treat each subordinate individually (Bass 1990). Making subordinates see the need for change, inspire them to accept the change and actively drive the process, and institutionalize the changes to make a lasting imprint in the organizational culture is among the marks of a transformational leader (Tichy et al. 1990).

Transformational leadership can help to give followers a feeling of empowerment which leads to higher organizational commitment and performance while at the same time higher moral standards, integrity and optimism is exhibited (Avolio et al. 2004). Transformational leaders will tend to resort more to solution-focused communication and, by their example, influence followers to adopt the same kind of communication and abstain from counter-productive ways of speaking to each other (Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. 2015). Followers of transformational leaders are more optimistic and less frustrated which mediates greater job performance (McColl-Kennedy and Anderson 2002).

Moreover, when subordinates have the impression that their leader is happy, they show a greater tendency to view him/her as a transformational leader (Jin et al. 2016) and such a leader is good, when reducing employee turnover is on the agenda (Tse et al. 2013). The fact, that employees under a transformational leader develop better and show better performances, has been shown by a large field experiment with military personnel (Dvir et al. 2002), which also contributes to a more positive attrition rate.

That transformational leadership works (better than transactional leadership) and correlates strongly with a couple of benchmarks like financial performance, employee satisfaction, reduced turnover rate, etc., has been shown by a variety of studies (Burke et al. 2006; Howell and Hall-Merenda 1999; Bass et al. 1996; Gardner and Stough 2002). Transformational behavior can be learned by leaders (Dvir et al. 2002) and only slightly depends on personality traits (Bono and Judge 2004).

A theoretical linkage of the models of transformational leadership and Leader-Member-Exchange has been attempted (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Gerstner and Day 1997) and later on tested empirically (Howell and Hall-Merenda 1999) making it worthwhile to review the literature on LMX in the following section.

### 4.3 Leader-member-exchange

Leadership research traditionally has focused on two assumptions:

*The first assumption is that the members of an organizational unit who report to the same superior are sufficiently homogeneous on the relevant dimensions (e.g., perceptions, interpretations and reactions) that they can be*

*considered as a single entity: the "work group." The second assumption is that a superior behaves in essentially the same prescribed manner toward each of his members. (Dansereau et al. 1975, p. 47)*

Though this was observed more than forty years ago, it is still true for many approaches found in management literature. Research on the vertical-dyadic-leader-follower (VDL) relationship which later evolved into Leader-member-exchange (LMX) and *Leadership Making* (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) sheds light on the way the relationship between leader and follower develops, works, and – possibly – can be improved to work better:

*Briefly, this model describes the processes by which a leader and a member develop various behavioral interdependencies between their respective roles. (Graen and Schiemann 1978, p. 206)*

The behavioral tendencies between leader and member are looked at in a qualitative way, which – for this work – seems to be a promising approach. The strength of the LMX lies in viewing the LMX not as a one-way-street but as a reciprocal affair which doesn't focus primarily on the characteristics of the leader but takes the follower as well as the nature of the relationship of the two into account (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995).

As mentioned above, LMX does not assume that the superior treats all his/her inferiors the same way but rather explores how the differentiation of behavior comes about. According to Dansereau (1975), the commencement of the relationships between superior and inferior when different roles and subsequent behavioral latitudes are negotiated play a crucial role in the process. Those members who do not take part in these negotiations, will end up receiving less attention from their superior, will be outside the cadre, be barred from a share of the authority that comes with the office of the superior like taking part in decision making and receiving more confidential information, and will be supervised as opposed to be led by the superior.

While Dansereau stresses the active role the subordinate plays in the initial stage of LMX, other processes that are known from role theory are at play, too (cf. Dahrendorf and Abels 2010; Parsons and Shils 1951). After all, the development of LMX into HQ (high quality) and LQ (low quality) can be seen as role development (Dienesch and Liden 1986). In this regard, it should be mentioned, that to be assigned a role by a superior is sometimes seen as an imposition on the role receiver – especially, when the development is not going the way, that the receiver wants it to be (Bosetzky et al. 2002) resulting in the need for higher self-regulation followed by self-depletion (Baumeister 2012). The differentiation process of in- and out-group might see winners and losers and, once formed, remains stable (Dienesch and Liden 1986). It should however be noted, that the emergence of in- and out-groups does not have to happen in all circumstance (van Breukelen et al. 2006) but depends on different variables which will be discussed below.

These early interchanges between the leader and her/his later following help building trust, which creates mutual interdependencies between leader and inner circle. While the in-group

gets the interesting projects, members of the out-group get to go home on time as commitment beyond the job description is not expected of them by their superior. Such a cadre is not set up out of folly or partisanship, but born out of the necessity that the boss needs a circle of trustworthy people to delegate and ensure the functioning of the organization (Nystrom 1990). As Dansereau (1975) pointed out, on the leader's part time is often an issue, which influences the span of the initial phase of the group forming process.

It has been shown that the above delineated process can still go on even after initial leader-member-exchanges and the ensuing in- and out-groups have formed. Scandura and Graen (1984) had leaders attend a training intervention on how to improve relationships with their inferiors. Especially those members who reported an initial LQ LMX with the now trained superiors profited by this intervention and started to show the same work attitudes as their colleagues who had initial HQ LMX. While it would be interesting to learn, what determines the process of stepping up for HQ LMX in the first place, these lines are supposedly not fixed and seem to partly depend on the personal growth of the superior which can be triggered by a training intervention – maybe an empathy intervention.

Over the course of time, relationships between leader and follower can mature and move from LQ to HQ provided that an “offer” for said relationship was initiated by the superior and accepted by the follower or – as Dansereau has described it (1975) – the follower has started a negotiation on role and job latitude. The relationship can also remain strictly contractual and the relationship between boss and follower does not progress from the “just-met” stage.

#### 4.3.1 Antecedents and consequences of LMX

Both antecedents and consequences of LMX has been thoroughly researched in the past decades offering a complete picture of the process in its different stages.

An important precondition of LMX, especially when seen in the light of social exchange theory (Blau 1964), is that the leader actual has resources like organizational power, autonomy, and decision making power to share with member who enter HQ LMX (Dienesch and Liden 1986). As members take their share, they relieve their leader of part of her/his responsibilities and get power and other benefits in return.

Both from the leader's and the subordinate's perspective *liking* and *ability* as antecedents have been shown to best predict the development of HQ LMX, while assertiveness was not valued by either of the members of the dyad very much (Dockery and Steiner 1990). Apart from that, the quoted study stresses, that members place more importance to the emotional and interactive aspects of LMX while superiors value overall work-group productivity more. Person-centered communication is also an important precursor of HQ LMX (Fix and Sias 2006) which is a two-way road as the communication offerings have to be accepted by the follower or the follower sends out signals triggering said behavior from the superior.

A meta-analysis by Dulebohn and Bommer (2012) has shown that while antecedents like the ones listed above by the studies and others mentioned below play a less significant role:

*Furthermore, these results indicate that it is the quality of the relationship that determines key outcomes, not the follower or leader behaviors and perceptions per se. In other words, LMX mediated many of the relationships to such a large degree that it appears that the role of LMX is central to explaining the ultimate relationship between the antecedents and the outcomes we explored. Thus, although the antecedents certainly are important in their own right and very relevant for understanding LMX quality, it is LMX that appears to bridge associations between the antecedents and outcomes that we examined in this study. (Dulebohn et al. 2012, p. 1740)*

Nevertheless, the authors of the above quoted meta-analysis agree with Dienesch and Liden (1986) insofar, as they see the main responsibility of initiating and forming the LMX in the purview of the leader. His/her eagerness to establish such an exchange would thus be the most important antecedent of LMX.

Being in the inner circle and having a HQ LMX has different consequences – most of them positive (for the negative see below). Members with a HQ LMX show increased job performance, role clarity (Gerstner and Day 1997; Howell and Hall-Merenda 1999) and work satisfaction (Scandura and Graen 1984), and – adding to these two outcomes – a higher moral (Graen et al. 1982). They communicate better and more often, are highly involved and committed (Dansereau et al. 1975), show and experience greater organizational (Nystrom 1990; Loi et al. 2014) as well as normative and affective commitment (Dulebohn et al. 2012) and individual citizenship (Ilies et al. 2007). Also, evidence for decreased turn-over intentions for HQ LMX members have been found (Gerstner and Day 1997).

#### 4.3.2 LMX and Transactional/Transformational Leadership

Graen und Uhl-Bien (1995) as well as Gerstner and Day (1997) started to connect the above described *transactional/transformational leadership* (see 4.2) with LMX by finding evidence in twenty-five years of management studies, that the stage of LQ LMX can be likened to *transactional leadership*, while HQ LMX shares a lot of characteristics with *transformational leadership*. This would mean that a superior cannot be labeled simply being a *transactional manager* or *transformational leader* as she might be leading followers in a transformational way with whom she has a HQ LM and other in a *transactional way* who are not part of the cadre.

This hunch by the above quoted authors was later on confirmed by Howell and Hall-Meranda (1999) who found a strong correlation between LMX and *transformational leadership* as well as with job performance. That LQ LMX invites a *transactional leadership* style, however, was found to be only partially true for leaders practicing management by negative feedback. Wang et al. (2005) have demonstrated that also in China, a classic high power-distance country (Hofstede et al. 2006), *transformational leadership* serves as a mediator for HQ LMX, which led to higher performance and a greater degree of organizational citizenship – both outcomes that most leaders would find desirable.



Nevertheless, it has also been shown (Dulebohn et al. 2012) that LMX relationships depend on sets of behaviors that can be attributed both to *transformational* and *transactional leadership*. Contingent reward behaviors like recognizing accomplishments, providing feedback and rewards which is usually seen as being one of the three styles of *transactional leadership* (e.g. Camps and Torres 2011) play also an important part in establishing a functional LMX with followers. Moreover, only the relationship-oriented aspects of transformational leadership (i.e. *individualized consideration*, *idealized influence*, and *being a coach/mentor*) contribute to the quality of the LMX and not the other aspects (Dulebohn et al. 2012).

#### 4.3.3 Pitfalls of LMX

The differentiation process of LMX into HQ and LQ groups is not without pitfalls. Judging from the literature reviewed this process of the emergence of different leader-member relationships is inevitable as the leader is under time constraints and has to deal with the subordinates as individuals (Yammarino and Dansereau 2002), the outcomes of this differentiation process are not necessarily all positive. While the above listed positive effects are true for members with a HQ LMX, the effects of LMX on the entire team and on members with a LQ LMX also need to be investigated. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) already hinted at possible negative effects for said members.

Excessive differential treatment by the leader can level out positive effects of HQ LMX and can temper the commitment of other members to the work unit (van Breukelen et al. 2002). What exactly *excessive* is, has not been defined by the paper, but it suffices that the members of the team perceive the leaders' differentiation behavior as such and deem it unfair. Perceived LMX variability can lead to team conflicts which consequently lower members' job satisfaction (Hooper and Martin 2008). When leaders, however, distribute non-tangible contingent rewards like attention, appreciation, and friendliness equally, this effect can be somewhat attenuated.

Erdogan and Bauer (2010) linked the effects of LMX differentiation to the justice climate in the team and found out, that LMX differentiation is only then detrimental to organizational commitment, job satisfaction and satisfaction with coworker relations when the justice climate was low, i.e. when subordinates perceive the distribution of resources and rewards, the decision making and interpersonal treatment by their leader as unfair. When the justice climate was high, helping behavior among coworkers was high even when LMX differentiation was high.

When the justice climate is low, differentiation of work units/teams into in-groups with member with HQ LMX with the leader and out-groups with LQ LMX might also trigger inhumanization processes where members of the out-group are treated differently to the point of being discriminated by members of the in-group (Vaes et al. 2003). As discussed in section 2.9.3, the motivation for showing empathy to out-group members dwindles, which might directly affect the quality of *transformational leadership*, which depends on leader empathy (see section 4.6.3). As empathy and helping/prosocial behavior is closely linked (Batson et al. 1995),

the linkage between justice climate and helping behavior that Erdogan and Bauer (2010) measured, might also affect leader empathy.

Keeping a distance to the superior and the quality of LMX low by remaining outside the cadre also has possible advantages, as Bernerth et al. (2016) have shown by theoretically integrating the LMX-model with self-regulation theory (Muraven and Baumeister 2000). These advantages will become a factor when the boss turns out to operate on morally shaky grounds (or is perceived to do so by the follower). The follower who has a HQ LMX with the superior established will feel more obliged to give in to requests not in compliance with either the organization's ethic code and/or the society's. Having to regulate her-/himself in the face of such a superior will be stressful and resource depleting for the employee. Members with a LQ LMX will not face the same dilemma because a) they are not being asked to do "funny business" due to a lack of trust in the first place and b) feel less obliged to comply due to less commitment to the organization and the persona of the superior.

While there are possible pitfalls of LMX for the subordinates, the leaders might also experience some. LMX can contain a "yes, man"-element where members will present their boss with agreeable opinions only and actively try to raise his/her self-esteem to achieve a HQ LMX (Deluga and Perry 1994). This behavior would bar the superior from receiving valuable feedback and getting a more realistic view of the situation in the organization.

On the other hand, members of the "HQ LMX-club" are evaluated favorably when resisting managerial calls by negotiating them as opposed to flat out refusing. For LQ LMX, however, it doesn't seem to make a difference whether they comply or resist as they are evaluated more negatively anyway (Tepper et al. 2006). Having an HQ LMX relationship with the boss doesn't necessarily have to mean that an own opinion is dangerous for the LMX status.

#### 4.4 Servant leadership

*Servant leadership* is worthy of a side note as it promises to be closely connected to EI and *empathy*. It is a style of leadership that has received prominent attention in the last years (Avolio et al. 2009), but cannot boast of a widely accepted definition (Parris and Peachey 2013), though measurement concepts have already been contrived (Liden et al. 2008). The concept is mostly based on a booklet by Robert Greenleaf (1991) who got inspired by Herman Hesse to contrive the concept of a leader serving his followers with personal integrity instead of demanding unconditional obedience.

The attention of the leader concentrates on the well-being of the followership and away from selfish motives. The intersection with *transformational leadership* is quite considerable as developing and showing individualized consideration is also part of *servant leadership* (van Dierendonck 2011). The altruistic calling of a *servant leader* is, maybe, what sets her/him apart from other sorts of leaders (Barbuto et al. 2014).

There is an ongoing discussion how *servant leadership* actually translates into effective leadership behavior for profit-oriented organizations: *servant leadership* might serve as antecedent for leader and organizational trust (Joseph and Winston 2005) and is mediated by HQ LMX, trust and fairness, which helps the organizational to develop a stronger focus on sustainability and corporate social responsibility (van Dierendonck 2011).

#### 4.5 The emotional side of leadership

*Emotional intelligence* has become a buzz word from the end of the 1990s onwards. The summary works of Goleman (1997; 2013) created a hype building on the pre-existing concept of *emotional intelligence* coined by Salovey and Mayer (1990). Though Goleman has been critiqued for being too eager to sell books and though there are arguments whether *emotional intelligence* is needed at all for sufficiently intelligent leaders (Antonakis et al. 2009), the trend nevertheless is still going on and has not only triggered a stream of scientific publications on the subject but created public awareness and various development programs – even for the US army (Seligman 2011).

In the literature on management and leadership, Yukl as a prominent author, for example, has made a shift towards *emotional intelligence* and empathy in the late 1990s (Humphrey 2002) and has authored quite a few articles in this vein since then (Mahsud et al. 2010). The role of emotions in the workplace, both from the leader's as well as from the follower's perspective has been shown to be of great importance and worthy of extensive research (Ashkanasy and Daus 2002; George 2000). That *emotional intelligence* has been linked with job performance, might have made this topic interesting from a purely economic point of view (van Rooy and Viswesvaran 2004).

##### 4.5.1 The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Salovey and Mayer defined EI as follows:

*We define emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. (1990, p. 189)*

Salovey and Mayer (1990) actually intended the model to be an umbrella term that encompasses research dealing with emotions itself, the appraisal of them in oneself and others, the utilization of these for different purposes like creative thinking and the regulation of emotions in oneself and others.

Later, they refined the definition above, which they felt was too vague, by adding other dimensions to it:

*Emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when*

*they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.* (Mayer and Salovey 1997, p. 10)

Davies et al. (1998) elaborated on the definition above and thought of a four dimensional structure to capture the broad variety of the different psychological phenomena of *emotional intelligence*:

1. Appraisal and expression of emotions in oneself
2. Appraisal and recognition of emotions in others
3. Regulation of emotion in oneself
4. Use of emotion to facilitate performance

Davies's definition and Salovey's and Mayer's are not identical but the difference can be considered to be minor (Law et al. 2004). Davies et al. has incorporated the dimension 4, which introduces the term *performance* to the equation and means "marshalling emotions in the service of a goal..." (Davies 1998, p. 991). She pointed out that emotional regulation and delay of gratification underly all human accomplishment and, for this reason, have to be part of the construct. Salovey and Mayer (1997), on the other hand, added the element of emotional and intellectual growth to their concept, claiming that *emotional intelligence* has to have an element of growth to it to be considered a form of intelligence.

Goleman (2013) builds on the definitions cited above by Salovey and Mayer and Davies et al. but offers an expanded construct stating that EI has four domains: *self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship management*. With the four domains associated are various competencies like *self-assessment, empathy, emotional self-control* but also elements from *servant leadership, transformational leadership, conflict management, team management* as well as behavioral traits like *self-confidence, optimism, initiative, and achievement*.

Goleman's description of EI is more a management guide that wants to show leaders how to lead in an inspiring, emotionally aware way than a scientific treatise. Nevertheless, his works have become very influential – more than any paper published in prestigious journals could have become – and served to make the concept of EI well known among leaders of the industry.

Apart from the above cited definitions, various other definitions and assessment instruments exist and are used for testing EI, i.e. (Carson et al. 2000b; Bar-On 1997). This makes measuring EI not an easy task (Harms and Credé 2010). The definitions cited here, save Goleman's, can be labeled *narrow* definitions of EI and deal only with the recognition of emotions in oneself and other and the control of these in oneself and – following Little (2016) – others, whereas *broad* definitions function as an *umbrella-term* and encompass an array of constructs (Joseph and Newman 2010). The broader definitions like the one from Goleman (see above) and Bar-on (see below) overlap with the *Big 5* personality traits and offer little construct validity as measure for EI (Daus and Ashkanasy 2003).

## EI and the empathy construct – differences and similarities

How much the empathy concept and the EI concept overlap seems to be largely a matter of definition. Salovey and Mayer (1990, p. 194) called empathy a “central characteristic”, while Davies (1998, p. 989-990) viewed it as one of the “psychological components underlying emotional intelligence” as well as an ability. When empathy is treated as a multidimensional concept and not as in the narrow sense (see 2.10), the congruity between both concepts is greatest. Moreover, without empathy – *emotional, cognitive, and empathic accuracy* – EI is basically an empty shell of pretending to have a clue what goes on inside another person. To be *emotionally intelligent* one is predicated on being empathic in the narrow and the broad sense.

In the literature on empathy reviewed, empathy was in most cases understood to encompass associated psychological phenomena like *empathic accuracy, self-other-differentiation/theory-of-mind, and empathic concern*. While the behavioral part is strictly speaking not part of the multidimensional empathy construct, as delineated in section 2.5, speaking of *empathic behavior* is quite customary among researchers as the behavioral part is closely connected to the emotional one.

But what about adding *self-awareness* to the list of shared characteristics? Even at the most basic level, the empathy state requires *emotional self-awareness* as self-other differentiation is needed to differentiate between one’s own emotion and that of the observed other – empathy would not be possible without it (Batson et al. 1995; Bernhardt and Singer 2012; Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004). *Emotional self-awareness* is also part of the *self-compassion* concept which is, at least, akin to *empathic concern* albeit directed at the self. Acknowledgment of the emotions that are active in oneself is an integral part of that process as well as the process of NVC which Rosenberg calls *self-empathy* (see 2.7). It is therefore quite safe to conclude, that to empathic self-awareness is a given.

However, EI, as opposed to empathy, contains in all the important definitions the element of *emotional regulation*, which is not part of the empathy construct. *Emotional regulation*, however, is an effect of the practice of *self-empathy* and *self-compassion* (see 4.5.3) but not part of the construct. The cultivation of *empathic concern/compassion* also helps to control emotions as they are an effective way of avoiding the emergence of negative emotions in the first place (Fredrickson et al. 2008). In a way, *empathic behavior* is a royal road to *emotional regulation* (see 4.5.3). Here, the cited definitions of EI add an important element to the understanding of the effects of *empathic concern* which has its utilities for leaders. From the review of the literature on EI and empathy in the context of leadership, I have gotten the impression that it seems to be mostly a matter of choice which term is used while the underlying concept is largely the same. In publications on leadership, empathy is treated as an emotion (e.g. Humphrey 2002), which might partially explain the convergence of the two concepts in this research field.

A training programs like NVC (see 5.3.3.5) trains the same skills while speaking of empathy and self-empathy instead of EI (when taking Salovey and Mayer’s definition from 1997). It also includes the element of *emotional regulation* as the process is a form of *emotional re-appraisal* but also effectuates that negative emotions as reactions to aversive behavior do not

appear in the first place and thus do not have to be regulated (see 4.5.3). The empathy training interventions reviewed in section 3.1 and 3.2 often contain elements of *empathic behavior* and *empathic communication* and target behavioral skills that overlap greatly with the skill sets the EI concept promotes.

I am not suggesting using the terms *empathy* and *emotional intelligence* synonymously due to the described differences, but apart from looking at empathy in an academic way, the differentiation does not go very far. From a marketing point of view that wants to popularize empathy interventions among leaders, EI might be better suited for use in the industry as the term sounds more agentic (*intelligence!*) than empathy. In section 4.6 I will review the literature on leadership and empathy and leadership and EI together as separating the concepts in the context of leadership seems futile due to the reasons stated above.

The empathy training intervention designed in section 5.3.3 as part of this doctoral study aims at training empathy as a multidimensional construct and stresses the behavioral aspect of this concept as well as the regulation of emotions by *self-compassion* and increasing emotional self-awareness. So, in a way, an EI training is automatically included and no harm is done labeling it as such

#### 4.5.2 The spreading of emotions

In building his arguments for *emotional leadership* Goleman (1997; 2013) drew a lot from the literature on *emotional contagion*. Leaders should be aware of the phenomenon and manage their own emotions accordingly as they spread to their subordinates and influence their performance accordingly. Of course, emotions do not need a leader to spread in groups as other group members can be the source of group affecting emotions as well (Kelly and Barsade 2001; Neumann and Strack 2000; Tee 2015), however, the leader has a significant impact as the studies cited below show. Gender, by the way, only has a weak effect in the spread of emotions in a group (Wild et al. 2001), which might surprise people holding certain stereotypes.

The spread of positive emotions might be wanted in many organizations or at least in many subgroups of these organization. While safeguarding against negative emotions is important, capitalizing on good emotions has many positive effects on the sharer of the good news as well as the persons who hear them (Gable and Reis 2010): increase in subjective well-being, self-esteem, trust, commitment, liking, closeness, etc.

The leader's optimism has been shown to spread to subordinates letting them partake in the positive effects of optimism (McColl-Kennedy and Anderson 2002). Similarly, The leader's positive mood has a positive effect on the group that is being led and increases the group's performance (George 1995) while at the same time the leader is being perceived as charismatic by followers in a good mood (Johnson 2009). When the leader not only feels and communicates positive affects but also make a congruent facial expression, the leader him-/herself will receive more positive ratings from the followers (Newcombe and Ashkanasy 2002). But it is not only the actual mood when in contact with the group of subordinates that spreads in the

group: an anticipatory mood can also spread without prior contagion (Huntsinger et al. 2009) making it all the more important for leaders to be aware of how they feel and how they like the people that are working under them.

Groups, whose leaders are in a good mood, also tend to be better coordinated and require less effort from the leader (Sy et al. 2005), which, in turn, will ensure that the leader's mood will stay positive in the long run. Once a group, including the leader, has reached a positive mood and the degree of similarity of mood in the group is high, a "positive group affect spiral" has been observed (Walter and Bruch 2008), which enhances the group mood even more and is a self-enforcing process. Bad moods, however, are dangerous insofar, as bad emotions are stronger as positive ones and are remembered much longer (Baumeister et al. 2001) – they linger in the group for a prolonged time and the group is not easily "snapped" out of them (Dasborough 2006).

As discussed in section 2.1.1 empathy and *emotional contagion* are two different concepts. The same is true for *personal distress* (see 2.4.4) which is based on empathy but turns to *emotional contagion*. While *empathic behavior*, *empathic accuracy*, and the motivation to show empathy can be trained, *emotional contagion* is something that "happens". There are ways, though, to safeguard against being infected by unpleasant emotions and spreading them to others. Increasing awareness of one's own emotions by practicing *self-compassion* (see section 2.7) has multiple positive side-effects – one being, that one becomes mindful of emotions afflicting oneself and learns to deal with them in a constructive way (see 4.5.3).

By it practicing *self-compassion*, leaders and other team-members get the chance to recognize how they feel in the moment and can take measures to avoid that unpleasant affects influence their behavior and/or spread to others. Moreover, one automatically improves one's own mood significantly (Fredrickson et al. 2008). The cultivation of positive affects has multiple other effects that are also beneficial for the leader her-/himself as happiness has been accounted for greater success in work and life by multiple studies which Lyubomirsky et al. has reviewed (2005). This information might motivate leaders on this path. A participant of a leadership training told me, that he cultivates a grumpy mood when coming to work to discourage followers from approaching him and keeping him from doing his "job". At least in Germany, this tactic seems to be adopted by many leaders, so that spreading the "good news" is certainly necessary.

#### 4.5.3 Emotional labor and regulation of emotions

Recognizing emotions that are "alive" in oneself (Rosenberg 2013) and dealing with them are altogether different things, also the latter is predicated on the former. When emotions, regardless whether they are "self-made" or come from somebody else due to *emotional contagion* or *personal distress*, cannot be expressed freely as it is often the case in the work place, emotional self-regulation (Gross and Feldman Barrett 2011) has to happen which comes at the price of ego-depletion (Muraven and Baumeister 2000).

## Emotional labor

The term *emotional labor* has been coined to describe the regulatory processes that involve dealing with emotions surfacing at the work place (Grandey 2000). While it may be more obvious that workers in the service industry have to perform *emotional labor*, it also pertains to superiors', subordinates', and colleagues' behavior that triggers emotions which cannot be expressed freely in order to comply with the respective organizational requirements (Cossette and Hess 2015). In the case of the service industry, these organizational requirements are often part of the job description – as is the legendary PAN-AM-smile.

But even if emotional control is not spelled out in the form of written rules, it is the organizational culture that defines for its members how to deal with emotions (Schein 1985). Complying with the culture means having to regulate oneself at certain points when one's emotions flare up or when the employee is supposed to be happy for things that do not pertain to him-/herself and join forced cheerfulness. Leaders being at the helm of the team/organizations also should be aware of the importance *emotional labor* as they influence group emotions greatly (Kelly and Barsade 2001).

Two forms of *emotional labor* can be distinguished (Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2012): *surface-acting* where the employee simply pretends to be in a certain, culturally prescribed mood but has a discordant emotional state on the inside, and *deep-acting*, where the employee has internalized the mandated emotional state and actually “feels” what is seen on his/her face. *Deep-acting* requires more *emotional regulation* than *surface-acting*, of course. It is doubtful, whether *surface-acting* works very well at all, as micro-expression (Ekman 2007) will probably leak the true feelings of the employee anyway.

Gardner, Fischer et al. (2009) look at the process of emotional labor from the perspective of the leader-follower relationship and authentic leadership, which has the development of positive self-regulated behavior in a highly developed organizational context as its goal. To the two above described ways of regulating emotions and displaying them according to the organizational rules comes a third category – genuine emotions that are naturally felt and displayed. Only when the leader has genuine emotions, authenticity is felt which has several positive effects on both the leader and the leader-follower relationship: the leader's well-being increases, and the followers have a more favorable impression of the leader and show greater trust in the leader, provided the leader's displayed genuinely felt emotions are in line with the display rules of the organization. Of course, the leader's genuinely felt emotions will not always be in line with said rules resulting in emotional dissonance. When they are displayed nevertheless, favorability of the followers and trust in the leader decreases again.

## Emotional regulation

*Emotional regulation* has many routes: besides *suppression* and *re-appraisal* there is also *situation selection*, *situation modification* and *attention deployment* (Gross 2002). When reviewing Zaki's paper on the motivations for empathy, these routes has been described in relation to empathy (see 2.9.3). *Emotional regulation* by *suppression*, however, comes at a physiological price and results in sympathetic activation of the cardiovascular and electrodermal systems (Gross 2002) as well as a loss in memory performance (Hayes et al. 2010). Muraven and



Baumeister (2012) liken the ability to regulating oneself to the working of a muscle that gets tired after use resulting in ego-depletion but becomes stronger when trained. *Re-appraisal*, on the other hand, does not have the same negative side-effects as *suppression* as a form of *emotional regulation*, only that – like *suppression* – it reduces emotional expressiveness (Gross 2002).

Not all of the above listed routes to *emotional regulation* are equally applicable for leaders in all the circumstances as they might lead to behaviors deemed unacceptable for leaders. Leaving or avoiding situations that would cause negative emotions will make the leaders appear weak – if it is possible at all to do so. At some point, the employee has to be told, that he/she is being laid off, the union presentative has to be met to discuss downsizing, and the team has got to be told, that the project will face budget cuts. Procrastination usually is not going to solve an issue. *Situation selection*, therefore, is not a good strategy to deal with emotions. Situations leading to positive emotions will most likely be sought out by most persons.

*Situation modification*, i.e. trying to avoid the unpleasant situation which one has selected, by somehow changing it, might also not work at the office where leaders and coworkers are “trapped” in a web of different role expectations. It will not help the situation, that one talks about last night’s football match with the union representative instead of the downsizing. *Attention deployment* may work when switching the TV program to a less heart breaking program but doesn’t seems possible in the workplace as a leader (or employee). You can’t ignore the depressed and overworked employee forever...

As mentioned in the paragraph above, *re-appraisal* may not cause negative physiological effects but leads to a reduced emotional expressiveness which might also get in the way of leading in an *emotional intelligent* way. Though I have not read studies on the effects of *emotional re-appraisal* on leadership behavior, it might also change the social reality of leaders who practice it. When a leader has to let somebody go, she/he might reappraise the possible unpleasant experience of having to feel bad for the person being laid off as well as feeling bad for having to do that. A *re-appraisal strategy* that I have witnessed frequently with leaders and consultant in my professional experience as business trainer and coach, was relabeling efforts such as “I was firing employee X” to “Employee X was given the opportunity to improve his/her career outside this company”. Such relabeling could constitute a form of *emotional re-appraisal* as it helps the agent to avoid feeling affects like *empathy* and, resulting from that, *sympathy* with the person being laid off. The person applying *emotional re-appraisal* when being in a situation of power might therefore lose touch with the social reality of the co-actors in social interactions. For leaders to regulate emotions at the workplace, *emotional re-appraisal* might not be the best choice of *emotional regulation*.

#### Alternative method of regulating emotions

Alternative *emotional regulation* strategies have also been discussed in the literature and have a close connection to the topic of this dissertation. Kemeny, Foltz et al. (2012) developed a training program that combined education on the effects of emotions, empathy and compas-

sion with secularized Buddhist mindfulness meditation being inspired by prior theoretical considerations on Buddhism and scientific psychology (Ekman et al. 2005). The findings of the experiential study were promising:

*In particular, the training appears capable of reducing “destructive” emotions and emotional behaviors, and the cognitive processes that provoke such responses, as well as increasing positive states of mind, such as positive affect, and prosocial responses, such as compassion. (Kemeny et al. 2012, p. 348)*

The *emotional regulation* was realized in this case by mindfulness of the emotions surfacing in one’s mind when becoming aware of certain external or internal stimuli and learning not to identify with them which causes them to eventually vanish from the mind. The Buddhist’s concepts of mind and emotions are not the same as to what psychology teaches though akin (Ekman et al. 2011). Nevertheless, the method has proven to work for the experimental group (female school teachers). *Acceptance* has been added to the list of regulatory strategies by some researchers (Gratz and Roemer 2008) which is somewhat rooted in the *mindfulness* tradition (Keng et al. 2016) and entails *accepting* surfacing affects without trying to do something about it other than being mindful of it and trusting that it will change and disappear eventually.

*Self-compassion* (see 2.7) has been shown to be effective in the process of regulating negative emotions effectively (Diedrich et al. 2014). Though participants of the control and experiential groups were recruited among person suffering from depressions, there should be little reason why this method would not work with persons in leadership positions. This should be no surprise, as mindfulness is one of the three elements of the *self-compassion* concept (Neff 2003a) and has been shown aid the regulation of emotions effectively. The practice of *self-compassion* not only helps the regulation of negative emotion in its own right but also supports the re-appraising process (Diedrich et al. 2016).

Apart from the regulatory merits of *self-compassion*, it has also other effects that are associated with the practice of it, that make it a promising candidate to be included in an empathy intervention program. Persons, who are *self-compassionate* can accept their role in negative events without becoming overwhelmed, can help to accept less than good feedback, and have a buffer against negative self-feelings (Leary et al. 2007). *Self-compassion* can increase psychological well-being and its buffering effect against negative affects has been demonstrated in yet another study (Neff et al. 2007). Moreover, it increases optimism and other positive affects (Neff and Vonk 2009), which would be highly beneficial for leaders practicing a transformational leadership style (McColl-Kennedy and Anderson 2002).

Not only *self-compassion*, but also *compassion* training has been shown in recent studies to have promising effects on emotional regulation, especially affect trajectories (Jazaieri et al. 2018) as well as on increasing overall happiness (Jazaieri et al. 2014). Participants, who took part in a nine-week *compassion* training program, reported several positive outcomes. They were able to regulate emotions, change their trajectories by accepting the affective state, and

consequently felt less anxiety and more calmness. *Compassion* training also increased positive affect in study participants even when faced with the suffering of other persons (Klimecki et al. 2013a) which – in effect – also represents a form of emotional regulation that could be relevant for leaders who have to face suffering on a regular basis. While the former study featured a nine-week training which will surely be too lengthy for most professionals, the later study only covered a one-day retreat increasing its practicality.

In conclusion, a module as part of an empathy training intervention teaching participants in leadership positions *self-compassion* or, at least, motivating for it, would be highly beneficial. *Self-compassion* complements the empathy concepts very nicely and adds an element that can be practiced at home or – mentally – at work very conveniently.

#### 4.6 Leader empathy and emotional intelligence

As mentioned already, there have been discussions whether leaders actually need empathy/EI to be good leaders or whether it suffices that they are intelligent enough and good at problem solving (Antonakis et al. 2009) and whether EI is actually of any worth for the growth of organizations (Daus and Ashkanasy 2005). That notwithstanding, there are a number of studies that illustrated the importance of EI for leadership. Moreover, after Damasio's many studies on the importance of emotions for decision making processes (neatly summed up in Damasio 2005), the importance of EI for leaders with decision making power has been made blatantly obvious. It has become more and more accepted that emotions and the recognition of them are part of organizational life, can be functional in leadership and group dynamics and do not interfere with rationality (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995). In 2015, *The Leadership Quarterly* even ran a special issue on the subject matter, of which many articles – among others – will be reviewed below.

I categorized the studies on EI/empathy and leadership according to the field of leadership research they most prominently stand for. This causes many overlaps as, for example, studies on *transformational leadership* often deal with the effectiveness of an empathic leadership style as well.

##### 4.6.1 Leadership emergence

The emergence of a leader seems to be a good starting point for reviewing the relationship between empathy/EI and leadership. Leadership emergence can be defined "as the ascension of a leader in a team with no formal mechanism to appoint or elect a leader." (William, Norton I. Jr et al. 2014, p. 514). In the scenario where a team member emerges as a leader among equals the perception of the team mates about the future leader's potential is most important factor – besides the future leader's confidence the she/he's up to the job.

Dominance and intelligence have been shown to play a significant role in the emergence of a leader (Smith and Foti 1998) as well as willingness to serve, domain competence, credibility, goal attainment, display of effective leadership behavior and coping with stress (William, Norton I. Jr et al. 2014). Also, some personality traits of the Big Five have been linked to leadership

emergence: *extraversion* (the above mentioned *dominance* being an aspect of that trait) had the strongest link being followed by *conscientiousness* and *openness*, while *neuroticism* is negatively related (Judge et al. 2002).

Empathy and EI also play a role in this process as research interesting for this dissertation has shown. Kellet, Humphrey et al. (2002) basically identified two behavioral routes of equal importance to emerging leadership. The one route is described above and is characterized by mental abilities and being able to solve complex tasks, the other by displaying empathy, *emotional intelligence*, and a caring attitude towards team members. Empathy plays a central role in the process of emergence – even when the complex task route is taken – as effective communication is necessary for all possible routes to leadership (Kellett et al. 2006). By empathy, the emerging leader gets an understanding as to what emotions are to be expressed to the followers and what should be regulated, as well as signaling that followers' needs are understood.

Empathy has also been identified by another study gathering data from a sample of forty-eight teams as antecedent of leadership emergence (Wolff et al. 2002). It does not exclude cognitive processes and skills deemed important in a leader by team mates in the informal process of choosing a leader from among their ranks, but rather enables them. The cognitive abilities could be properly applied in supporting and developing other team mates when the foundation was empathic understanding. Those, who received empathic support later informally choose the supporter to be their leader. The study counted *perspective-taking* as a cognitive skill and not among the empathy construct as other researchers have been doing (see 2.2). Especially this skill has a great impact in the informal selection process.

Walter, Cole et al. (2012) linked the studies on leadership emergence dealing with personality traits and cognitive task solving abilities with – what they called – emotion recognition. The latter taken for itself was deemed not a sufficient factor for the emergence of leadership, which in this case were teams of undergraduate students doing team assignments.

*Specifically, the potential benefits of superior emotion recognition are only realized among more extraverted individuals who proactively address the task-related issues and preferences uncovered through this ability. (Walter et al. 2012, p. 987)*

Empathy also assists emerging leaders in managing group emotions as Pescosolido (2002) has found while doing qualitative field research with two groups. When the leaders showed both charisma and empathy, they were more likely to engage in the management of group emotions which largely meant reducing uncertainty for group members by picking up cues from the followers and translating them into clear messages. Managing group emotions was identified in his study as one of the major leadership functions, especially keeping the group optimistic and not descending into frustration and depression (see 4.5.2).

#### 4.6.2 LMX and empathy/emotional intelligence

Achieving a HQ LMX can be done just by contingent rewards (see section 4.3.3) without considering EI and empathy. Nevertheless, the bulk of research is on the relationship between EI/empathy and LMX. For example, Barbuto and Burbach reported a positive significant relationship between EI and transformational leadership as well as identifying EI as an antecedent of HQ LMX:

*A significant relationship was found between emotional intelligence and the leader-member exchange for followers. This indicates that leaders with high emotional intelligence will also be strong in developing relationships that promote greater flow of information, sharing of influence, increased confidence and concern for followers, and achieve more highly involved and more communicative followers. (2009, p. 140)*

That being said, the authors of the above cited study clarify at the end of the paper, that though the relationship is significant, it does not account for 95% of the other factors that influence LMX. The study has thus not given much evidence for the effect of EI on the forming of HQ LMX. Most of the influence of EI is seen in the beginning phase of LMX when it is decided whether a follower is HQ LMX “material”. Nevertheless, the beginning phase is of great importance for the formation LMX (see 4.3).

Mahsud and Yukl (2010) have undertaken a differentiated analysis of LMX, leadership behavior and empathy. They basically divided leadership behavior into two categories: task- and relation-oriented behavior. The latter was mediated by leader empathy to affect the development of HQ LMX with followers. So, empathy is an antecedent of HQ LMX when the leader employs a relational style of leadership – like transformational leadership. The leader empathy also predicts very strongly whether a task- or a relation-oriented style of leadership is adopted.

An aspect of EI and empathy (see 4.5.3) is the management of emotions which Little et al. (2016) researched in connection with the LMX-theory. Different interpersonal emotion management strategies were tested against their effect on LMX and LMX relationship to *organizational citizenship behavior* and job satisfaction. The latter effects have been linked to LMX in previous research (see 4.3.1). The authors make the valid point, that the development and maintenance of HQ LMX depends on the successful management of emotions as a close relationship as between leader and follower is likely to be emotionally charged. According to this study, follower perceived the LMX more favorably when the leader employed certain emotional regulation strategies: *situation modification* and *re-appraisal* (named *cognitive change* in the study at hand). These strategies also mediated an increase in *organizational citizenship behavior* and job satisfaction. Interestingly, *situation modification* and *re-appraisal* were understood here as something that the leader did for the follower, i.e. the leader modified a situation so that it caused the follower to feel fewer negative emotions and re-appraised a situation for the follower in such a way that the outlook became more positive. This is a unique take on EI and empathy in that the emotions are managed for somebody else. In many studies on emotional regulation the focus is more on persons regulating their own emotions.

From personal accounts of participants of business trainings and coachings I learnt that negative affects can preoccupy members of work groups for the better part of the day. Empathic and emotionally intelligent leaders would perceive their followers' negative emotions and try managing their emotions to help them concentrate on their tasks again. An existing HQ LMX could be a prerequisite for such an behavior, but further research building on Little et al.'s work (2016) would be necessary. Also, the acceptance of such other-oriented emotional regulation behavior might be influenced by cultural background, gender, or personal experiences. After all, not everybody might like his/her emotions to be regulated by somebody else as that behavior could be deemed as being reminiscent of parental effort to soothe their little ones.

These findings provide interesting research questions (which I will try to elaborate on in the research sections of this work) as to what happens when leaders are trained in empathy: will they show more relation-oriented leadership behavior and make use of the newly acquired skill sets?

An LMX related question would also be, whether leaders trained in empathy and *empathic behavior* will behave any different concerning LMX differentiation (see 4.3). Though developing HQ LMX can create highly efficient work relationships and thus enhance the overall performance of a work team there is an inherent injustice in this process (see 4.3.3). There are members who want to be in the inner circle but are not granted access. Emotionally more intelligent and empathic leaders might not be willing to suppress perceived negative affects of excluded members to the same degree as leaders who haven't received such a training. They might be able to go beyond likes and dislikes and make more members a partnership offering (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995).

#### 4.6.3 Empathy/EI and styles of leadership

Gardner and Stough (2002) confirmed some of the findings of the study above and have found quite a strong relationship between EI-level and the style of leadership taken. Leaders, who consider themselves to be *emotionally intelligent*, endorsed and practiced the different aspects of *transformational leadership*. There was no significant correlation between EI and *transactional leadership* – with none of the subcategories of EI as well. Management by *contingent reward*, on the other hand, showed a slighter weaker correlation with EI than the one between *transformational leadership* and EI. Deviating from Bass (see 4.1) and somewhat following Barling et al. (2000), the authors viewed management by *contingent rewards* as a form of *transformational leadership* which is debatable as the focus on extrinsic rewards it seems to go against the very nature of *transformational leadership*. Regardless to what style of leadership it belongs, it shows that *contingent rewards* management works better with *emotional intelligence*. *Laissez-fair-management* and *management-by-exception* were negatively correlated with EI.

A meta-analysis (Harms and Credé 2010) which mostly used unpublished dissertations as source, came to somewhat different results concerning the effect of EI on *transformational* and *transactional leadership*. Contingent was counted among the methods of the latter in this

case. The relationship of EI and *transformational leadership* and *contingent reward management* was still significant but only moderately so, when the raters of EI and leadership styles were not the same person. Sixty-nine studies were used for this meta-analysis number of whom (not specified) recruited their samples among “coaches, principles, ministers, nurses, supervisors, and student leaders” (p. 9). It would be interesting to know, how the functions of the persons sampled influence the outcome of a study – while a minister certainly leads the congregation, it is more a spiritual leadership than anything else.

Joseph and Newman (2010) performed another meta-analysis with one-hundred-eighteen studies on EI from all kind of sources but with a focus on job performance and EI. The study focused on EI and job performance in general and not on leadership performance in particular. Some conclusion relevant for the topic of this section can be drawn, though. Their unique angle was the categorization of jobs into ones with *low emotional labor* (i.e. Air force mechanic, cigarette factory worker) and ones with *high emotional labor* (i.e. sales, customer service, counselling). The researchers conclude that the intensity of emotional labor (*low/high*) is a moderator for subdimensions of EI (*emotion perception, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation*) to have a significant influence on job performance. The analysis, however, used a cascading model of EI, where *emotion perception* is supposed to lead to *emotion understanding*, which leads to *emotional regulation* and only the latter’s influence on job performance was calculated. That this set-up produces the result that the intensity of *emotional labor* mediates the impact of EI on job performance seems logical as the *emotional regulation* is needed in exactly these jobs. Other aspects of EI could be equally relevant for job performance (or leadership) but have not been analyzed.

Whether leadership is *low or high emotional labor* surely depends on the leader and his/her ability to perceive emotions in the workplace. For those who are high in empathy, the task of managing and leading followers with the ensuing exchanges seems to be *high emotional labor*. Insofar, the findings of the above meta-analysis also pertain to leaders. More so, as all the aspects of empathy in the broader sense and EI in the narrow sense pertain to leadership and not just the regulation of emotions.

#### Transactional leadership

*Transactional leadership* does not seem to need a lot of social skills to work. This is also reflected by the fact, that literature on improving *transactional leadership* skills through EI/empathy seems to be scarce – contrary to *transformational leadership* where plenty was to be found. In fact, evidence is presented that (regular and not emotional) intelligence is among highest predictors of career success (Antonakis et al. 2009).

An empathy development program would probably not increase the effectiveness of this style of leadership very much. Leaders in organizations, where this particular style of management is the norm, should be the ones with the greatest analytical and deductive skills. Equipped with such mental faculties they are the experts at dividing and structuring the work, recognizing the needful and delegating the task to the ones that are best at them and are willing to put in the best effort in exchange for a contingent reward (Antonakis et al. 2009).

Nevertheless, some researchers (Wolff et al. 2002) have identified ways, empathy can assist task-oriented leaders as it can enable cognitive skills used for problem-solving. *Perspective-taking*, which can be seen as based on *empathy*, helps also task-/transactional leaders to analyze their followers and negotiation partners state of mind and base their decision on that. However, should the leader score high on *perspective taking* she/he might deviate from the path of transactional leadership and become more supporting of the subordinates as a significant relationship between the two has been found.

When management by *contingent rewards* is counted to be part of *transactional leadership* (see discussion above), the study by Gardner and Stough (2002) showed a strong relationship between EI and this form of management, which has also been found by other researchers (Barling et al. 2000). It seems that not only taking the perspective of the follower but also understanding his/her emotions while managing one's own and the follower's is an important part of management by *contingent reward*.

#### Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is more likely to benefit from an empathy development program. The importance of having good emotional intelligence as the ability to be aware and change the emotions of followers has been noticed for a long time (Bass 1994). From this initial hunch, many studies followed that shed light on the relationship of EI and *transformational leadership*.

The importance of the perception of the transformational leader's behavior of the followers has been accounted for in Dasborough's and Ashkanasy's model (2002). Attempts at *transformational leadership* will have to be executed with good intentions, as followers will use their EI to identify pseudo leaders who are not authentic in their endeavors and only want to harvest the positive effects of *transformational leadership*.

Barling and Slater et al. (2000) found in an exploratory study that EI is associated with three aspects of *transformational leadership* – *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, and *individualized consideration*. EI, according to their findings, can be seen as a predictor of *transformational leadership*. Gardner and Stough (2002) add *intellectual stimulation* to the list of aspects of *transformational leadership* that have a positive and strong relationship with EI. Though giving no possible reasons why a higher level of *emotional intelligence* should help with stimulating followers, the correlation is as strong as the others.

That *transformational* leaders are per se higher on EI was not supported by Palmer, Walls et al. (2001) study, whose sample was drafted from the alumni of an university in the US that worked in management positions after graduation. However, they found that certain EI subscales significantly correlated with certain dimensions of *transformational leadership*: *inspirational motivation/individualized consideration* and the ability to monitor and manage emotions in oneself and others. *Contingent reward*, which was counted among the traits of *transactional leadership*, also significantly correlated with the management of emotions in oneself and others.



Rubin, Munz et al. (2005) connected the effects of aspects of EI and personality with leadership behavior. Their study with a sample of one-hundred-forty-five managers of a large biotech company showed that leaders with high positive affects were more likely to engage in *transformational leadership* while this did not affect the probability of leaders in engaging in *contingent reward behavior*. The personality trait of *agreeableness* most strongly predicted *transformational leadership behavior*. From all the different dimensions of EI, this study researched the influence of *emotional recognition* in others or, in other words – empathy, on *transformational leadership behavior* and found, that empathic leaders were rated higher by their followers as showing more *transformational leadership* behavior. Contingent reward behavior was not affected by the recognition of emotions which somewhat contradicts the above cited studies. Unique to their study is the link between *extraversion* and EI:

*Perhaps the most important contribution is that leader emotion recognition can interact with extraversion in a way that significantly and positively influences leader performance of transformational leadership behavior. High extraversion provided a clear benefit to leaders who also possessed the ability to accurately recognize emotion. Conversely, leaders who possessed low extraversion and high emotion recognition abilities did not seem to reap the benefits of their emotion recognition ability. (Rubin et al. 2005, p. 854)*

While *extraversion* is not directly related to *transformational leadership* it seems to mediate the effects of EI. The implication for empathy development programs would be that *empathic behavior* (see 2.5) and *perceived empathy* (see 2.6) should be addressed at length as simply being empathic will not be sufficient to be recognized as a empathic and transformational leader by followers. They also have to notice that the leader is harboring these positive affects and caring attitudes. How leaders low on *extraversion* will be able to learn ways to be seen empathic would be another interesting research topic.

One-hundred-thirty executives from construction companies represented the sample of Butler's and Chinowsky's (2006) study. Now, construction seems to be a very interesting field to test the relationship of EI and transformational leadership as, on first glance, it seems an unlikely field for EI and empathy to matter much and, indeed, the construction executives scored high on those EI strength, that only Bar-on (1997) includes in his definition of EI (see 4.5.1): *stress tolerance, optimism, and independence*. The weakest EI components measure were the ones, that many would say belong to the core of the EI concept: *empathy, interpersonal relationships, and social responsibility*. Nevertheless, *transformational leadership skills* were high on the list and construction executives did employ that leadership style. The link with EI in the stricter sense seems somewhat questionable. The weak scores in *empathy* etc. were explained by the authors as typical for that type of industry where contractors employ subcontractors very often with whom a clear transactional relationship exist. This study gives important insights, that the need for EI in executives can vary greatly between industries, or, alternatively, that some industries lack organizational developments efforts and have not (or didn't have to yet) adapted to contemporary forms of leadership.

As the outcomes of *transformational leadership* are much better researched than its antecedents, Barbuto et al. (2006) examined EI as a possible antecedent for *transformational leadership*. Three-hundred-eighty-eight leader-member dyads from the offices of elected public officials were the sample of this study. By and large, this study confirmed the results of the other studies cited in this section. The authors of this study used yet another scale (Carson et al. 2000a), which defined EI as having five dimensions: *empathic response, mood regulation, interpersonal skill, internal motivation, and self-awareness*. The first dimension encompasses both empathy and *empathic behavior* making it an interesting dimension in the context of this work. Barbuto et al. summarize the study highlighting the function of *empathic response*:

*According to the emotional intelligence subscales, empathetic response is the most consistent antecedent of transformational leadership behaviors. The findings across methods indicate a modest relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership.* (Barbuto and Burbach 2006, p. 60)

When it is expected from *transformational* leaders to show *individualized consideration* and act as a kind of coach to their subordinates, *empathic behaviors* will be of great importance (Anderson 2013). Many empathy development programs have been designed to help counsellors from various fields to acquire the right skill sets for their profession (see 3.1). *Transformational* leaders acting in a somewhat similar capacity will have to follow suit albeit in a more business-oriented fashion. Individual treatment of followers, being one of the tenets of *transformational leadership*, can only be achieved when the leader has a good understanding of the emotional needs of the follower for the treatment to be on-target.

Creating a shared vision is an important part of *transformational leadership*. Boyatzis (2015) did not cover EI or empathy directly but offers interesting propositions into the antecedents of the successful formation of a shared vision. He claims that only when individuals are in a *positive emotional attractor state* (PEA) visions can develop. The PEA encompasses the experiencer not only with positive affects but has far-reaching neurological, physiological, and cognitive effects – the whole being is engulfed by this state. He points out that his theory is akin to Fredrickson’s broaden-and-built theory (2001). Leaders who have been perceived to be in this state, are remembered for this by their followers as it is contagious. The author does not mention how this state is to be attained but cultivating positive emotions will surely help. For *transformational leadership* to be effective and visions to stick and spread, the leader has to attain a PEA state her-/himself and “infect” the followers.

### Servant leadership

The philosophy of *servant leadership* is deeply rooted in *understanding* and *empathy* (Greenleaf 1991). It is therefore not at all astonishing that researchers tried to establish a link between *empathy/EI* and *servant leadership*, albeit without touching the chicken-egg-problem. Washington’s et al. (2006) study showed followers attributed leaders they perceived as being *servant leaders* also as *empathic, integer, and competent*. Barbuto (2014), on the other hand, saw a strong, significant correlation between EI and *servant-leadership* ideology, but could not find a corresponding correlation between follower ratings of *servant-leadership* behavior.

*Emotionally intelligent* leaders tried to be a *servant leader*, but their efforts weren't recognized as such by the followers. Unfortunately, the research ended here, as it would be nice to know what the leader, who tried to be a servant, actually was in the eyes of the followers. How are leaders perceived that fail to be recognized as *servant leaders*?

#### 4.6.4 Leadership effectiveness

The link between EI and leadership performance is, unfortunately, not as uncomplicated as it sounds when reading management literature on EI (Joseph and Newman 2010). There is strong evidence for the link between empathy and EI and leadership performance and effectiveness as the literature quoted in this section and subsections shows, but other factors have to be accounted for that predicate the effectiveness of EI and empathy in leadership behavior (Vidyarathi et al. 2014).

The issue should also be explored from a holistic and sustainability standpoint as there are many more factors to consider when job performance is not the only variable that leaders of large organizations have to consider: sickness rate, unwanted employee turnover, quality of organizational climate, quality of talent management in the organization etc. The review of the literature on LMX has shown that the respective leader has some influence on these factors (see 4.3). Section 4.6.2 has shed light on the link between LMX and empathy/EI.

Moreover, not all leadership styles and, for that matter, leaders might require the same level of EI and empathy to be effective, or, from a different perspective, some leaders are predisposed to use certain leadership styles for achieving the results defined by their organization as the optimum as they suit their personality and their disposition towards empathy better than others. *Transformational leadership*, for example, has been linked to some of the *Big five* personality traits. Leaders who score high on *agreeableness* are more likely to display *transformational leadership* behavior, followed by *extraversion* and *open to experience* but with a smaller correlation (Judge and Bono 2000).

Nevertheless, a lot of studies indicate, that EI and empathy can increase the effectiveness of leader, follower, or organizational performance indirectly by improving leader-follower-relationships (see 4.6.2), by making *transactional* or *transformational leadership* behavior (see 4.6.3) more effective, which in turn has been shown to improve job performance. Other studies have found a direct correlation between EI/empathy and leadership effectiveness and/or job performance.

Yitshaki's study (2012) on entrepreneurs of start-up companies is an example for the former studies. An indirect link between EI and the growth of newly founded businesses was found and a direct link between *transformational leadership* behavior and growth. The former mediated the effect of the latter.

Though Pirola-Merlo, Härtel et al. (2002) have not directly researched the influence of EI on leadership, they have found that leadership mediates team performance via the team climate, the mood the team is in. The study was with fifty-six Australian R&D teams as is seen by the

authors as preliminary evidence for the importance of recognizing and managing emotions in followers when performance matters.

The already discussed study of Gardner and Stough also evaluated leadership outcomes and drew the conclusion that:

*The outcomes of leadership (extra effort, effectiveness and satisfaction) were all found to correlate significantly with the components of emotional intelligence as well as with total emotional intelligence. Each outcome of leadership correlated the strongest with the dimension of understanding of emotion external. (2002, p. 76)*

Of course, when discussing outcomes of leadership behavior, relying on self-report measures might not be enough. Relevant performance figures as well as feedback from other side of the leader-member-dyad would have been preferable to get a more reliable picture.

One-hundred-eighty-six top executives were the sample of the study by Stein, Papadogiannis et al. (2009) using Bar-On's EQ-i (Bar-On 1997) which is based on an umbrella model of EI including everything that is not cognitive intelligence. Among other dimension of Bar-on's EI construct it was empathy that showed a significant relationship with the profitability of the organization members of the sample. Moreover, the sample that the author researched had a higher level of total EQ-I than the rest of the population, which is not surprising as *traits* as *assertiveness, optimism, independence, stress management, problem solving, etc.*, are also included. The finding on the correlation of empathy and profitability are good motivators for leaders to attend empathy development programs – especially since surprisingly few managers remember a couple of years out of college the difference between correlation and causation.

Work context and cultural context have been shown to be important factors in understanding the relationship between EI and leadership effectiveness (Vidyardhi et al. 2014). In a study with eighty-eight managers and three-hundred-ninety-one full-time-employees (FTE) working at an assembly-line in India the factors of power-distance (Hofstede 1980) and work interdependence in teams were researched in the light of the leader's perception of the emotions of her/his followers. First of all, 24,3% of the variance in the job performance of the FTEs were explained with the empathic skills of the leader. Although leader empathy always had a certain influence on the job performance of the employees, it was moderated by power-distance, which attenuated the effect when high. High task interdependence in the work group, on the other hand, which increased the effect. In other word, when task interdependence is high and the distance between leader and follower is low, the effect of leader empathy on the followers' job performance is highest.

## 5 Research questions and methodological approach

### 5.1 Personal starting point

Before formulating the research questions that this dissertation strives to explore, I would like to reflect my personal connections to the subject at hand to explore my own paradigms in preparation of the planned qualitative research.

*However, qualitative research demands disclosure about a researcher's personal roles and traits that also might affect a study and its outcomes. (Yin 2011, p. 42)*

Since 1994 I have been practicing meditational yoga that considers the development of personal qualities like compassion for other beings, non-violence in action, words, and thought, and freedom from greed as of paramount importance for the attainment of yogic perfection as well as for peace, well-being and tranquility. Though the yogic path stresses the importance of these personal qualities, no special technique is prescribed for the attainment of these. It is believed that by meditation on the supreme being who is believed to possess these qualities in abundance, the practitioner will also attain them – as a person who approaches the sun will become like fire in the course of the process<sup>8</sup>.

Apart from my spiritual endeavors where compassion as a concept akin to empathy (see 2.4.3) is valued greatly, empathy itself became an important skill in my professional life. Over the past twelve I have been conducting business trainings and coachings for professionals mostly from the corporate world. On the one side, as a trainer and coach being empathic is highly important in order to “read” the emotions of trainees and coachees and adequately react to them. Very soon, I observed that this skill is important for my participants as well and made empathy interventions part of the training curricula whenever it seemed fitting. Especially, when training participants to interact with colleagues and customers from countries where non-verbal communication and emotional subtext are often more important than the direct message (Hall 1990), empathy seemed to be pivotal for effective communication. Feedback from former participants reinforced my conceptions about the importance of this skill.

Marshal Rosenberg's work, which I learnt about in 2014, served as a bridge between my private and my professional ambitions concerning empathy. Studying his work on non-violent communication and attending such trainings myself I have learnt a lot about the merits of non-violent communication in everyday dealings between family, friends, and colleagues. Especially the tools for increasing *empathic understanding* appeared to be very useful and were employed by me in trainings and coachings as well.

While reviewing the literature on empathy and empathy interventions I came in touch with the research done on the effects of the Buddhist compassion meditations (Neff 2003a; Singer and Bolz 2013) and started to include some of these practices in my meditational routines as

well. Especially, Neff's meditational routines for *self-compassion* have proofed to be very useful for myself and has helped me greatly in difficult periods of my life.

All in all, it is safe to say, that, personally, I think that empathy and compassion have been playing an important part in my life and that I myself am striving to be an empathic person in the sense of acting empathically and compassionately towards others and highly value these behavioral traits in others. I will have to be keep this in mind, when collecting data for the empirical part of this work through qualitative interviews and observation of participants during the trainings.

Having studied sociology, I was educated about how to conduct empiric research – quantitatively as well as qualitatively – and visited lectures on the philosophy of science. Professor Dr. Rudolf Brüse has instilled the merits and the practicality of qualitative research in me – a method he himself employed when doing market research for private companies. I am positive that this training in empirical research, which I have refreshed as well as intensified in the course of the literature review for this dissertation by studying the works of Corbin and Strauss (2015), Yin (2011), Klenke et al. (2015), Hill et al. (1997), Kromrey at al. (2016) and Lamnek and Krell (2016), will help me conducting this research project.

## 5.2 Research questions

Following a qualitative research paradigm, I allowed my research questions to evolve from the starting point of my doctoral research project when I handed in an exposé to be accepted as PhD-candidate all through the literary review and the first interviews (Maxwell 2009). While initially my focus was more on empathy interventions that targeted the entire organization, I soon realized that it will be hard to find an entire organization that would to partake in such an experiment. It seemed logical to limit the scope to those persons in leadership positions who are directly in charge of subordinates. After several HR department heads pointed out the intricacies of conducting 360-degree measurements of training impact in their organizations, which the CEO and the workers' council would have to approve, I realized that focusing on the experience of the leader would be a viable option.

The review of existing empathy intervention programs has shown that a multitude of different training approaches exist and many of them have shown a significant increase in empathy and *empathic behavior* in the participants. However, of the two-hundred-forty-three studies that I have reviewed “second handedly” by screening overview- and meta-studies none was concerned with leadership behavior. The effects of empathy interventions seem to have been largely tested on nurses, doctors, teachers, social workers, counsellors, psychologists and, predominantly, students aspiring to work in any of these professions.

Though it might very well be possible, that studies on the effect of empathy development programs on leadership behavior have slipped my attention or have surfaced after I have finished the literature review, in the light of the care and diligence I have invested in this undertaking, I feel safe to say, that the subject has received little attention as of now and would

profit from further research. Altmann et al. (2015) have announced to explore this topic in a paper on empathy training but have not published in that regard, yet.

Empathy interventions are, of course, not only tested with participants who are expected to be empathic professionally but with participants who are suffering from some empathy deficit or persons with Asperger syndrome, sexual offenders, or prisoners with a disposition to physical violence. These empathy interventions have been thoroughly researched over the past decades (e.g. Baron-Cohen et al. 2001), but have little relevance for this work, although there are some authors who attest prominent leaders to have clinical empathy deficits (Dutton 2014; Hare 2005).

While it might be that some individuals from the league of the Fortune 500 CEO suffer from a lack of empathy due to a disposition for psychopathy, it is safe to assume that the majority of person who have accepted leadership position do not have clinical empathy deficits. On the contrary, empathy has been shown to be antecedent for leadership emergence (see 4.6.1). Of course, many leaders have been selected and did not emergence from among equals.

In section 4 leadership as well as the relationship between leadership and empathy have been discussed. Empathy has been shown to have several positive effects on leadership behavior and leadership outcomes. Quite a few studies have shown strong correlations between the emergence of leadership, the forming of high-quality leader-member-exchanges, positive leader's as well follower's job performances and leader's empathy/*emotional intelligence*. Leader empathy/*emotional intelligence* and leadership behavior were either measured by self-report assessments tools or was judged by the respective followers.

Leader *empathy* and leader *emotional intelligence* were treated in the studies reviewed as a constant which it is not, as sections 2 and 3 have shown. As empathy (understood here as a multidimensional construct) is trainable<sup>9</sup>, the effects of an empathy intervention on leadership behavior would be interesting to know. It is safe to assume that there is an effect regarding the general effectiveness of empathy intervention – even when the program is not attended voluntarily (see section 3.1.1.5). However, how the quality of leadership behavior changes after an intervention and what the trainees experience afterwards, seems to be an underexplored area which leads to the following main research question:

*MRQ. How does an empathy development program influence the quality of leadership behavior from the perspective of persons in leadership positions?*

Starting from this main research question that – following the tradition of qualitative research – is formulated broadly, realistically, and process-oriented (Maxwell 2009), different sub-questions come to mind pertaining to the different aspects of leadership behavior and empathy:

- SQ1. At what different levels is empathic leadership behavior shown: at leader-member dyad level (see 4.3 and 4.6.2), at group level, and/or at organizational level.

- SQ2. How and where can empathic leader behavior that has been acquired in a training program be applied in the daily routines of a leader?
- SQ3. How long can the leader uphold the motivation to react and act empathically towards subordinates and co-workers or even towards superiors after the training has past?
- SQ4. How do empathic leaders perceive their effectiveness in motivating followers to commit to the organization, to perform better, and/or to show compliant behavior?
- SQ5. Does the leader perceive an effect on both his/her own job performance and that of the followers?
- SQ6. Did an increase in empathy change the leader's perception of "good" job performance – for the leader and the follower?
- SQ7. How are organizational constraints influencing the resolve of a leader to lead in an *emotional intelligent way*?
- SQ8. Is it possible at all, to individually go against the predominant organizational culture and establish an empathic work group culture?
- SQ9. Are leaders with a sharpened sense for empathy becoming more lenient in managing employees and permitting too many exceptions?<sup>10</sup>
- SQ10. Is empathy extended to the competition so that it takes the edge off the manager?
- SQ11. How will an empathy training program effect the forming of HQ and LQ LMX? Will it have an effect LMX differentiation in that the former well-established membrane between ordinary followers and the cadre will get porous again?
- SQ12. Is a leader who became more empathic willing to ignore the inherent injustices of LMX differentiation?
- SQ13. Is a change in work group climate noticeable to the leader who has become more empathic<sup>11</sup>?
- SQ14. Will leaders make different experiences with empathic leadership behavior when leading direct reports and when leading virtual teams or followers in a matrix organization?
- SQ15. How are leaders coping with the increased influx of empathic information from their followers?
- SQ16. Are leaders applying the *compassion* and *self-compassion* cultivating techniques that will be part of the training program to prevent *personal distress*?

While I do hope to find answers for the main research question with this research redesign, the sub-questions are somewhat "bonus material" as it is unclear at this point, whether the research method is fit to answers these very specific questions (Maxwell 2009).

### 5.3 The research design

In any research project different considerations are supposed to precede the finalization of the research design (Przyborski 2014, p. 118)<sup>12</sup>:



- Clarity on one's personal interest in the subject of the research and the formulation of a research question
- Opting for a suitable methodology
- Determining a focused topic area<sup>13</sup>
- Reflection of data collection methods and their implications for the whole process
- Decisions regarding sampling and the representativeness of the sample in regard to building theories
- Decisions regarding the theoretical grounding of the research

The answer to point 1 has already been attempted in sections 5.1 and 5.2, the rest of section 5 will be devoted to the other points. Answering point 1 before diving deeper into methodological consideration seemed logical as this was my personal starting point and the decision for a suitable methodology and theoretical consideration came later.

### 5.3.1 Methodological considerations

To answer the research questions will be attempted by using a qualitative research design featuring a self-designed empathy training program, the delivering of said program to different groups of participants, interviewing participants approximately four weeks after the program, and analyzing the data from the interviews and from the observations during the training programs. The reasons for such a design are multifold but simple at the core: being a professional business trainer and coach this kind of research design seemed natural to me and connected my professional and the aspiring academic world. It also afforded me the opportunity to enter a new research field very different from the one I chose for my master's thesis. Moreover – and this is being an important factor, too – the research design seemed to be doable with little funding, or, even better, could have funded itself.

As I am self-employed, the time spent on finding participants and conducting trainings is essentially time I cannot use for earning money. My initial plan (see below), to let the organization to whom the participants belong, pay for the trainings as a regular human resource development measure, did not work out. Therefore, the number of trainings I was able to conduct was limited to three which limited the number of participants. Though handing out questionnaires to 10-20 participants would also be parsimonious way to collect data in a quantitative way, the size of the sample would be far too small to match the quality criteria of quantitative studies.

The qualitative approach offers unique insights into the research questions that a mere quantitative research couldn't (Lamnek and Krell 2016) and has been intriguing to me for a long time. The empathy studies reviewed that used qualitative methods (see section 3.2) demonstrated the effectiveness of this methodology for empathy research. In leadership studies as well, qualitative methods have been shown to complement quantitative measures very nicely (or the other way around) and is featured in all the important journals (Klenke et al. 2015). In the light of the many qualitative papers that have been published by renowned researcher in

high profile journals (Gephart 2004), I will desist from the – at least in German – customary qualitative research apologetics.

It would be equally interesting to measure the increase of *empathic behavior* shown in leadership situations after an empathy development program, the effect of increased leader empathy on follower satisfaction, leader and follower job performance, leader and follower sick and turnover rate, but doing that at the workplace would involve very intrusive monitoring methods. This would require far reaching access to the respective organization which is hard to come by as it constitutes a major intervention for the group/organization which would need the consent of the workers' counsel and the management. To do it in an experimental setup, on the other hand, would only very superficially simulate the environment of the workplace with its myriads of sensory impulses, systemic behavioral constrain, expectations, and human interactions. Nevertheless, a combined approach (Bryman 2004) would probably yield the most in-depth answers to the research questions.

In the course of planning the research design and reviewing the literature, empathic leadership crystallized more and more as the *focused topic area* (Hill et al. 1997). It became apparent that the insights into the beliefs, reasonings and mental blockades of the participants to engage in *empathic behavior* with their subordinates, the inner experiences they made with this kind of behavior and their motivational paradigms for applying (or not applying) empathic behavior interested me the most. The perspective of trainees of empathy interventions is not very well explored as Nerdrum has concluded:

*It is a paradox that research into empathy training, where the perspective of the "other" is the primary focus, only marginally has focused on the trainees' experiences. (2002, p. 610)*

After scanning the literature, I can attest that this statement – though made sixteen years ago – still holds true and I believe that this research project will contribute to the discussion on empathy and leadership and potentially help organizations who want to incorporate empathy interventions into their existing leadership development programs.

Opting for a research methodology and determining the *focused topic area* went hand in hand. When it became clear during the process of conducting this research project that qualitative methods will yield the most promising results and fit my situation (and personality) best, the more the focus within the vast area of leadership and organizational behavior sharpened on the inner experience of the leader. Though there are different ways of evaluating a training program's effectiveness, the results produced by qualitative ones (as reviewed in section 3.2) struck me as at least equally relevant as those produced by quantitative measures. With the *focused topic area* in mind, the qualitative interview seemed to be best suited to answer the research questions.

#### Theoretical grounding

Przyborski recommends (2014) choosing a theoretical grounding early in the research process that includes a methodology but also goes beyond. Following this advice, I made the decision

to use *Grounded Theory* (GT) (Corbin and Strauss 2015) as the main methodology for my study. The incremental approach of GT representing multiple loop learning (Senge 2010) fascinates me for various reasons. It takes into account that the researcher and consequently the research questions and everything else change in the process of research through contact with the objects of research. Moreover, it sees the background and the experience of the researcher with the field as a valuable assets and not as a stumbling block to objectivity (Maxwell 2009). In the quantitative paradigm, the process starts with a hypothesis that researchers have developed without having dived into the field in the same way as the qualitative researcher does (Lamnek and Krell 2016).

That GT was successfully used in other dissertations with similar research questions where the researchers were working single-handedly and not in research teams (Urban 2008; Schmid 2010) strengthened my resolve to go in that direction. Taking Nerdrum's study (2002) as an example, I will also take inspirations from methodology of Hill et al. (1997), who have built on GT but made some modifications concerning sampling and coding (see below).

The decision for a qualitative research paradigm also has ramifications for the theoretical grounding, though this – in the name of *reflectivity* – is an area that doesn't interests me by far not as much as the social reality of the participants of this study. Studying sociology, I sat in lectures comparing *positivism* with *symbolic interactionism* and *pragmatism* as in sociology both the quantitative and the qualitative research paradigm are well-spread. Many sociologists feel the apologetic need to show members of the natural sciences, that they, too, are real scientist by adopting a *positivistic* outlook on their discipline and use quantitative measures. But what works well for microbes has some limits when the observed behavior becomes more complex than cell division.

Opting for qualitative research in general and *GT* in specific has been caused by and, vice versa, causes a specific paradigm, though one is not limited to a single one (Maxwell 2009).

*Your selection of a paradigm (or paradigms) is not a matter of free choice. You have already made many assumptions about the world, your topic, and how we can understand these, even if you have never consciously examined these. Choosing a paradigm or tradition primarily involves assessing which paradigms best fit with your own assumptions and methodological preferences; ... (Maxwell 2009, p. 224)*

When reflecting my assumptions on the world in general and the behavior of human actors, I was influenced by *symbolic interactionism* and can agree with most of the assumptions that Corbin supposed Strauss was living by (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Nevertheless, due to my education in the philosophy of Yoga as written down in the Bhagavad-gita<sup>14</sup>, I would – unlike the more radical thinkers of *interactionism* – not doubt the existence of an absolute reality, which is called *brahman* in Sanskrit. Only the imperfect senses and mind make it impossible for most beings, and certainly me, to have but a distorted view of that absolute reality.

In this regard, *symbolic interactionism* gives a brilliant theoretical grounding as to how human actors are trying to make sense of the environment and the multitudes of interactions with fellow actors by attributing symbolic meaning to them. Actors are constantly negotiating sense and are signaling other actors how to come to an understanding that can never be fully congruent but makes joint interactions more likely and successful (Esser 1999).

While *interactionism* has a strong and almost exclusive focus on the interactions between social actors which alone create social reality, I also assume that systemic factors influence human behavior as well and have been influenced by social systems thinking as propounded by Niklas Luhmann (Luhmann 2015) and interpreted by others (Esser 1999; Bosetzky et al. 2002; Senge 2010). According to Luhmann, building on the work of Parson (1977), both the interactions of the members of an organization which are communicative in essence as well as the organization itself with its rules and norms shape the behavior of the individual actor.

Strauss and Corbin, both influenced by *interactionism* and (American) *pragmatism*, rather neglect the systemic influences on behavior in their GT and exclusively focus on the individual actor trying to make sense of symbolic meaning through interacting with others. For this work, the systemic viewpoint is interesting insofar, as the behavior of leaders is always happening within the boundaries of the respective systems they are member of and is being shaped by it. Nevertheless, leaders also have some degree of leeway and can shape the culture of the departments they are leading. When trying to understand the inner experience of leaders after an empathy intervention when they had time to interact with their followers and to put the newly learnt behavioral patterns into practice, the application of GT grounding in *interactionism* will hopefully yield the best insights.

However, it would also be equally interesting to research the systemic changes that might be caused by organization-wide empathic interventions, which was my initial idea for a dissertational project. In this project, only one leader per organization gets an empathy intervention. Pessimistically, it can be assumed that even if the leader changes his/her behavior and leads in a more empathic way, after a while the “empire strikes back”, i.e. the leaders feels the normative pressure of the surrounding organization in some way or other and rewinds the personal change process as organizational learning is a tricky thing (Senge 2010). Optimistically, the organizational unit of the empathic leader functions as a germ-cell and is the nucleus of system wide change.

Unfortunately, the means to undertake an organization-wide intervention as well as to measure the effects are not at my disposal. Perhaps the data contrived in this study will yield some insights into systemic constraint or boosters of an empathic change process.

### Quality criteria

Being scientific research, qualitative research has to follow quality criteria the same way as quantitative research to produce significant results. The quality criteria, however, are somewhat different from quantitative research (Bryman 2004). Meeting these quality standards starts with choosing a research questions that qualitative methods can answer the best (Przyborski 2014). The research questions of this work were specifically formulated to meet

this criterion. The inner experience of the leader is of interest here, the quality of the relationships with subordinates, and the quality of emotional regulation after an empathy intervention. In the Weberian sense (Weber 1922), understanding the social actor, the leader, is the goal of this research.

Grounded Theory developed initially by Glaser and Strauss (2009) in 1965 and continually refined by Corbin and Strauss (2015) provides an excellent framework to achieve this understanding but brings a few theoretical implications as the research approach is fundamentally different from the research paradigm of quantitative research. The quality criteria known from quantitative research, *validity*, *reliability*, and *objectivity*, have to be defined in a different way to apply to the paradigm of qualitative research (Lamnek and Krell 2016; Klenke et al. 2015).

Lincoln and Guba (2006, 2011) suggest alternative criteria for determining the quality of a qualitative research project. *Internal validity*, which in quantitative research denotes the causal attribution of changes of the dependent variable to changes of the independent variable by systematically eliminating other influencing factors as much as possible, is being replaced with *credibility* – i.e. the credibility of the researcher, the data, and the methods employed which is closely connected to the degree of *reflexivity* and *authenticity* of the researcher. *External validity*, the extent to which the findings pertaining to a specific population from which the sample was drawn can be transferred to other population as well, is being replaced by *transferability*, the degree to which results are transferable to other contexts and settings and allow the building of theory. *Reliability*, the extent by which the same findings can be duplicated by different researchers as well as in different experiments over time, is being replaced by *dependability*, meaning how much the results depend on the persona of the researcher, and *objectivity*, the extent to which the findings are not influenced by the observer, by *confirmability*, the degree to which the findings can be confirmed by others.

*Credibility* I plan to create by reflecting extensively about my motives and biases, jotting down notes and being upfront and authentic with the interviewees. The degree of *external validity* will be hard to judge before the data has been analyzed. Due to the small sample size, the personality traits of the participants might play a big role in the reception of the training. On the other hand, *ecological validity* (Lamnek and Krell 2010) is quite high, as the study was not done in laboratories and not with students but with actual leaders in a realistic personnel development set-up by a real facilitator. *Dependability* is a hard one to create in this study, as it is a one-man-job. As I am providing a very detailed description of the training design using elements that are well-known, the study can easily be replicated. Nevertheless, I certainly do display my very own mix of idiosyncrasies and individual learning history. When modelling *empathic behavior* for the participants of the training program, the personality of the facilitator is hard to duplicate. Standardization by letting participants watch a pre-recorded video-content would be a solution but takes a lot of the dynamic from a training program, that has an influence on the participants. Sacrificing the quality of the program for the sake of standardization, seems to be a poor choice. Group dynamics and social learning are also very hard to standardize but are important elements of the learning experience. Nevertheless, my personal experience of 12 plus years as a business trainer has taught me, that training groups are

not that different overall and largely follow the same systemic rules. *Confirmability* is being strived for by making the different steps of the process transparent and available to the interested reader. Participants will be asked to comment on the transcript and the formed categories and sub-categories. Corbin and Strauss's (2015) strategy for substituting *objectivity* is being *sensitive* and respectful towards the participants and the data that researchers mine from them.

Maxwell (2009), too, has hatched out a checklist to guard the validity of qualitative research projects against the threads of *bias*, the distortion of the collected data "by the researcher's theory, values, or preconceptions" (p. 243) and *reactivity*, the extent to which the researcher influences the object of research while researching it:

1. *Intensive, long-term involvement* with the members of the sample like in long-term participants observation
2. "*Rich*" data that are detailed and varied resulting from verbatim transcripts supplemented by observational notes
3. *Respondent validation* by systematically getting feedback from the members of the sample on the data and the conclusions that one has drawn from them
4. *Searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases* that force the researcher to look for alternative explanations or let the reader do that
5. *Triangulation* by collecting data from different individuals and by different means to rule out judgment errors on behalf of the researcher
6. *Quasi-statistics* by extracting quantifiable numerical results from the data to support statement concerning quantity
7. *Comparison* between different samples when undertaking multisite studies

For this study, not that many points from Maxwell's check-list can be realized due to the nature of this doctoral study. *Intensive long-term involvement* is not a given. At least, the researcher comes into contact with the participants twice: a prolonged time during the training and during the interview. Unfortunately, the time during the training can only be used partially as observations and impressions had to be noted down after the training. "*Rich*" data is definitely a given in this study as the interviews will be coded using both the transcript and the audio files. Enriching the interviews by observations, however, is not possible as the interviews are being conducted over the telephone. *Respondent validation* is at least being attempted in as many cases as possible. The small-time frame remaining for the completion of this study along with the limited time the participants have at their disposal will somewhat pose a challenge to this.

*Searching for discrepant evidence* also has limited usage for this project as the number of participants is already set. The researcher will have to be extra careful to detect tendencies of the participants avoiding making negative statements concerning the training program just to be polite towards the researcher who also designed and conducted the training. Luckily, the majority of the participants come from a region of Germany that is rather well-known for their *low-context* style of communication (Hall 1990) and do not shy away from direct feedback even if it is unpleasant for the communication partner. *Triangulation*, a method that Hill et al.

(1997) also highly endorse with their *consensual qualitative research (CQR)*, will not be possible as a) I am conducting the research single handedly and b) means of data collection are basically limited to the interview and can only partially be enriched by observations.

*Quasi-statistics* do not make that much sense with a sample of six. Still, when applicable, quantitative statements will be made to put the results into perspective. In the same way, *comparison* as a means to increase validity is only partially possible as the persona of the facilitator and the research is always the same. As the members of the sample come from different organizations, have different professions and are diverse concerning age and gender, at least here the element of *comparison* comes into play.

The above mentioned *consensus* method (Hill et al. 1997) can also not be applied to increase validity as that option is only for research teams. Following Hill et al. (1997) I have been recording my expectations and biases before each interview. In lieu of a team to discuss these, this affords me at least the opportunity to reflect them, although – as the authors point out – this is no guarantee, that one realizes all one's biases and is not influenced by them. But at least, it is a step towards increasing the validity and objectivity of the research design.

That only one interviewer is doing the interviews has advantages as well as disadvantages (Hill et al. 1997): there is possible a greater consistency across the interviews as the interviewees react to the same personality. On the other hand, all data is distorted by the same kind of interviewer bias and the interviewer's style possible yields only specific data while other pieces of information slip his or her attention that would have riveted other interviewers.

I am fully conscious of the possible pitfalls of such an approach where I am personally involved in designing, conducting, and evaluating. Such an approach is not unheard of and Nerdrum's and Rønnestad's study (2002) received a lot of attention and is much cited. Contrary to Nerdrum, who was involved in the same way as I but had his co-author to reflect his involvement and biases and do much of the data analysis, this research project is a solo undertaking.

All the more, my personal bias will have to be reflected very carefully while interacting with the participants. Before each interview I will reflect on them and write them down. During the interview, I will jot down observations and thoughts which will be written down after the interview. When analyzing the data this information will be taken into account.

I am making great effort to keep an open mind towards the results of the research and try to dispose of preconceived opinions regarding the effectiveness of empathy interventions for leadership behavior. The review on the literature on leadership behavior (section 4), helped me to reflect preconceived notions and accept the possibility that increased empathic exchanges will not necessarily be better for leaders.

Personal involvement and resulting distortions are possible in the following areas:

1. Design of the program
2. Conducting of the program
3. Interviewing participants
4. Analyzing the data

Distortions in designing the program cannot be ruled out. I am trying to keep them minimal by designing the program mainly by following the findings of the meta-studies and other studies discussed in section 3.1. Moreover, the two most important elements used in this training have been proven successful in other training programs under controlled conditions (see section 5.3.3). When conducting the program, the persona of the trainer does play a role. Having the necessary qualifications and twelve years of practice I consider myself apt for this task.

A plus concerning validity is, that all three programs were conducted by the same trainer. It has to be considered, though, that the participants of the training program might have bonded with me (or developed an antipathy) during the training, which would influence their responses in the interview resulting in distorted data. This definitely could reduce the quality of the study and needs to be met with reflection. *Reactivity* as the influence of the researcher on the participants is impossible to avoid in any kind of study. Maxwell (2009) points out that understanding how the influence happens is part of the solution. When interviewing the participants and when analyzing the data, being aware of *reactivity* and noting down incidences where influencing could have happened, will somewhat reduce this effect.

The transcribing of the interviews was done by an experienced transcription service provider following simply rules of content-oriented-semantic transcription (Dresing and Pehl 2015). Though some information is omitted when using simple instead of extended rules for transcription, the transcript comes with jump labels allowing me to also easily listen to the passages that are being coded using data analysis software (MAXQDA). This easy access to the original data seemed to justify the considerable amount of money that is to be saved when opting for simple transcription rules.

When analyzing the data using Hill's et al. CQR-method (1997) of reaching consensus employing different researchers, would be the preferred choice. As I will be doing it alone, distortions are, of course, possible. Staying very close to the data will be the only way, to ensure *validity*.

#### Choosing the sample

In section 5.3.2 the endeavors for finding participants for this study are described. Unfortunately, I was not in the position to choose participants in an incremental way often done in qualitative research like *theoretical sampling* (choosing participants to substantiate a theory) until *theoretical saturation* (any more new samples will not add new categories and insights to the process) is achieved (Corbin and Strauss 2015). Nevertheless, the sampling procedure closely resembles *criterion-based sampling* (LeCompte et al. 1993), as the criterion for inclusion into the sample are being defined by the research design (being in a leadership position),



or *purposive sampling* (Yin 2011), as those participants were selected that could contribute the most to the research questions at hand – the ones with subordinates to lead.

Though the members of the sample were selected by chance, it was not *random sampling* where a statistically defined sample is selected from well-known population (Yin 2011). On the contrary, the members of the sample all chose the program out of interest for an empathy training program. Nevertheless, an element of *convenience sampling* (Maxwell 2009) remains (see 5.3.2 for the process of finding participants). No monetary incentives were given to the participants to become part of the sample, except that they would receive a soft skills training from a business trainer with plus ten years of experience free of costs. Unlike the participants from training No. 1 (who unfortunately could not be included in the sample anyway for reasons described below), the others were attending outside work and had to invest their (precious) free time or a vacation day for the program. Considering the value that many people in Germany attribute towards free time (*Freizeit*), I felt flattered by the interest in the topic. It was clear to all the participants, that the training program addressed professional interaction at the workplace. Nevertheless, I (and sometimes a participant) pointed to the value of empathic behavior in others spheres of life.

All participants chose to attend the programs voluntarily. They were all motivated to learn about empathic behavior which they expressed during the introductory round prior to the training (see 6.1). Some had come into contact with the works of Goleman, some attended meditation retreats, some had already heard about NVC, and some simply voiced a general interest in adopting a more people-oriented leadership style. Sourcing participants who had no interest in empathy did not work out for various reasons (see 5.3.2). Whether the findings of this study would equally pertain to participants who are requested to attend a program like this by their authorities or who partake in the program as part of a larger leadership development program, would be subject to further studies. Based on past research, it is safe to say, that an empathy training does have an effect, even when the participants do not know what they are training (c.f. Klimecki et al. 2014). Studies where the participants knew that empathy was being training but had to attend the program as it was part of their professional training, showed that the empathy interventions are effective when attendance is compulsory (see 3.1.1.5 as well as (Misra-Hebert et al. 2012; Altmann et al. 2015; Nerdrum and Rønnestad 2002)).

The population from the which the sample was chosen had regional and sociographic limits. The population was limited to German leaders as I was not looking for participants in other countries and the Website I set up for this purpose was in German. My customer base and network colleagues are mostly coaching members of the middle management and CEOs of medium-sized companies – no Fortune 500 CEO among them. Although I had contacted various CEOs of major clinics, none of them responded positively. From a sociographic point of view, the sample consisted of members of the middle-class (Esser 1999), were all academics, German nationals and didn't have any migratory backgrounds (at least, from what they told

me and judging by their names). More diversity would have been nice as the cultural background has been shown to influence leadership behavior (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2004). At least genderwise I am covered, as men attended the program, too<sup>15</sup>.

Regarding the sample size for a qualitative study I was not able to meet the minimum of seven as recommended by some researchers (Hill et al. 1997; Hill et al. 2005) but came pretty close with six. Though eleven participants attended the trainings, not all met the criteria for inclusion in the sample (P6, P10 and P11) or were available for the interview (P2). After interviewing P6 it became clear that she didn't have any interactions with colleagues that could be remotely characterized as leader-follower-exchange so that including her in the sample seemed pointless. Adopting Corbin and Strauss' (2015) pragmatic approach, "A researcher knows when sufficient sampling has occurred when the major categories demonstrate specificity, are dense in terms of properties, show dimensional Variation, and are well integrated." (p. 141), I hope that the data collected from the sample will suffice as there is no possibility in this research design for incremental sampling as in *theoretical sampling* (see above). Though not being transcribed too save money, the four interviews not included in the sample (P1, P6, P10, and P11) provide valuable impressions as to the impact of the training which will be reported below.

While the members of my sample meet the criterion of being leaders, it remains to be seen, whether they can contribute to the process of qualitative research. If there are members of the sample who have not changed their leadership behavior after the training, have not applied the techniques taught in the program with their subordinates or on themselves and have not gained new insights, a lot can be learnt from those participants, too, provided they are willing to delineate their motivation in the interview why they didn't apply in practice what they heard about the training program.

### 5.3.2 Finding participants for the study

I set up a micro site on the Internet to outline my research project and inform potential participants: [www.empathie-trainieren.de](http://www.empathie-trainieren.de). The micro site gives background information about empathy, the utility of *empathic behavior* in the workplace and some details about the development program. It also supplies information about organizational issues and the cost structure. Basically, I am offering the development program pro bono to all nonprofit organizations but was asking profit-oriented organizations for a travel expenses and an adequate honorary.

As participants of psychological experiments usually receive some form of compensation, i.e. money, credit, etc., I was aware that this went the other way. My reasoning was that development programs that are offered for free might not be valued as much by the participants. Treating my research project as a standard development program would increase its ecological validity. That being said, receiving extra funding for my doctoral research would have been welcomed as the time spent researching and writing the thesis could not be spent earning money as a self-employed business trainer and coach.

Finding participants for the study turned out to be much harder than I initially thought. My plan was to contact existing contacts in the HR departments of major multinational cooperation for whom I have conducted training programs in the past. Though a lot of interest in empathy development was confessed, “Oh yeah, I know plenty of person, who’d need that!”, nobody actually wanted to sign up. I wasn’t given exact reasons and it would be interesting to investigate the reasons why this is so. It could be, that visiting an empathy development program would suggest that one is lacking in that area which could be embarrassing both for oneself and for others. It could also very well be, that an empathy development program was not considered worthy of spending precious time.

After receiving discouraging feedback from profit-oriented organizations that were in my customer base, I started to go another way and approached round about one-hundred CEOs and assistance to CEOs of major hospitals and care centers in Germany. I used the social network platform Xing for the purpose where I wrote to every contact that the search revealed to be persons of influence in their respective institutions.

Out of these 100 contacts, 15 answered my message whom I send a brochure and offered to call them. Many of the CEOs and department heads of major hospitals said, that they are bombarded with requests for research projects and simply do not have the time and resources to support all these. Nevertheless, three took me up on that offer and I got a chance to introduce them to my research project. With two leaders of learning and development departments of large clinic groups talks became more serious. One, who was responsible for learning and development large psychiatry clinic group, unfortunately had to take up provisional vice presidency of human resources and could not pursue my empathy project anymore.

From the leader of planning and development of a large Protestant nonprofit clinic group encompassing three general hospitals, three living facilities for handicapped people, and two palliative care centers, came very favorable feedback and the offer to promote my empathy development program for their employees. It was specifically addressed to employees holding management positions like assistant medical directors, head of departments, and senior physicians.

I had contacted them in July 2017 and for November 23rd the program was planned. Unfortunately, a week before the start only two participants had enlisted for the program. I decided to go on with the program anyway and to conduct empathy training No. 1. It was offered to the organization *pro bono*, which the participants did not know, though.

After the disillusioning experiences from contact with clinics, I started to look for participants through my network of business coaches, who informed interested individuals and representatives of organizations about the opportunity of getting a “free” empathy training program. This route turned out to be more resourceful than my other endeavors. Around fifteen persons displayed an interest. Due to time and monetary constrictions, I had to turn down most of them as giving training programs for free actually costs money: travelling costs and the missed opportunities of being able to earn money at the same time. The participants of the training No. 2 and 3 were coming from this source.

### 5.3.3 The design of the empathy development program

The empathy training intervention became part of the research design when it crystalized that I would be conducting the trainings myself. Hiring an outside professional business trainer for this task was impossible for monetary reasons – a fate, I am sure to share with many PhD-candidates who are not part of a doctoral program. While a setup like this would violate quality criteria of quantitative research, it is feasible in qualitative research and has been done by other researchers producing well-respected studies (see section 3.2). The key being reflectiveness of one's expectations, beliefs, influences, and behavioral patterns (Yin 2011). Following Yin (2011) the training intervention even affords an extra opportunity to collect more data which could enrich the data contrived from the interviews. My intent was to write down as many observations as possible immediately after the training programs. During the training program would have been preferable but facilitating and moderating a program leaves little time to jot down notes. In a way, this is less intrusive and situation changing as when a video camera is running (for which I would have needed a camera operator) or when a third-party observer is in the room as that always changes the dynamic of the social interaction.

The program was designed with the needs of leader from the medical professionals in mind, as these were the initial target group. The elements of the training program, though, are not exclusive for medical professionals and have been used in many different professional contexts so far. I did not have to adapt the program itself to the non-medical participants. The scenarios for role-plays that were supplied by the participants itself during the program, were different, of course. While some parameters like duration and venue were out of my hand, I had complete freedom regarding the content of the training program. The four meta-analysis were not unanimous on which intervention yields the best result. My design presents in some ways the lowest common denominator while at the same time keeping the needs of professionals in leadership positions in mind.

When designing the training, I placed great emphasis on *empathic behavior*, *empathic accuracy*, and *empathic understanding* which, as the studies of DE and VT have shown, are effective moderators. Leaders as the target group of the training program typically have no clinical empathy deficit<sup>16</sup>, so that the focus on shaping behavior in general and communication in specific is far more job-oriented. Interventions that increase *empathic behavior* and are done in groups contain elements of *emotional* as well as *cognitive empathy*. Participants will be engaging in various group exercises that require them to interact frequently with each other doing role-plays etc. As the motivation to be empathic seems to be the most important factor (see 2.9.3), giving good example on the effectiveness of empathy in the training program, is pivotal for the short term and long term success of the program (Terry and Mitchell 2001).

These interactions will be typically done with a heightened sense of attention towards the affections and perspectives of the respective counterparts in role-plays interjected by reflective phases triggered by questions from the facilitator that again focus the attention to the *emotional* and *cognitive* side of empathy: “How did you feel, when your counterpart in the role-play said that?”, “How did your counterpart feel, when you did this?”, “What might have your counterpart thought, when he/she acted that way.” These and other questions will be

integral part of the training program as they help participants to focus their attention on the topic of the program – empathy.

In the following paragraphs I will describe the training design in detail and attach screen shots of the slides I have shown during the training. The training program was planned as a one-day workshop. Table 3 gives an overview over the (planned!) duration and content of the program. The different elements are described in detail below.

The structure of each behaviorally oriented element follows more or less strictly the behavioral modeling training (BMT) approach which has been shown to be effective in a couple of meta-studies (Burke and Day 1986; Taylor et al. 2005). The discussion on the effectiveness of BMT has been led extensively (Mayer and Russell 1987) but seems to have subsided in the years after and became more detailed and less controversial with the main tenets being widely accepted and employed (Felfe and Franke 2014).

BMT or derivatives of it, have been used successfully in empathy training programs (see 3.1.1.2) so that many attendees of HR development programs are familiar with it and accept it easily<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, the author has been applying it himself for many years now. BMT is based on Bandura's theory of social learning (1977) and divides the learning process into five stages (Decker and Nathan 1985):

1. introducing participants to the behavioral skills that are to be trained
2. modeling said skills either by the facilitator or by means of video etc.
3. giving participants the opportunity, time and space to practice these skills
4. providing participants with feedback by the facilitator and peers to correct/reinforce behavior
5. helping participants to transfer the learned skills into their daily professional routines.

These five steps are followed in the training elements No. VI, IIX, IX. Element No. XI is devoted exclusively to the last, the 5<sup>th</sup> step of the BMT process, where the transfer of the skills picked up in the workshop into the daily professional routines is discussed. In my experience from giving seminars in Germany, the pragmatic question arises very soon anyway: "This is nice, but how can I use it for my work?" So, motivation for step 5 is usually quite high, when trainings are done within the context of a HR development program and participants are attending as professionals.

To increase the comparability of the training programs at different occasions, the instructions for the training activities are shown to the participants on slides which I have included in the description of this workshop below<sup>18</sup>. By this, I am making an effort to standardize the experimental training program. A good program, however, profits from the lively interaction between the group and the facilitator which cannot be planned. It is likely a general problem when empathy training programs are part of an experimental design.

Table 3. Design of the empathy training program

#	Name of the element	Content and objective	Duration
I	Greetings and organizational stuff	- Getting to know participants and introducing the trainer - Introducing the objective of the program	15'
II	Introduction to the empathy concept	- What is empathy and what not - Clearing up misconceptions and reaching a common understanding within the training group	30'
III	Empathy stature	- Experiencing motor empathy - Sharpening the attention to one's own emotions and to the emotions of others	15'
IV	Critical empathy incidents	- Reflecting on empathy - Remembering and reliving good and bad incidents of empathy to get further attuned with the subject of the course	15'
V	Input Nonviolent Communication (NVC)	- Receiving an input to learn about the concept	30'
VI	Activity NVC	- Learning the stages of NVC by experiencing them in role-plays - Training behavioral patterns that are empathic and learning to apply them in professional situations	60'
VII	Input <i>empathic paraphrasing</i>	- Learning the process of <i>empathic paraphrasing</i> - Receiving scientific background information	15'
IIIX	Activity <i>empathic paraphrasing</i>	- Learning <i>empathic paraphrasing</i> by experiencing it - Receiving feedback from peers how one's behavior has been perceived	45'
IX	Role-plays on critical incidents	- Applying the learned techniques (NVC and <i>empathic paraphrasing</i> ) to real life case and training them	120'
X	Compassion and self-compassion	- Input on the difference between <i>personal distress</i> and compassion - Input on the benefits of compassion and self-compassion for oneself and subordinates - Introduction to a meditational routine to strengthen compassion and self-compassion	30'
XI	Transferring workshop content	- Reflecting how the empathic techniques and the insights of the workshop can be applied on daily routines as professional	30'
XII	Feedback session	- Giving feedback on the session and how one feels afterwards	15'

Experiencing empathy in the training often induces people to reflect on highly emotional and possible traumatic incidences in their lives which they want to share with the group. This is encouraged and demonstrates the power of *empathic listening* to the group. On the other hand, the curriculum has to be kept and the session should not be used by individuals as a sort of therapeutic session. The facilitator needs to strike a good balance here, so that all the participants are happy, and the objectives of the course are met at the same time.

### 5.3.3.1 (I) Greetings and organizational stuff

The first part of the workshops serves to give the day a structure which is important to many participants. Beside getting to know each other, the participants are introduced to the objectives of the workshop as presented on a slide (see Figure 1) and are given a quick overview of the curriculum of the day. The objective of the seminar are as follows:

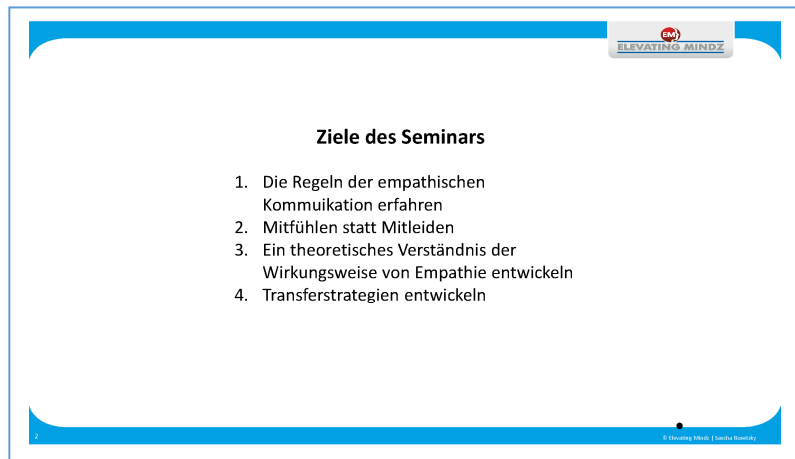


Figure 1. Objectives of the seminar

1. Experiencing *empathic communication*
2. Compassion instead of *personal distress*
3. Developing a theoretical understanding of the way empathy works
4. Developing strategies to transfer what has been learnt in the workshop into everyday professional life.

### 5.3.3.2 (II) Introduction to the empathy concept

Following the findings of DE and VT a didactic element is an important part of an empathy training program which is in line with the BMT theory. It works very well in combination with experiential methods but taken alone is the most effective (according to the study of the former). Zaki (2014) has also found that information alone on the effects of empathy can increase the motivation for empathy which in turn leads to a significantly increased probability that empathic behavior is shown.

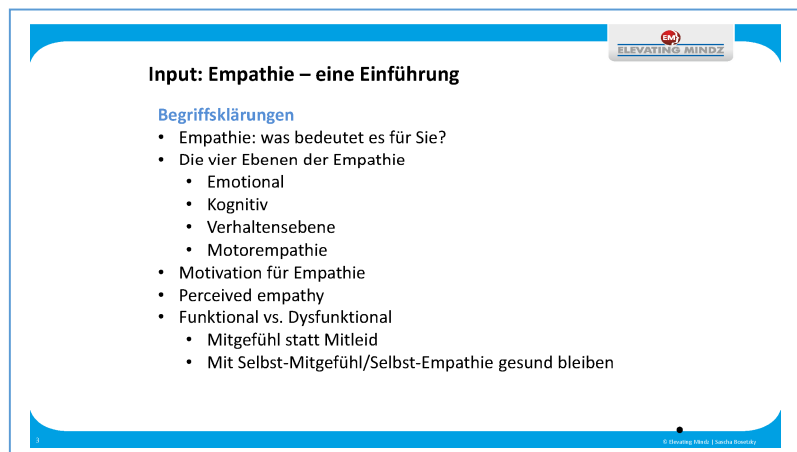


Figure 2. Introduction to the empathy concept

The didactic part serves to introduce the participants to the empathy concept (see section 2.10) and establish a common language for the workshop by addressing the following topics presented on a slide (see Figure 2):

- What means empathy for you?
- The four aspects of empathy
  - Emotional
  - Cognitive
  - Behavioral
  - Motor empathy
- Motivation for empathy
- Perceived empathy
- Functionality of empathy vs. dysfunctionality
  - Compassion vs. *personal distress*
  - Staying healthy using *self-compassion/self-empathy*

From my experience as a business trainer, participants who do not visit workshops frequently often feel more comfortable when, at the beginning of the workshop, they are allowed to sit down, listen to the facilitator, and orient themselves in the room and with the other participants, before being prompted to start exercises that involve close interactions with others and sharing of emotions and thoughts. This input and the introductory round before are supposed to function that way and help participants ease into the workshop.

#### What is empathy for you?

Before going explaining the concept in detail, it might be beneficial to get participants involved and hear their pre-conceived opinions about empathy. It bears a certain risk to so that beforehand, as conceptions lacking any scientific foundation could spread among the other participants. However, should these conceptions exist, they will most likely surface in the discussions, anyway. So, bringing them out in the open right at the beginning might prove to be a good idea.

#### The four aspects of empathy

Regardless of the ongoing discussion what empathy actually is (see section 2.10), it is beneficial to know about all the different sides to the empathy concept in order to fully understand what happens during *empathic exchanges* and what potential lies in *empathic behavior*.

Interestingly enough, in many of the training studies in section 3.1, empathy is predominantly treated as a homogenous concept (at least in the limited but influential publication I have screened). Differentiating between different forms according to the brain regions activated, seems to be an important but rather academic task for empathy specialist.

In the workshop, not whole lot of time will be devoted to educating participants about the different aspects of empathy – a day can be awfully short when a lot of experiential exercises are planned. The focus will be more on experiencing empathy in exercises and role-plays. *Motor empathy* can be a powerful tool to signal empathy and be perceived as empathic (see section 2.3). For that reason, I not only want to mention it but also introduce an exercise on the topic (see below).



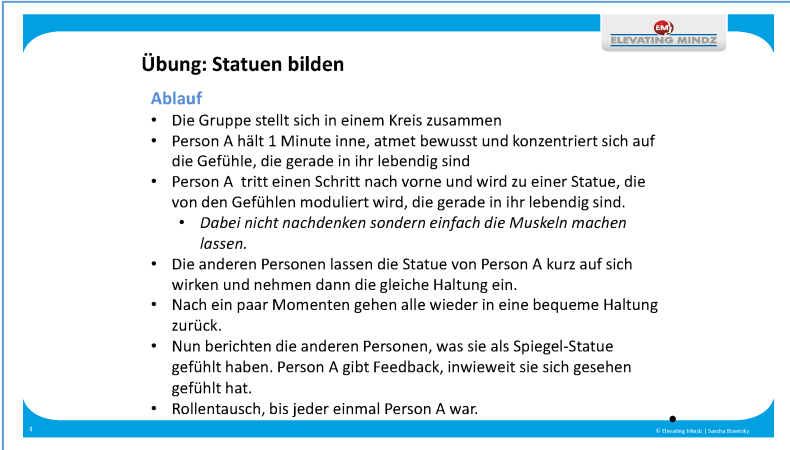
*Empathic behavior* (see section 2.5) is an important element for leaders. The difference between simply being empathic and acting on this emotion will have to be discussed. This is also true for the corresponding concept *perceived empathy* (see section 2.6).

*Motivation for empathy* (see section 2.9) is a highly interesting topic with many organizational implications. Exploring it in depth with the participants will not be possible. At least giving some food for thoughts would be preferable. In the end, the whole day is meant to increase the motivation for *empathic behavior* in the participants.

The part about the *functionality of empathy vs. dysfunctionality* is supposed to address the issue that identification with perceived emotions of others can lead to *personal distress* (see section 2.4.4). More than going into the detail, I would like to give participants the assurance that the tools they are being introduced to in this workshop will help them to avoid *compassion fatigue* (Fernando and Consedine 2014). More in that topic will follow in element X.

### 5.3.3.3 (III) Empathy statue

Empathy stature is an exercise that was inspired by a workshop on Social Presencing Theater by Arawana Hayashi<sup>19</sup> that I attended 2015 in Berlin. The exercise is done in a group of three. The instructions were shown on a slide (see Figure 3). One participant is asked to take a few deep breaths and concentrate her-/himself on a feeling that is “alive” in her-/him-



The slide is titled "Übung: Statuen bilden" and is part of a presentation by "ELEVATING MINDZ". It contains the following instructions:

**Übung: Statuen bilden**

**Ablauf**

- Die Gruppe stellt sich in einem Kreis zusammen
- Person A hält 1 Minute inne, atmet bewusst und konzentriert sich auf die Gefühle, die gerade in ihr lebendig sind
- Person A tritt einen Schritt nach vorne und wird zu einer Statue, die von den Gefühlen moduliert wird, die gerade in ihr lebendig sind.
  - Dabei nicht nachdenken sondern einfach die Muskeln machen lassen.
- Die anderen Personen lassen die Statue von Person A kurz auf sich wirken und nehmen dann die gleiche Haltung ein.
- Nach ein paar Momenten gehen alle wieder in eine bequeme Haltung zurück.
- Nun berichten die anderen Personen, was sie als Spiegel-Statue gefühlt haben. Person A gibt Feedback, inwieweit sie sich gesehen gefühlt hat.
- Rollentausch, bis jeder einmal Person A war.

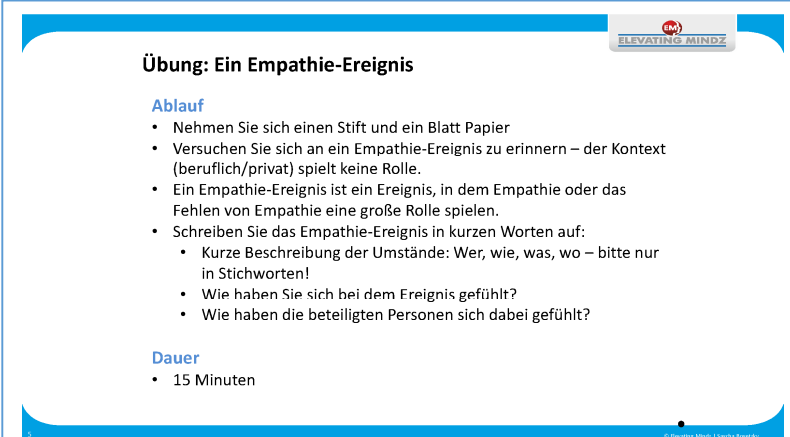
Figure 3. Empathy statue

self right now and show corresponding body movement that ends in a “human statue” acting spontaneously without thinking it over. The other participants focus their attention on that stature and mimic it, all the while closely paying attention to the feelings that arise in them. After a few moments, everybody quits the statue and the observers give feedback about the feelings that were “alive” in them while the first participant listens. After accepting feedback, he/she reveals what extent she/he felt seen by the others. The exercise is repeated until everybody showed a statue.

The exercise serves multiple purposes. It focuses participants attention on their own feelings prompting to be *self-empathic*. At the same time the other participants direct their attention to the body posture of others experiencing the phenomenon of *motor empathy* by paying attention to how they better understand the inner world others by mirroring them (see section 2.3).

### 5.3.3.4 (IV) Critical empathy incidents

This exercise serves two purposes: it focuses attention on empathy but now in a social context and it yields scripts that will later be used for role-plays. Participants are asked to write down one (or more) incidents where empathy or the lack of empathy played a major role. The context can be professional or private.



**Übung: Ein Empathie-Ereignis**

**Ablauf**

- Nehmen Sie sich einen Stift und ein Blatt Papier
- Versuchen Sie sich an ein Empathie-Ereignis zu erinnern – der Kontext (beruflich/privat) spielt keine Rolle.
- Ein Empathie-Ereignis ist ein Ereignis, in dem Empathie oder das Fehlen von Empathie eine große Rolle spielen.
- Schreiben Sie das Empathie-Ereignis in kurzen Worten auf:
  - Kurze Beschreibung der Umstände: Wer, wie, was, wo – bitte nur in Stichworten!
  - Wie haben Sie sich bei dem Ereignis gefühlt?
  - Wie haben die beteiligten Personen sich dabei gefühlt?

**Dauer**

- 15 Minuten

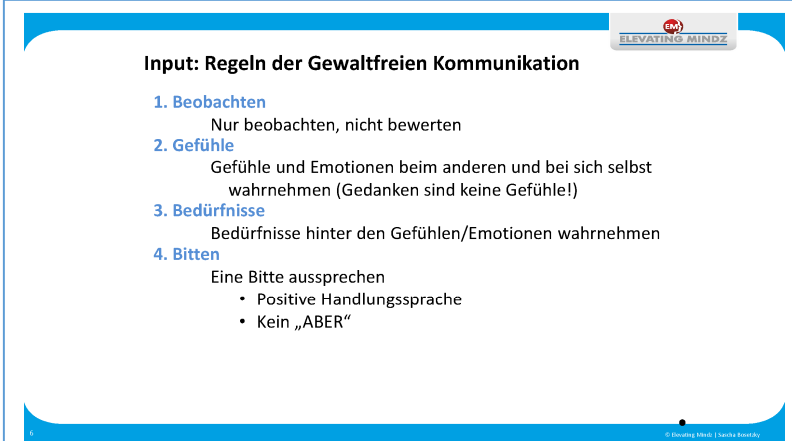
Figure 4. Critical empathy incidents

The participants are asked to note down answers in 15 minutes to the following questions:

- Who, how, what and where did the empathy incident take place?
- How did you feel while the incident unfolded?
- How did the persons involved feel?

### 5.3.3.5 (V) Input Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

Empathy (self- as well as other-directed) plays in NVC a pivotal role (Rosenberg 2013). It can best be characterized as a communication process which has been developed by Marshall Rosenberg, a disciple of Carl Rogers. Altmann, Schönfeld et al. (2015) have used this process when conducting their empathy training study with



**Input: Regeln der Gewaltfreien Kommunikation**

- 1. Beobachten**  
Nur beobachten, nicht bewerten
- 2. Gefühle**  
Gefühle und Emotionen beim anderen und bei sich selbst wahrnehmen (Gedanken sind keine Gefühle!)
- 3. Bedürfnisse**  
Bedürfnisse hinter den Gefühlen/Emotionen wahrnehmen
- 4. Bitten**  
Eine Bitte aussprechen
  - Positive Handlungssprache
  - Kein „ABER“

Figure 5. Input Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

social work professionals. The participants showed a significant increase in empathy after the training measured by a series of self-report questionnaires, but also avoided the negative effects associated with an increase of empathy like *personal distress*. Having been given a “proof of concept” for the efficacy of NVC in the context of empathy developments programs, I decided to include elements of NVC in my training design.

I have studied the above quoted work by Rosenberg and took part in a two-day training course on NVC. Appreciating the popularity and easy-to-grasp nature of the process I have often used it in my own training programs for clients who had to deal with challenging customers, team

members, etc. The strength of the model lies in helping participants to focus on their own emotions connected to a concrete incident, to strengthen their *self-empathy*, to show them how to address grievances in a way that is not generating resistance in the recipient and, consequently, to resolve conflicts.

The merits of increasing self-awareness of emotions and *self-empathies/self-compassion* have been thoroughly investigated and put to test in many experimental set-ups (see 2.7). Participants in prior trainings of mine often reported a calming effect of going through the four stages of the NVC process and achieving more *self-empathy* with each stage. The process is meant to be used to structure confrontational dialogues.

### Observing

In the first stage the participant is asked to report an observation without passing judgement on it, embellishing it, becoming sarcastic, exaggerating the number of incidents or its meaning, weaving relationship-messages in the observation, etc. So instead of saying “You *never* do the dishes and *always* leave a *colossal* mess” the NVC way of observing would be: “I just noticed that you left a stack of dirty dishes on the kitchen board and did not put them in the dish washer.”

Rosenberg’s (2013) idea is that by stating simple observations the recipient will be more receptive to the communication process and less defensive. The advice for this stage is to stay on the *factual side of communication* (Schulz von Thun 2006; Watzlawick et al. 2007) as much as possible which is really hard for most people as observation errors and misjudgments are the rule and not the exception (Kahneman 2012).

### Feelings

After having voiced the observation, the participant is asked to focus on the feelings that are connected with the incident and express these verbally to the recipient without mixing feelings with thoughts, accusations, guilt, etc. – just the bare emotion that is being felt. “When I saw you place a stack of dirty dishes on the kitchen board and leave the room, I felt angry.”

Rosenberg (2013) emphasizes the importance of focusing on the feeling that is alive in one in the moment and not mix it with thoughts which, he claims, many people do when saying things like „I feel, that you do not do your share of house work around here, when I see you put dirty dishes...” In the training programs it usually takes a couple of trial runs before participants manage to express what they feel without mixing it with their thoughts. The exercises which have been put before the NVC block in this training program serve to focus the participants’ awareness on their own emotional state making this step easier for them.

Simply becoming aware of the feelings that are alive in one in the moment<sup>20</sup> has a soothing effect on the person doing the process. The psychological mechanisms behind this have been well-researched (see 2.7) and work like a charm.

## Needs

In the third stage, the focus shifts from feelings to personal needs which roughly correspond to the list of needs postulated by Maslow (1981) but without being put into a hierarchical order. Participants are lectured about the different needs humans have according to the NVC system which are the root causes of emotions – a notion that is supported by other researchers as well (i.e. Ekman 2007). In the process of NVC, the participant is asked to become aware of the need that is underlying the feeling that has been expressed earlier.

By focusing on one's own needs instead of criticizing the other one increases the chances for a constructive dialogue as the other person, again, will feel less a need to become defensive. Arguing against personal needs is difficult. "When I saw that you put dirty dishes on the kitchen board and left the room, I felt angry and my need for respect was not fulfilled."

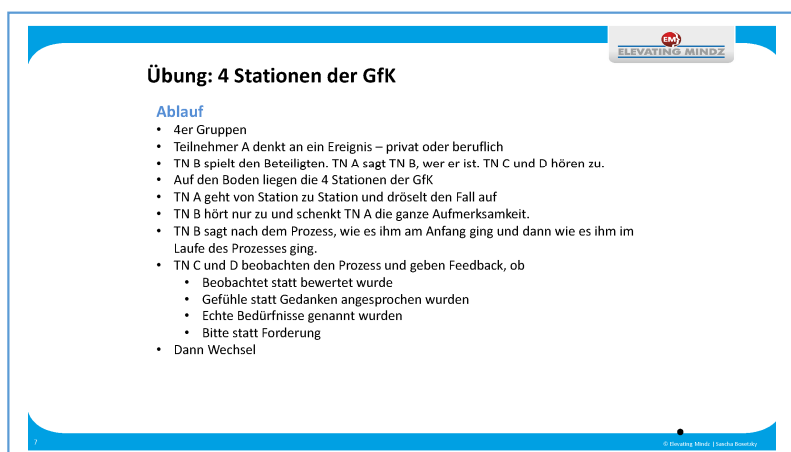
## Requests

Asking and not telling is the motto of NVC as the latter is not confrontational provided it is done in the right spirit (cf. Schein 2013). As in the other stages of NVC, the request works best when it is directed at an immediate event and not an abstract thing in the future. Rosenberg (2013) stresses the effectiveness of pointing to positive options for action instead demanding of the recipient to not do a specific action: "I am requesting you to put the dishes in the dish washer!" will be accepted more likely than "I am requesting you to *not* make a mess!"

While stages three and four are not directly linked to empathy or empathic behavior anymore, they nevertheless are valuable in the context of an empathy training as they increase the practicability of the training for every day usage – participants are being given a tool that will help to express feelings and needs in a way that furthers communication and collaboration and will most likely reduce conflicts and increase the motivation for empathic behavior.

### 5.3.3.6 (VI) Activity NVC

The NVC activity serves to give participants a firsthand experience of the process of NVC, train it, sharpen their *self- and other-empathy*. In an ideal world, participants would have enough time to thoroughly repeat the process until it has become their second nature. In the corporate world, training days are considered precious and time is therefore often an issue.



**Übung: 4 Stationen der GfK**

**Ablauf**

- 4er Gruppen
- Teilnehmer A denkt an ein Ereignis – privat oder beruflich
- TN B spielt den Beteiligten. TN A sagt TN B, wer er ist. TN C und D hören zu.
- Auf den Boden liegen die 4 Stationen der GfK
- TN A geht von Station zu Station und dröseln den Fall auf
- TN B hört nur zu und schenkt TN A die ganze Aufmerksamkeit.
- TN B sagt nach dem Prozess, wie es ihm am Anfang ging und dann wie es ihm im Laufe des Prozesses ging.
- TN C und D beobachten den Prozess und geben Feedback, ob
  - Beobachtet statt bewertet wurde
  - Gefühle statt Gedanken angesprochen wurden
  - Echte Bedürfnisse genannt wurden
  - Bitte statt Forderung
- Dann Wechsel

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Figure 6. Activity NVC

In the activity, the four stages of the NVC process are written on cards and put on the floor in the order of the process, each about a meter apart. The participants are asked to form groups

of four and each group gets a set of cards. One participant will take up the lead and think of a scenario that can be acted out as a role-play in the NVC activity. Preferably, a critical incident written down in exercise IV can be used here. Another participant will play the counterpart of the participant in the lead, after having been told her/his role in the role-play.

The remaining participants are being told to closely observe either the participant in the lead or the other and pay attention that the players are following the NVC process which will be addressed later in the subsequent feedback session. Before the participants split up into different groups the facilitator, in this case me, models the NVC process with a volunteer from the group.

After the four stages of the process are taken, the counterpart of the participant in the lead will give feedback how she/he felt in the role assigned to her/him by the lead player. The lead player will listen carefully and profess his/her feelings during and after the process. The observing participants gives feedback regarding their observations during and after the process.

After everybody has shared their thoughts and feelings, new roles are assigned until each of the group members have been in all the roles. At the end of the activity, the groups dissolve, and the participants return to the plenum where the facilitator collects a few opinions about the exercise and moderates a discussion about the process and its transferability into professional life.

This activity provides experiential learning of a communication method centered on *self-* and *other-empathy* and thus forms an integral part of the overall pedagogy of the whole program. While in element V the technique was introduced didactically and possible blockage and misgivings about the process were addressed, participants now have a chance to experience the process firsthand, which the meta-studies have shown to be a very effective way of increasing the impact of an empathy program.

The participant will experience the process at least one time personally and will watch a couple of times when other participants take the lead. Also, they have observed me as the facilitator modeling the process at the very beginning. Having more than ten years of experience in giving communications trainings I am confident that the desired behavior is modeled correctly by me. According to some authors (cf. Hill and Lent 2006), the trainer modeling empathic behavior is also a mediating factor of effectiveness, although other author of meta-studies did not confirm this (see 3.1.1.2 for the discussion).

This is somewhat in conflict with the studies on BMT (see 5.3.3) which found that it is effective when the facilitator models the desired behavior before the actual training commences. Regardless of this contradiction, in my experience it is useful to the learning experience when the participants get a chance to have the process of NVC demonstrated to them.

When the number of participants makes forming more than group necessary, it will become difficult for a single facilitator to properly monitor the activity and assist participants in following the process. If that is the case – and often it is, since companies many a times do not want

to pay the honorary of a second facilitator when the group number is below twenty – the facilitator has to switch between the groups trying to make sure that the process is adhered to as good as possible.

The principles of social learning (Bandura 1977) apply in this activity. All the participants have the chance of learning *empathic behavior* by watching the facilitator model empathy as well as the other participants when engaged in role-playing. This effect will be an additional moderating factor as has been shown in many experimental studies (see 3.1.1.2). This is also true for *perspective-taking* which the counterpart of the lead player will be able to improve when slipping into the role of another person in the role-play as well as *self-empathy* which can be trained when the counterpart of the lead player is act how felt in the role.

In my experience, when teaching the NVC process in company mandated seminars where not all the participants necessarily agree with the object of the seminar, 1 out of 10 participants objects to the process out of different reasons and starts a discussion about the usefulness of the process. Ideally, someone from the group of the participants takes up the cause of defending the process when the didactic part has been successfully taught. The facilitator, nevertheless, has to be prepared to get opposition. It sometimes works, to do an impromptu NVC role-play with the “opponent” either as counterpart to let him/her experience the calming effect of the process firsthand.

#### 5.3.3.7 (VII) Input empathic paraphrasing

*Empathic paraphrasing* forms the second empathic communication technique that is introduced in the training. The method coming from counselling in the Rogerian tradition (cf. (Rogers 1957) is also an important element of NVC but has received scientific attention from non-therapeutic branches of psychology. Seehauser et al. (2012; 2016)

**Empathisches Paraphrasieren**

**Begriffsklärungen**

- Was heißt paraphrasieren?
- Was ist daran empathisch?
- Was sagt die Forschung?

**Wie funktioniert paraphrasieren?**

- Mit der Aufmerksamkeit ganz beim anderen bleiben!
- Nur Beobachtung, nur Zuhören
- Keine Interpretation, Kritik, herausfordernder Ton oder Wörter hinzufügen wie „bißchen“, „bloß“, etc.
- Eventuell auch Gefühle und Bedürfnisse wiedergeben – als Frage!

**Anwendungsgebiete**

- ?

Figure 7. Input empathic paraphrasing

from the Freie University Berlin and the Charité have demonstrated the effectiveness of this method in two experimental studies.

In the first part of the input, the terms used will be explained and defined. Depending on the audience, the findings of the studies cited above can be presented to illustrate the multi-level benefits of *empathic paraphrasing*:

*The technique of empathic paraphrasing, which is investigated in the present study, can be categorized as aiming at affect improvement and engagement within this classification framework. However, it also contains a relationship-*

*oriented component, as empathic paraphrasing communicates interest and commitment in understanding the other's perspective, thereby implying that their feelings are valid and worth listening to. (Seehausen et al. 2012)*

These findings might be especially interesting in the medical context as the studies originated from that context, but also pertain to many other professions as well as leadership in general.

Before explaining the process of empathic paraphrasing in detail, a short YouTube clip of Carl Rogers counselling a client using the said method is [shown](#) to give participants a chance to have the “grand master of the method” model it for them.

In the second part, the “rules” of empathic paraphrasing are discussed with the participants. I extracted these rules from NVC (Rosenberg 2013), which are shown on a slide (see Figure 7) and explained in detail by the facilitator:

- Focus your attention on counterpart the entire time
  - Empathy only works when you give your attention to the other person. Try not to think about yourself.
- Only observe, only listen
  - As was practiced in the NVC activity, try to just concentrate on the behavior and the words without judging, categorizing, comparing, condemning.
- No interpretation, critique, challenging tone or adding words like “just”, “a little”, etc.
  - When paraphrasing, it is important to not to distort the words of the other person by adding one's own interpretation to it. Sometimes, people involuntarily belittle the emotional experiences of other persons by adding words like the ones shown above to the sentences that are mirrored.
- Possibly, paraphrase feelings and needs as well – in question form!
  - When the participants feel comfortable to mirror the verbal content of what their counterpart has said without distortions, they can venture to the more advanced level of addressing the emotional and need level (see 5.3.3.5) in question form. When done in question form, the verbal mirroring of emotions and needs is the most effective form of paraphrasing. It should to be presented as an offering to the counterpart, though, as one may be empathic inaccurate, or the counterpart does not want that his/her emotions are addressed openly.

After the rules of *empathic paraphrasing* are presented, the facilitator starts a short brainstorming session in the group where application scenarios for this communication technique are to be discussed. The results of which could be documented and sent to the participants after the training.

I have been teaching this form of empathic communication for many years now and have made the observation that participants often object, that simply mirroring what other person say cannot possibly have any effect. For a more academic audience, the brief introduction to the science behind paraphrasing will surely increase the motivation for this method and help

to overcome misgivings. It has also proven to be effective to do an impromptu empathic paraphrasing role-play with the participant having the doubt about the method. The calming effect on the heart rate etc. that Seehausen et al. (2012) described is often immediately felt by the participant in doubt.

Participants often have the feeling that it is impolite to interrupt another person talking. When being introduced to activity IIX, many participants anticipate difficulties. The paraphraser's challenge is to interrupt the stream of words that issue from the story-teller to initiate the paraphrase. The video of Carl Rogers doing a counselling session and the facilitator doing a test-run serves to show participants how to interrupt and interject the paraphrase without appearing to be curtly or blunt.

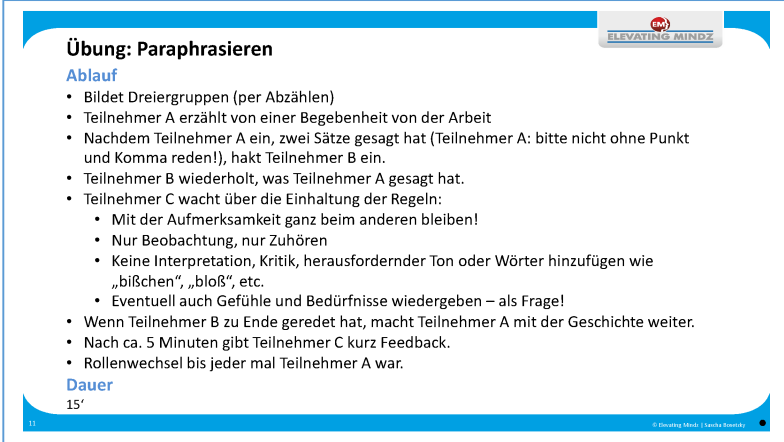
When presenting *empathic paraphrasing* to various audiences, I often introduce it as technique that crisis intervention teams use to resolve hostage situations, etc. A fairly recent study actually provided evidence that such a training in *actively listening* and *paraphrasing* is effective for future FBI negotiators (van Hasselt et al. 2016). Usually, that gets the attention of people who do not see the immediate usage of that technique and have mixed feelings towards psychotherapy and the like.

It has to be noted though, that some people actually have a hard time, to just do *empathic* and *active listening* and *paraphrase* without interjecting their own thoughts and advices. An intervention on *empathic listening* with seasoned business consultants I have done was rather disillusioning, as it seemed impossible for some even after multiple trials to just listen. The professional deformation (cf. Polyakova 2014) seemed to be too great to adapt a more reactive approach.

Element VII of the training program is the didactic part of the exercise about the activity *empathic paraphrasing* that is to follow where participants get the opportunity to put into practice what they just have learnt.

#### 5.3.3.8 (IIX) Activity *empathic paraphrasing*

The exercise follows the classic triadic training design, that many interventions training communication follow. The instructions are again given by slide to the participants (see Figure 8). The group is divided into triads – i.e. groups of three. Again, before that happens, the facilitator models the activity with the help of someone from the audience.



**Übung: Paraphrasieren**

**Ablauf**

- Bildet Dreiergruppen (per Abzählen)
- Teilnehmer A erzählt von einer Begebenheit von der Arbeit
- Nachdem Teilnehmer A ein, zwei Sätze gesagt hat (Teilnehmer A: bitte nicht ohne Punkt und Komma reden!), hakt Teilnehmer B ein.
- Teilnehmer B wiederholt, was Teilnehmer A gesagt hat.
- Teilnehmer C wacht über die Einhaltung der Regeln:
  - Mit der Aufmerksamkeit ganz beim anderen bleiben!
  - Nur Beobachtung, nur Zuhören
  - Keine Interpretation, Kritik, herausfordernder Ton oder Wörter hinzufügen wie „bißchen“, „bloß“, etc.
  - Eventuell auch Gefühle und Bedürfnisse wiedergeben – als Frage!
- Wenn Teilnehmer B zu Ende geredet hat, macht Teilnehmer A mit der Geschichte weiter.
- Nach ca. 5 Minuten gibt Teilnehmer C kurz Feedback.
- Rollenwechsel bis jeder mal Teilnehmer A war.

**Dauer**  
15'

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Figure 8. Activity *empathic paraphrasing*



One participant will tell a short story (about 5 min) about something that happened in her/his professional life. This will make the activity more realistic and will also ensure that the participant is emotionally invested in the activity, i.e. in a rather hot state where it is easier to realize the physiological effects of *empathic paraphrasing*.

One participant will be the paraphraser and apply the *empathic paraphrasing* technique heeding the “rules” introduced in element IX. The third participant’s job is to observe and, as a referee, watch that the “rules” are being followed by the paraphraser as well as watching the time. After 5 minutes have passed, the participants give each other feedback how the exercise went and what experiences they have made and how they feel. The observer gives feedback concerning the process and the quality of paraphrasing. After that, the roles are switched, and the participants take turn until everybody has been in the role of story-teller, paraphraser, and observer.

To wind-up the activity the facilitator gathers the participants in the plenum and asks for experiences and starts a moderated discussion on the usages of this technique in daily life. Ideally, participants commit to trying to use *empathic paraphrasing* in their daily life. Part of this discussion can also be the question, what has to change in the respective organization of the participants so that *empathic paraphrasing* can be applied on a wider scale.

The triadic design again trains different skills depending on the shifting roles that participants take in the activity. The observer trains *empathic listening* skills while at the same time memorizing the “rules” of paraphrasing by watching someone else do it, the paraphraser, well, *empathic paraphrasing*, and the story-telling participant ideally gets a taste for the effects of the technique and is motivated to apply it her-/himself more often.

The activity encourages participants to discuss events from their professional life in possibly a new way and might lead to new perspectives. It promotes collegial support and can help to reduce the impact of emotional labor that poses a problem in many professions and for many leaders (see 4.5.3) It hones listening skills, which according to Schein (2013) is something especially leaders of high-performance teams should master.

#### 5.3.3.9 (IX) Role-plays on critical incidents

With approximately 120 minutes, the most time is allotted to this activity. While incidents from professional life were already used in other exercises, this activity will train the usage of the techniques learnt in element VI and IIX in depth using realistic role-plays based on the critical incidents generated in element IV or based on spontaneously hatched out scenarios.

It will give the participants more opportunities to experience the effect of empathic communication in conflict situations on themselves and others. The effectiveness of role-playing (sometimes in the setting of theater) for increasing empathy in communication and other forms of behavior has been shown in quite a few studies (Bosse et al. 2012; Shapiro and Hunt 2003; Dow et al. 2007; Lim et al. 2011; Tiuraniemi et al. 2011; Bayne 2011). In the context of

leadership development, the effectiveness has also been proven in many studies (e.g. Agboola Sogunro 2004; Holling and Liepmann 2013).

The importance of role-playing for BMT has already been discussed above. In contexts other than BMT like action/experiential learning (Marsick and O'Neil 2016) and social learning (Schwäbisch and Siems 1996) it has also been proven to be highly effective. It is being used from kindergartens (Fatzer 1998) to MNCs. The method has strong roots in the *psychodrama* (Yablonsky 1998) as part of psychotherapy but is surely not limited to it. As emotional problems also emerge when leading people, it is perfectly suited in the context of leadership development.

Role-plays have the power to draw people into the scenario and let them experience “real emotions”. Participants often gave me the feedback, that they experienced an increased heart rate, sweating, red face, and other symptoms of *hot emotional* states when reenacting critical scenarios. In Shapiro's study (2003) using theatrical performance similar observations were made by the audience and the actors alike. While the activities in the other elements were more exercises than simulations, the role-play based on critical incidents will engage the participants deeply because they are reenacting parts of their own history. In *cold emotional states* people tend to rationalize and resort to norm-based behavior, while *hot emotional states* can trigger different behavioral sets (Leiberg et al. 2011). Under the influence of *hot emotional/visceral states* people often behave in a way that would seem silly to them in a *cold state* – a lot of babies would not have been born when that mechanism would not make people neglect birth control measures when sexually aroused (Loewenstein 1996)

People who have made extensive experiences in a certain field have been shown to downplay the emotional and physical toll of these experiences when being in a *cold emotional state* (Campbell et al. 2014) and felt less compassion for others undergoing the same trouble (Ruttan et al. 2015) as well as being perceived by others as showing less compassionate behavior (Hodges et al. 2010). Here the role-play provides participants the opportunity to reflect an event first in a *cold emotional* situation, reenact it in a (well) *hotter emotional state* and juxtapose their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from both settings. In my experience, participants often have a more positive outlook on the empathic quality of their behavior than is shown in the role-plays. Whether this reflects their “real-life” behavior is hard to judge without shadowing them in real life.

Sometimes a special form of role-playing can be adopted when participants predominately act professionally on the telephone without being face-to-face with their counterparts. Telephone role-plays where the players are sitting back-to-back as to only deprive them of seeing their fellow actor are a good alternative in this case. As emotions can be detected by vocal outburst very effectively (Simon-Thomas et al. 2009), the telephone role-play can also be used to supplement the face-to-face role-plays and train participants to pay more attention to the voice.

The learning objectives of role-plays can be multidimensional (Schaller 2006):

- 1) Cognitive – as in understanding the benefits of *empathic behavior*, understanding better options for making decisions, etc.
- 2) Affective – as in experiencing the pleasant sensation of being treated with compassion first hand
- 3) Psychosocial – as in adopting *empathic behavioral patterns*

Whether the role-plays in the context of this empathy intervention will meet all the three objectives, will be hard to say and, at least for me, difficult to measure. It is good to know that role-plays have the potential to be effective on all these three levels. A lot could be learned from the feedback session following the actual role-play.

While it is first and foremost a teaching method, its usages as an instrument of qualitative research have also been explored (Kühl 2009). A facilitator with a well-trained eye will be able to glean a lot of data from the role-play itself during the intervention – especially, when the participants allow video-taping of the play. Unfortunately, in this research design, where the facilitator is also the researcher, this function of role-plays will only marginally be used. Facilitating a session like this is time-consuming as it is.

Jotting down observations right after the role-play will not be an option and would not be well received by the participants who like to have the facilitator's full attention – also in the breaks. Observation will be written down immediately after the training. Ideal would be to hire a facilitator for the training, so that I, as the researcher, could devote all my time to observing. For monetary reasons, this is not feasible, though.

In smaller groups, all the participants will get a chance to take part in the exercise. In larger groups, this is hardly possible. Nevertheless, according to Bandura's theory of social learning (1977), even the observers should profit from the activity. Care should be taken, that the behavior shown in the role-plays is identified correctly as being either empathic or non-empathic and that at least at the end of the session, participants will have witnessed a truly empathic exchange in the role-play, so that social learning does not take a wrong turn.

Provided there is enough time, an element from constellation work in mediation can also be used (Brackwehr and Mayer 2015), to give participants the chance to switch roles in the role-play and play the part of the person they have a conflict with, thus engaging and honing their *perspective-taking* skills.

Since it is never easy to motivate participants to engage in role-playing, part of this element should also contain a spirited introduction that delineates the advantages of this form of behavioral training. I have been employing this didactic method for the last twelve years. It always seems to be a type of "dare" for the participants to engage in role-playing and the announcement of said activity never meets with many cheers – across different cultures. Nevertheless, after the role-play almost everybody reports a learning effect which has also been empirically proven (s. above).

The exercises done in the preceding elements have a positive side-effect: they function as warming-up activity and have, ideally, helped participants to loosen up and find fun in (play)-acting with the fellow participants. Before engaging in serious role-plays, that can be emotionally challenging, a warming-up phase is considered important (Schaller 2006). In the pedagogy of this empathy intervention, the warming-up has already taken place and, at this point, the participants have gotten some practice in this sort of activity, even when their professional career has not given them such an opportunity before.

The role-play as an exercise can be divided into different stages (Schaller 2006; Yardley-Matwiejczuk 1997):

1. Learning about the characters involved
2. Defining/clarifying what is to be achieved by the role-play
3. Setting the stage
4. Getting into character
5. Acting out the scene
6. Giving feedback while still in character
7. Feedback session with the whole plenum

#### Learning about the characters involved

The characters for the role-plays are taken from the critical incidents written down in element IV. Alternatively, scenarios and characters for the role-play can be constructed impromptu, when, for example, in the discussion before, a certain topic has come up. In any case, all the participants of the role-play should have a clear idea about the context and what is expected of them. At this point of the training, participants will have practice in voicing emotional experiences and acting out empathic exchanges as this has been done in activity VI and IIX. It is the facilitator's job to make sure to moderate the process of getting to know the characters involved in the incident to be acted out by asking the participant "supplying" the scenario good questions.

#### Defining/clarifying what is to be achieved by the role-play

forms an integral part of the activity. While the first and foremost objective should be to improve the *empathic communication* skills of the participants, when acting out a scenario from the professional context of the participants, secondary objectives might also play a role: achieving greater emotional clarity towards an experienced situation with colleagues, clients, or patients, reliving a specific situation in which *empathic behavior* could be the key to a better outcome, using NVC to stay calm and empathic instead of "going through the roof" when triggered by a particular behavior, etc. As long as the secondary objectives are not in conflict with the primary objective of increasing empathy, they are welcomed as they might help participants to fully engage in the activity.

#### Setting the stage

Creating a separate space as a stage for the role-play that fits the role-playing scenario, is an important part of the activity. Participants should not remain seated as usual but shift to this

separate space, so that it is always clear when they are on- and off-stage as well in-character and out-of-character.

*It provides players with a feeling of security and comfort, to enter and exit the stage in a clearly defined area (possibly within a corner of the conference room). (Schaller 2006 p. 139; my translation)*

In the separate area, chairs, desks etc. can be placed as needed for the context of the role-play. Elaborate props are not needed and might even hinder the imagination of the participants. It falls on the facilitator to bring the scene to life – much like the Dungeon master in the once popular role-playing board game *Dungeons and Dragons*: “So, this is your office, your chair and your desk, where you sit working on a fine Thursday afternoon, when...”

Especially, when participants have to act out difficult scenes in the role-play, I have often observed that they jump up from their chair as if it were hot and want to get away from the stage as fast as possible.

#### Getting into character

After the objectives have been clarified by the facilitator, the participants of the role-play are being put into character by the facilitator. Even when participants play themselves, this process is important as it signifies, that the participant is about to do something special. I cannot find a quote for this technique but have learnt it during my trainer education at artop, Berlin, an institute of the Humboldt University Berlin. Having applied it in countless role-plays, it seems to have a good effect and helps participants to immerse themselves more in the role-play.

The intricacies of getting into character and accepting the different roles should not be discussed here, but have been discussed elsewhere (Schaller 2006). As the role-playing in this case is part of a leadership development program, the participants are explicitly asked not to resort to their habitual behavioral patterns, but to play a better version of themselves to train new and hopefully more *empathic behavioral* patterns, participants might be less conflicted acting in front of colleagues. The element of exposing oneself and showing unknown facets to others (Luft 1984) cannot be ruled out, especially when participants have a hard time adopting the desired behavioral patterns and fall back to habitual ones.

#### Acting out the scene

With all the participants who are part of the role-play in character, the actual play can begin. When there are more participants than needed for the scene, the remaining participants are usually requested by me to take observation tasks. While observing all the participants is difficult and doesn't lead to many reliable information, watching just one participant and reporting the observations in the feedback session at the end, is preferable.

The participant, that plays the lead, takes charge after all the “actors” have gotten into character and the facilitator gave the start signal. It is up to the actors to determine how long the

play should last. In my experience, when the play hits a dead end, the actors often look to the facilitator to end the play.

#### Giving feedback while still in character

The feedback routines as used in *psychodrama* are an efficient way of getting the most out of the exercise (Yablonsky 1998). While still in character, the participants share how they felt during the role-play. The facilitator takes care that the participants employ *self-empathy* and use the emotional language that has been trained during the NVC elements. In my experience, participants often want to justify their behavior, explain what they tried to achieve by acting in this or that way. More valuable than rationalizing past behavior are the feelings of the persons involved – after all, it is an empathy training! The setting is a great opportunity for all the participants to get feedback how their style of communication is received by others. This can be especially useful, when the first run of the role-play hasn't been that successful and the lead actor had to acknowledge that old behavioral patterns still dominated his/her behavior towards the other(s).

When all the participants involved in the role-play have shared their inner-experiences in their particular role, the facilitator gives a sign and the participants can step out of character/their role. Schaller (2006) suggests a pantomime routine for this, where participants are shedding imaginary cloth, step out of the area reserved for the role-play, and are their usual self again.

#### Feedback session with the whole plenum

In the plenum, the participants watching the scene get a chance to share their observation and how they perceived the outcome of the incident. The feedback session is very important for the effectiveness of the roleplay (Taylor et al. 2005) and should (Felfe and Franke 2014)

- a) follow the shown behavior immediately
- b) be concrete and specific
- c) be given only when the relationship between feedback giver and receiver is characterized by trust and appreciation
- d) be given by a person knowledgeable in regard to the situation at hand
- e) should balance positive and negative aspects of the shown performance
- f) include positive action alternatives and not just “don'ts”
- g) be tailored to the specific individual needs of the receiver.

In addition to this list, the feedback should be, of course, adapted to the context of the program: it should be given in an empathic way adhering to the guidelines of NVC. The feedback can also be seen as another opportunity to practice *empathic communication*. The facilitator, at this point of the program, will have to take special care, that feedback is not too harsh as participants have opened more than they would probably do in other training seminars. In my experience, seminars on empathy do have that effect on everybody involved – even the facilitator!

Feedback might not be limited to *empathic behavior* but may also touch other parts of professional communication. Since balancing efficient professional interactions with colleagues

and subordinates with empathy and compassion is an important aspect, this kind of feedback should also be permitted by the facilitator but should be seen in the context of the program. Programs designed for multiple days can devote more time to this subject as it adds great value to the empathy intervention when the participants also get a chance to receive in-depth collegial feedback.

Receiving feedback from the facilitator is an equally important part of this element. While the facilitator might not be an expert on the respective organizational culture, she/he should be an expert concerning *empathic behavior*. The facilitator should prompt the participants in the role-play to engage in self-reflection to help the training process (Felfe and Franke 2014). The motivational function of positive feedback and its power to reinforce behavior (Decker and Nathan 1985) should be kept in mind by the facilitator, who should point out where the process of NVC, *empathic paraphrasing*, etc. was not followed in the role-play but should also strive not to dampen the enthusiasm of the participants.

Feedback can also be given by and while watching the role-play on a screen – provided it was filmed when it happened. This method is usually not very well liked by participants especially when they have not been exposed much to behavioral skills development programs. It has been employed successfully in communications trainings of medical personnel (Noordman et al. 2011; Roter et al. 2004) and shown to be superior to just verbal feedback alone (Ozcakar et al. 2009). This method intensifies the feedback giving process, objectifies it, helps participants to gain further insights into the unknown territories and blind spots of their behavior. Video feedback many a times makes it easier for participants to admit to themselves that a second run of the role-play would be good as the “person on the screen” did not behave as empathically as the person in front of the screen would have thought. Especially, when doing role-playing with participants who have been in a leadership position for many years, video feedback helps them to realize where they went off in the role-play. Using video for feedback is, however, very time-consuming and requires a lot of trust from the participants. In the light of the new European General Data Protection Regulation this method has become complicated.

Participants might not agree whether employing *empathic behavior* is the best course of action when dealing with patients, customers, or inferiors but at the end of the feedback session it should be clear to all participants whether the behavior shown in the role-play matched the learning points of *empathic behavior* defined in the preceding elements or not. If latter is the case, a second (and even third) round of the role-play is necessary. In my experience, it helps to appeal to the playing part of role-playing and do as if we were to shoot another take of a movie scene.

Warming up participants with short impromptu sketches (Johnstone 2014) can help to nudge participants into this kind of mindset. Theatrical performance has been used effectively in teaching medical students, anyway (Shapiro and Hunt 2003). Ideally, the role-playing session is finished, when every participant has had a chance to successfully play act his/her case as many times as it took to receive mostly positive feedback. In reality, there is rarely enough time – unless it is a sales training.

Though in element XI the questions of how to transfer what has been learnt in the workshop are going to be discussed, it might be a good idea to do that immediately after the role-plays or after each individual role-play. On the one hand, discussing the transferability of the skills to be learnt right after training them is in accord with the standard BMT design (Decker and Nathan 1985) and keeps participants engaged by signaling them that the training program is not an academic sport but meant to help them in their professional life. On the other hand, it can also disturb the playful flow of the affair and prompt participants with the dire problems of their everyday affairs. Solutions often emerge when the mind is occupied with rather playful prototyping (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013).

The goal is to make every training session as standard as possible, the training groups, however, have different needs which should be read by the facilitator. After all, being empathic her-/himself is an important requisite for the facilitator of an empathy training program. Being a bit flexible concerning the structure of the program is therefore necessary.

### 5.3.3.10 (X) Compassion and Self-compassion

In the introduction to the empathy concept (element II), the difference between *empathic concern* and *personal distress* has already been pointed out. To avoid confusing the participants with possibly existing differences between *empathic concern* and *compassion*, both words would be used synonymous in an English training (see 2.4).

**Input: (Selbst-)Mitgefühl stärken**

**Theoretischer Hintergrund**

- Achtsamkeit und Mitgefühls-Meditation sind seit den letzten 30 Jahren umfangreich erforscht worden und ihre positive Wirkung wurde in zahlreichen Doppelblindstudien bewiesen
  - Z.B. T. Singer, K. Neff, J. Goetz, C. Figley, B. Frederickson
- Gerade im Bereich der Medizin und der pflegenden Berufe hat sich die Anwendung bewährt, da
  - sich die Stärkung von Mitgefühl sich als probates Mittel gegen die dysfunktionalen Seiten der Empathie erwiesen hat
  - „Compassion fatigue“ und damit einhergehende Erschöpfungszuständen vorgebeugt werden kann
  - die Praxis schon nach relativ kurzer Zeit positive Effekte zeigt
  - Mitgefühl und Selbst-Mitgefühl im Sinne der positiven Psychologie die Resilienz stärkt und sich auch positiv auf die Abwehrkräfte des Körpers auswirkt

Figure 9. Compassion and Self-compassion

As the training was in German, I picked the beautiful and functional word *Mitgefühl* to use as a name for the concept of *empathic concern/compassion*. Contrary to the English word *compassion* the Latin word *passio* meaning suffering is not part of the compound. Translated literally it would mean something like *feeling with somebody*. It is distinctly different from the other German word that is often used in this context, *Mitleid*, which is widely translated with *sympathy* in English. The difference between the two German words and the underlying concepts have also been explained in element II.

The head of the Learning and Development department of the clinic group with whom I discussed the first training was very much aware of the *compassion fatigue* issue – something that many medical professionals reported in this clinic group as well. *Compassion fatigue* results from having to deal with human suffering and traumatized people on a daily basis (Figley 1993; Adams et al. 2006; Hooper et al. 2010). Especially, for those who are engaged in caring professions this can lead to serious psychological consequences like burn-out syndrome, etc.



While the authors cited above use *compassion fatigue* more in the sense, that *fatigue* results from showing/experiencing *compassion*, it is also used in the sense, that the ability of caring professionals to show *compassion* becomes fatigued (Fernando and Consedine 2014).

The corresponding concept to *compassion fatigue* is *compassion satisfaction* (Stamm 2013), describing caring professionals who do not become fatigued while showing compassion and experiencing empathy but feel satisfaction doing so. *Compassion fatigue* is not something that necessarily has to be happen, but actions can be taken to cope with it (Figley 2013). Strengthening *compassion* and thus avoiding *personal distress* would be such a measure which fits perfectly into the general theme of this training. Compassion is like a shield that turns shared sad emotions into feelings for oneself as has been demonstrated by neuroimaging (Kim et al. 2009). It can even strengthens the immune system (Pace et al. 2009; Rakel et al. 2009) which would be welcomed side-effect for care professionals.

Training in compassion can also help to work against the desensitization that comes with over-experiencing a certain situation (Campbell et al. 2014), i.e. hearing patients talk about ailments, listening to subordinates complain about the same thing over and over again, or the callousness that comes with having gone through something oneself (Hodges et al. 2010), which is sometimes displayed by, for example, senior physicians toward young interns, who seem to fail due to a heavy workload.

At the start of the training, in element II, the ongoing discussion on the functionality and dysfunctionality of empathy was already touched: Empathy can be costly when not regulated properly (Hodges and Klein 2001), it can trigger depressions when one is too often too close to suffering (Braun et al. 2007), and might even blur one's judgement (Bloom 2013). Down-regulating empathy might be necessary for physicians to even do their job properly (Decety et al. 2010). While a facilitator is supposed to "sell" the content of the training to the participants, it might also be a good idea, to address possible objections and discuss how too much of a good thing can be bad.

It is important, that in a training program for empathy it is pointed out, that empathizing too much and in the wrong way with the suffering of the people surrounding one, can be detrimental to the execution of one's job or even harmful to oneself – especially, when it leads to or is accompanied by *personal distress* (see 2.4.4). For *empathic concern/compassion* (see 2.4.1 and 2.4.3), on the other hand, seems to be no counterindication. There has been plenty of research on this phenomenon and nowhere it says that too much *compassion* is a bad thing.

An objection could be, that the research teams have been biased, insofar as they often connect compassion to religious traditions like Buddhism, Yoga or Christianity where it has been playing a significant role (cf. Singer and Bolz 2013; Ekman et al. 2011). An interesting side note is, that feelings of compassion are more needed for less religious person as a trigger for showing pro-social behavior than for highly religious persons who act pro-socially out of obedience to their respective creeds (Saslow et al. 2012). That notwithstanding, interventions for increasing compassion and self-compassion have been tested in various studies showing great effects for people regardless of their beliefs (see 2.4.3 and 2.7).

The time allocated for this element does in no way reflect the importance of the subject. 30 minutes will not be enough to introduce participants extensively to the topic. It might be enough to give food for thought and make them more receptive for compassion meditation. Hand-outs of the translated transcript of the Loving-kindness-meditation and the *self-compassion*-meditation were distributed that Dr. Kirsten Neff posted on her website ([www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)) and used for her research will be given to the participants (see section 8).

In my experience, in Germany many professionals have been becoming more and more receptive to meditational practices over the past twenty years. While in the beginning of the nineties, meditation was often frowned upon in the general public and seen as something esoteric, it is truly mainstream now and its health benefits are widely known. Chances are therefore better nowadays that the *loving-kindness* and *self-compassion* mediations will be accepted and adopted when the benefits are clearly pointed out and results become tangible. As many of the participants will most likely have more time at home to devote to the meditational routines, pointing out their benefits for the private life as well might also strengthen the motivation to implement these regularly.

The qualitative interview will be a good opportunity to learn whether some of the meditational practices have been adopted.

#### 5.3.3.11 (XI) *Transferring workshop content*

Although, following the BMT theory (see 5.3.3), the transfer discussion is to be held at the end of every element, this element is deserved for collecting all the different ideas, hang-ups, and concerns that have been voiced during the transfer discussions through-out the day. Ideally, the facilitator will have collected these on flip charts, cards, etc. participants can turn to these to get an overview and take them into the subgroups.

Depending on the size of the group, participants can be split into subgroups to work on the task of collecting ideas to achieve the following transfer tasks:

1. How to manage the transfer of empathic behavioral skills on a personal level
2. How to manage the transfer of these skills within their team or with their inferiors
3. How to manage the transfer on an organizational level

In the subgroups the participants are asked to collect their ideas on cards and present these in front of the group after the brainstorming session in the subgroups is finished after approximately 15 min. As motivation plays an important role in the showing of *empathic behavior* (see 2.9.3), this element is designed to help participants to form a firm resolve implementing the newly learnt (or again brought back to mind) behavioral skills in their daily routines. It is to be expected that the participants inspire each other when presenting their different ideas for transferring the training content. In the ensuing moderated group discussion organizational as well as individual blockages can be identified that keep or could keep participants from actually doing what they would want to do.

When participants are in doubt whether they will succeed in implementing the behavioral change, tools like getting a coach to help them or journaling can be introduced at this point. Organizational blockages like a hostile work environment that makes showing *empathic behavior* difficult can, of course, not easily be dissipated in a workshop like this. The facilitator can help the participants to find some leverage points for change or, at least, offer to inform the higher-ups of the situation of the result of the discussion and document it.

When talking about organizational confinements, often – at least during workshop that I witnessed myself – a sentiment of helplessness starts to spread: *this organization will never change* which easily leads participants to conclude *why then should I change* and possible inner growth and adoption of new skills is hindered (Seligman 2006). Ideally, this element ends on a positive and optimistic note. When the discussion is reaching such a point where the mood turns from positive to helpless, it is up to the facilitator to point to the silver lining and help the participants see areas where they can make a difference – be it their own behavior towards inferiors and different stakeholders.

#### 5.3.3.12 (XII) Feedback session

The last element of the training program has little to do with the pedagogy of the training but will help the facilitator to collect feedback to improve his/her performance and/or the program itself in the future. Although feedback sessions right after the actual program are not very efficient to get honest reviews and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program (Felfe and Franke 2014), they are considered good manners and help the facilitator to get a first glimpse of how the participants liked the program from a very subjective point of view.

For the feedback session, different formats are possible depending on the size of the group. Easiest and fastest is the clockwise option, where each participant is asked to tell in a specific number of sentences or a specific time frame how he/she like the training and what could be improved. The disadvantages of this methods are that the participants at the end of the feedback circle usually have few new things to say, the shy and/or diplomatic ones shrink away from pointing to thing that could be improved, and high-ranking participants influence the opinion building process for other participants.

The only way to avoid that is to collect the feedback on cards limiting the number of cards and points on it to a reasonable number. After jotting down their feedback on the cards, participants go to a board and pin them there. That way everybody gets an opportunity to voice their opinions in relative anonymity regardless of rank or boldness.

After the feedback session the training program itself has ended and it is time for goodbyes. Often the best and most informative talks happen after the official program is over with the feedback session. Yin (2011) had likened it to the way Inspector Columbo got the most information – in passing when the suspect had gotten the impression that the official interrogation was finished. The facilitator should have this in mind and plan accordingly.

### 5.3.3.13 Brochure summarizing the content

After the training, participants will be sent a brochure in the form of a PDF showing the slides of the presentation as well as summarizing NVC and *empathic paraphrasing*. Participants usually appreciate such a memory aid.

### 5.3.4 The qualitative interview

My practice in doing qualitative interviews is, unfortunately, limited to the study of sociology where I learnt the trade and interviewed half a dozen of persons for writing term papers. Since I have been working for 12 years as a business coach the skills picked up there are not that different from skills described as necessary by Hill et al.:

*Conducting interviews requires the clinical skills of knowing when to probe, how to support and encourage the interviewee, and what boundaries to maintain in terms of intrusiveness and feeling comfortable asking personal questions. Training and practice in interviewing skills (e.g., how to ask questions, how and when to probe, how to use minimal encouragers and restatements) is crucial. (1997, p. 541)*

Before starting with the actual interviews, I had a couple of practice runs with my daughter. Applying the techniques of qualitative interviewing I learnt a lot more about her school compared to the usual dinner talks. The first “real” interview with participant P2 turned out to be a practice interview, too, as P2 confessed, that she is not in a leadership position (though attending a training that was expressly labeled as leader-only by the HR department). I have listened to the interview to rate my performance and learn from my mistake before conducting the other interviews.

All interviews were held over the telephone to avoid traveling costs. The interviewees were asked to ensure a quiet atmosphere where they could talk freely without other people overhearing them. The interviews were recorded by the voice-over-IP software that runs on my computer after the interviewees gave their consent for the recording and the anonymized processing of the data from the interview. The interviewees were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study, that all data was anonymized and that nowhere on my computer were their names stored and couldn't be connected to the interview. This was done to comply with the newly passed European General Data Protection Regulation law. Face-to-face interviews provide much more data than only the voice – especially when the researchers jot down observation after the interview or even videotapes the interview (Yin 2011). Nevertheless, telephone interviews also offer some advantages over face-to-face situation as it may be easier for participants to open up and feel less vulnerable (Hill et al. 2005).

The plus side of this approach is, that the interview situation was not disturbed by technical appliances as is sometimes the case with the voice recorder on the table (Yin 2011). The recording happens unnoticed by the interviewee in the background and is soon forgotten by all

parties. I deemed video recording via services like Google hang-out, Skype or Zoom not suitable for the interview as these technologies are not by far as reliable as a telephone call. I use them frequently for coachings and more often than not things go wrong – from bandwidth to hardware issues I have encountered everything save my computer catching fire. Also, many people have reservations against this technology and/or simply do not know how to use it.

Expectations and biases before the interview will be recorded to enhance my reflexivity and thus the validity of the study (Hill et al. 1997). Immediately after the interview, observations made during the interview are written down to add to the depth of the data (Yin 2011; Hill et al. 1997). The notes are then digitalized and filed with the audio file to support the understanding of the data.

The language barrier between the interviewer and all the interviewees was relatively small as the differences in socio-cultural background was minimal – all involved were academics and belonged to the middleclass (Kromrey et al. 2016). There are, of course, gender differences between the interviewer and some of the interviewees which might distort the data. It might be seen from the data, if there were reservations on behalf of some of the participants. From the feedback I have gotten from weaving empathy exercises into “standard” communication training, empathy and EI are considered by many to be “female” topics. So, gender distortions might have also happened when the interviewer as a male interviewed other male interviewees who would perhaps feel more comfortable talking about such a subject with a female. Unfortunately, there is only one researcher. Whether or not, the gender of the researcher mediates the effect of the intervention in any way, will not be found out in this research design.

### Interview strategy

As the sampling size is fixed (see 5.3.1), the interview strategy will have to be somewhat different from what Corbin and Strauss suggest for GT. I will follow Nerdrum’s example (2002) whose study had a limited number of participants as well and also oriented myself at Hill’s CQR-methodology (1997) who has found a good compromise for studies with a fixed number of participants.

On one hand, the interview is largely unstructured like in GT to give the interviewees the most freedom to address their issues, on the other hand, elements from semi-structured interviews are incorporated following CQR and the recommendation of Yin (2011). In the light of the limited number of participants, I have created an interview protocol (see Figure 10) with a subset of topics – *areas of interest*, that match the main research questions and the sub-questions. The *areas of interest* serve as an anchor for me to steer the conversation back to the topics.

The interview starts with a *warm-up question* (Hill et al. 1997) to break the ice, focuses the interview on interviewee and empathy. Then a *grand-tour question* (Yin 2011) introduces the actual topic. The *areas of interest* will be addressed in the interview as additional topics in case the conversation ebbs up.

As in CQR the interviewee is treated as the expert concerning the implementation of *empathic leader behavior* into the daily routine of their respective workgroups within their respective organization. As the interviewer has assumed the expert position on empathy during the training program this paradigm shift during the interview will need to receive special attention. It is foreseeable, that role switches might occur during the interview from the role of interviewer to the role of expert trainer and back again when being asked a direct question by the interviewee or when I cannot suppress the need to comment on something the participant says (which I will try to avoid, of course). When switching roles during the interview, the best strategy seems to be to announce that openly and make clear, in what role I am speaking.

**Interview guideline**

**Warm-up question**  
 Das Empathie-Training ist jetzt einen Monat her. Wie geht es Dir nach dem Empathie-Training?  
*It has been a month since the training. How are you feeling after the empathy intervention?*

**Grand tour question**  
 Hat sich etwas an Deinem Führungsverhalten geändert?  
*Did something in your leadership behavior change?*

**Areas of interest**

1. Inneres Erleben mit empathischen Führungsverhalten  
*Inner experiences with Empathic leadership behavior*
2. Führungsverhalten  
*Leadership behavior*
3. Umgang mit den Mitarbeitern  
*Interactions with subordinates*
4. Perspektivwechsel: Wie fühlen sich Deine Mitarbeiter mit Deinem Führungsstil?  
*Perspective-taking: How do your subordinates feel with your leadership behavior?*
5. Anekdote mit Empathie in der Führung  
*Anecdote concerning empathy and leadership*

Figure 10. Interview guideline

With only six interviewees in a leadership position, every shot has to count. Generally, a conversational style is being adopted, that indicates, that the interviewer wants to learn from the interviewee (Yin 2011), who is nudged into narrating by the willingness of the listener (Lamnek and Krell 2010). To get a manageable data set out of the six participants, who have also announced upfront to have little time at their disposal, I will follow CQR in asking focused questions inspired from the *areas of interest* should the flow of information dry up for some reason.

The recommendation of Hill et al. and Lamnek (1997; 2010) to express a caring attitude towards the interviewees (which in Hill et al. case seemingly were predominantly counselors and/or their clients) and carefully paraphrasing what the interviewee said, seems to be a fitting strategy for the topic at hand: as it is a) a sensitive subject matter that involves the emotional inner experiences of the interviewees and b) fits the topics of the empathic intervention where *empathic paraphrasing* was part of the curriculum and was practiced with the participants. It is a non-directive form of interviewing which creates an empathic atmosphere and signals the interviewee an interest in his/her inner world and it helps to speak in modest amounts, being non-directive, staying neutral, and maintaining rapport (Yin 2011, p. 136-138).

### 5.3.5 Development of theory

While the principle of saturation (Corbin and Strauss 2015) was not possible to achieve in sampling, the analysis of the data does not have the same restrictions. Since I cannot spend unlimited time going through the data, it might be tempting to regard the process of analysis completed before saturation has been achieved. That being said, after the troubles of getting participants, conducting training programs, making appointments with them for the interviews, holding the interviews, I sure am motivated to get as much insights from these data than possible – without overinterpretation, of course.

For the analysis, I will be using a QDA (qualitative data analysis) software tool. As ATLAS.ti is too expensive for a private person, [MAXQDA](#) will be used, which came with a six-month license. MAXQDA assists in coding the interviews, writing memos, finding relevant text-passages and printing reports. It also contributes to the validity of the project, as it will make the process of analysis and theorizing transparent and reproducible as the project file can be accessed by anybody using the free-of-charge [MAXQDA-Reader](#).

The use of literature in this research project was finished before the coding of the data began. This might somewhat go against the doctrinal purity of GT but was only the feasible way, as the research question and process as well methodology emerged incrementally over increased immersion in the scientific object. The danger of being influenced by prior findings is somewhat reduced in this case as I am combining two research fields: empathy development and leadership. Throughout the interviews and the analysis, I am trying to keep an open mind on the possibility, that the empathy development program didn't have any effect on quality of the leadership behavior. As the facilitator of the empathy development program, however, I tried to make as great an impact as possible on the participants.

GT as methodology aims developing theory from data instead of going the other way – as is customary in quantitative research, that is, from a preconceived theory that is falsified or validated by the data (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992). The theory is grounded in the data and emerges, ideally, from intensive and repeated analysis of the data (Corbin and Strauss 2015). This method has the advantage, that the researcher's first look on the field is with an open mind and she/he might come up with a whole new theory and outlook on a social phenomenon (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992) that was not thought of before. As theories are developed inductively by permanently exploring reality, they have a different standing than in quantitative research, where they are just a start (Lamnek and Krell 2016).

Corbin and Strauss (2015) list three possible outcomes when applying GT: *description*, *conceptual ordering*, and *theory*. *Description* forms the basis of the other two outcomes and is itself useful to the reader but does not have the depth of the higher order outcomes. The analysis somewhat stops at the surface without digging deeper. *Conceptual ordering* “refers to the organization of data into discrete categories (and sometime ratings) according to their [properties](#) and [dimensions](#), then the utilization of the description to elucidate those categories.” (p. 61, highlights as in the original). *Conceptual ordering* of the data, though, is out of the

question, as I only asked one participants (P8) to rate his EI-level on a scale when hitting a dead end in the interview.

Theory is described by the authors as sets of concepts that have been “systematically developed in terms of their properties and dimensions and interrelated through statements of relationship”. (p. 62) The concepts then are abstracted into overarching *core concepts* (one and many *core concepts* are possible in this paradigm), which start to make the theory more cohesive. Developing *core concepts* entails exploring the different relationships the lower-level concept have with each other by “(a) defining the main issue, event, or problem area under investigation as perceived by participants; (b) explaining the potential context for action-interaction; (c) relating the action and interaction to the meaning given to problem, issue, or event and explaining how this action and interaction is subject to change with changes in context; and (d) relating the results or outcomes to action and interaction.” (p. 62)

GT distinguishes between different levels of theory: substantive, i.e. short-range meaning closely connected to the research question and the data at hand; mid-range, where the core concepts underlying the theory become even more abstract and the theory henceforth broader and fit to explain more; and finally, formal or general, where the process is taken even to its maximum. Strauss and Corbin’s faith in the theory-constructing ability of GT is seen more critical by others (Lamnek and Krell 2016), who simply negate that the combination of different concepts alone is sufficient for the generation of a theory – at best singular hypothesis are created. Kromrey et al. (2016), on the other hand, do not question GT’s suitability to arrive at substantive theories that remain close to the data that are its foundations but do not mention the construction of broader ranged theories. The utility of GT in forming psychological theory, regardless of range, is confirmed by Henwood and Pidgeon (1992), who only see philosophical issues in the “grounding of grounded theory” (p. 104)

Hill et al.’s CQR method (1997) ends at a narrative which is written up, when cross-case analysis has been completed and common patterns identified. Why no need for constructing theory is seen, couldn’t be discerned by me when reading both papers on CQR (1997; 2005). Being descriptive seems to be regarded as sufficient. Nevertheless, for this study I would like to aim for constructing a theory (short-ranged as it may be) which seems fitting for a dissertation and would fall back on merely describing the effects of the empathy training should the data not be rich enough to arrive at greater levels of abstraction. Keeping the process of analysis open ended, is, luckily, an option in qualitative research, more so when using GT.

### 5.3.6 Analysis of data

In the analysis of the data, I will also opt for GT. CQR had a great appeal to me as it appeared to be more pragmatic and more efficient. The process of analysis in CQR starts with applying predefined domains to the data. Each set of data is analyzed separately. The content of the domains is then further coded to develop core ideas. After that point, the different core ideas are cross-analyzed with the core ideas from other data sets to identify patterns, which are more abstract and allow broader insights. All along the way, the research team is seeking consensus about domains, the content of which, the core ideas and the patterns that emerge.



Not only the team forms ideas consensually, outside advisers are also consulted to help the team overcome biases etc. The greatest strength of CQR is the consensus aspect that, unfortunately, will not work in my case as I am cut off from other researchers. Without being able to utilize the consensual power of CQR, GT seems to be a better albeit a more time-consuming choice.

GT's process of intensely immersing oneself in the data and trying to make sense of it until higher-order concepts crystalize, sounds fascinating to me, as I experience this process regularly when entering new topic areas like this doctoral research. It seems to be very natural (at least for me) and mirrors common creative processes like *Design thinking*. Having been close to the participants during the training and in the interview will not hurt the analytical process in GT – on the contrary, it might even enhance my contextual understanding of the data. Rigid discipline in writing memos at every step of the analysis will be called for to make use of this prior knowledge and create transparency.

The process of GT starts with *open coding*, where basic-level concepts are assigned to the raw data. Coding is at all times an interpretation of the researcher as the amount of data is reduced by assigning it to different concepts (Corbin and Strauss 2015). The researcher approaches the data from different perspectives, “asks” the data different questions and analyzes the data

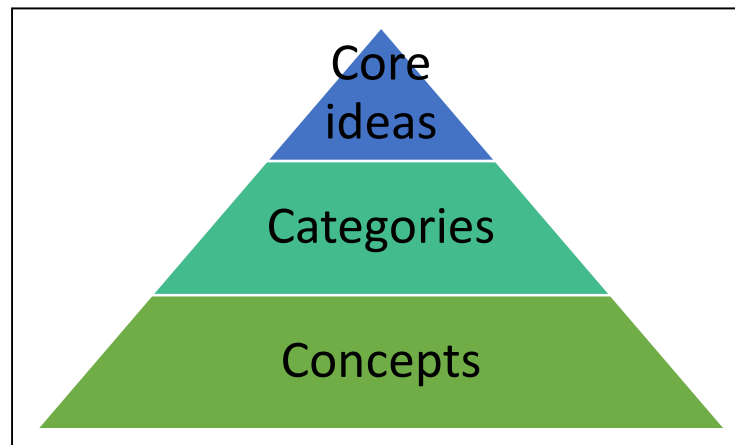


Figure 11. Levels of Abstraction in GT (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 77)

sometimes line-by-line, sometimes by paragraphs going about in an inductive way – learning from the data instead of categorizing data according to preconceived concepts. The idea of the first phase of coding is to develop a sense of the higher-order categories, that might emerge. However, the basic-level concepts due to their lower level of abstraction are closer to the data but have less explanatory power.

*While basic-level concepts provide the foundation, higher-level, more abstract concepts provide the structure or framework of a theory. They help hold the theory together. As concepts move toward greater levels of abstraction, they gain greater explanatory power, meaning they can accommodate more detail under them. However, at the same time, they lose some of their specificity. In the end, a well-crafted theory is a blend of detail and abstraction. (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 77)*

The methodology of GT is a *constant comparative method* (Kromrey et al. 2016) where the researcher does not limit the focus to a single case but jumps from case to case and constantly compares different concepts against each other. In contrast to CQR, this constant comparing starts right away in the process when more than one set of data exist. Constant comparing,

creation of new concepts and adapting of existing concepts makes diligent memo writing a must. Memos are supposed to help the researcher to record all inductively attained insights beyond the simple coding of data by assigning it to different concepts. The example of the memos given by Strauss and Corbin in the cited literature suggest, that the researcher enters an inner dialogue with the data, with interpretations that are induced by the data, with his/her own experiences around the data, and, finally, with him-/herself. When learning about the importance of memos, I opted for using MaxQDA as software tool for qualitative data analysis. The software allows to access the database created in the process of analyzing even after the license has expired by their free-of-charge reader ensuring the accessibility of the memos.

Strauss and Corbin (2015) recommend using an individualized *analytic strategy* that every researcher should develop when coding the data and suggest a variety of approaches for that (p. 90), all of which are important for the process of analysis and ensure sure that quality criteria are being met. Considering the research questions of this thesis, inquiring into the emotional inner life of the participants seems to be called for – besides, of course, asking questions from different perspectives, comparing the different coping-with-emotion strategies of the participants. While inquiring into the inner motives and feelings of the interviewees might come easier to me because of working as business trainer and coach, in-depth linguistic analysis will be more difficult and might also not be conducive to the process. Concerning the importance of the emotional underpinning, staying very close to the data to the point of listening to different passages over and over again, seems sensible as nuances are lost in the transcript. For data protection reasons, the audio files will be separated from the transcript when the file is published as individuals can be identified by their voice very easily. The *analytic strategy*, as the rest of the GT, is also to be seen as something that is sharpened in the course of the analysis.

*Axial coding* will take place sometime into the open coding and will add new depth to the analysis. Around the axis of the concepts, the researcher tries to make out the context of the concept, i.e. the meaning the participant attributes to the instance delineated, action and interactions around the event and the conditions that lead to them, motives for acting/responding, desired outcomes and, finally, the consequences, anticipated or actual, and the way they are evaluated by the participants and/or person whose opinion matters to the participants. Strauss and Corbin (2015) propose that the context for the concepts is to be found in what participants have to say about the reasons that led them to act/interact. Linking concepts with context presents the first step from describing to constructing theory, as the researcher actively scrutinizes the data for explanations of participants' actions/interactions.

Connected with *axial coding* is the process of “weaving” (p. 157) basic-level concepts into higher-level categories or paradigms, which can eventually be combined when too many are formulated. To keep track of conditions and consequences and to add complexity, Strauss and Corbin (2015) suggest creating a matrix of the different levels of the actions and interactions. Understanding how actions/interactions are linked to consequences represents an important step on the way to theory.

More clarity to the context needed for forming paradigms is identifying processes in the actions/interactions of the participants:

*Conditions are subject to time and place. In order to reach desired goal, outcomes, actors must match interactions to changes in conditions. This responsive and dynamic form of interaction I refer to is process. As process, interaction has both changing and repetitive forms, pauses, interruptions, and varying movements. (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 172)*

Since the one-hour interview was more a snapshot in the lives of the interviewees and the questions directed at the interviewees were more concerned with their temporary state of mind, I doubt that much of a process in actions and interactions can be discerned from the data, but it is an interesting analytical viewpoint and may apply in some instances.

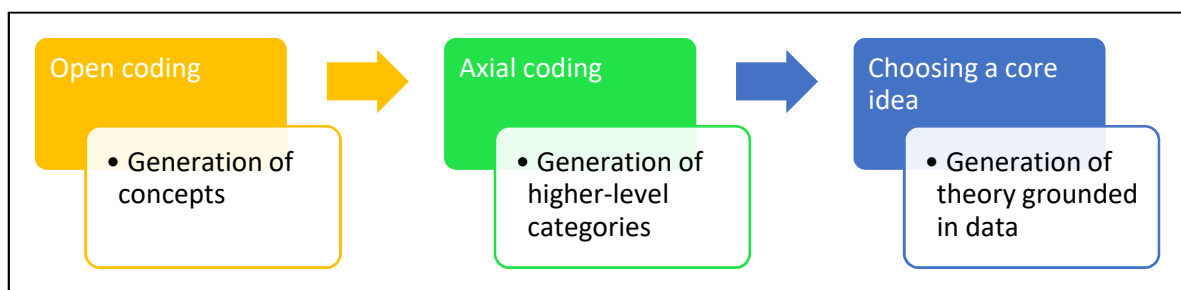


Figure 12. Process of theory generation (author's own interpretation)

When the process of axial coding has achieved the desired density and concepts have been “woven” into a web of higher-level categories, the process of choosing a core concept and of building theory starts. Among the different higher-level concepts one concept is to be selected as core concept when it fulfills certain characteristics:

1. *It must be sufficiently abstract so that it can be used as the overarching explanatory concept tying all the other categories together.*
2. *It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all, or almost all, cases there are indicators that point to that concept.*
3. *It must be logical and consistent with the data. There should be no forcing.*
4. *It should be sufficiently abstract so that it can be used to do further research leading to the development of general theory.*
5. *It should grow in depth and explanatory power as each of the other categories is related to it through statements of relationships.*  
(Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 189)

Key to being able to choose a core concept is the possibility to be able to resort to “long, thoughtful memos” (p. 189) because a long list of concepts will not do. Though the last step is essential for building theory, the process starts at the very beginning when facing the raw data

for the first time. Without the memos, all the thoughts that occurred to the researcher along the way are lost and of no help for forming theory. In the building of the theory, the explanatory element of it has to be considered all the way: how is the theory explaining the actions and interactions of the participants or, in this case, how participants, whose motives drove them to the empathy interventions, are realizing a more empathic way of leading by using communication techniques learnt in the intervention. While this is a first best guess, many other ways are possible where theory could explain actions/interactions in this regard.

When a core category has been chosen, the existing material has to be condensed around that core idea by summarizing memos, concepts, sketching out thought processes in integrative diagrams and presenting ideas to knowledgeable persons. Before finalizing the theory, the *theoretical scheme* needs work. It is to be checked for logic mistakes and internal inconsistency, cleansed of inconsistent concepts and trimmed of concepts, that simply bloat the scope of the theory without adding to it and should rather be used for future research. GT recommends a validation analysis of the theory by comparing it against the raw data and judging, whether it can explain the majority of the cases included in the sample. Variations, which the theory either fails to explain at all or only explains partially, are to be expected and should be accounted for.

With the last process done, the core idea is ready to be written up – either describing the inner experiences of the participants in answer to the research questions or, when *axial coding* has yielded enough insights, allowing for a theory, that goes beyond description to explaining, how, why, and when an empathy intervention leads to a different quality of empathic leadership behavior.

On personal note: I can't wait to apply the theory to use. Strauss, Corbin and many other researchers have made it clear, that GT is more a mindset than a fixed set of rules and regulation that slavishly have to be followed. Curiosity for the object of research and investigator like perseverance and readiness to immerse oneself in the case, seem to be prerequisites for success – the building of theory.

## 6 Procedure

### 6.1 The training programs: proceedings, observations, and impressions

The following participants took part in the training programs:

Table 4. List of participants and functions

Parti- cipi- pants	Training #	Function in the organization	# of re- ports	Age	Gender	Inter- viewed y/n	Included in sample
<b>P1</b>	Training 1	Assistant department head	?	30- 35	female	no	no
<b>P2</b>	Training 1	Regular employee	none	60- 69	female	yes	no
<b>P3</b>	Training 2	Branch manager	38	30- 39	female	yes	yes
<b>P4</b>	Training 3	CEO of a midsized company	35	40- 49	male	yes	yes
<b>P5</b>	Training 3	Member of the management team of a midsized company	team	30	male	yes	yes
<b>P6</b>	Training 3	Functional manager	none	40- 49	female	yes	no
<b>P7</b>	Training 3	Branch manager	20 FTE and 60 PTE	40- 49	male	yes	yes
<b>P8</b>	Training 3	Co-owner	8 FTE	40- 49	male	yes	yes
<b>P9</b>	Training 3	Department head	10 FTE	40- 49	male	yes	yes
<b>P10</b>	Training 3	Regular employee	none	40- 49	female	yes	no
<b>P11</b>	Training 3	Regular employee	none	40- 49	female	no	no

#### 6.1.1 Training 1: Protestant clinic group in Western Germany

The training program was conducted on the 23rd of November in 2017 from 9:00 to 16:30 hours. Initially, it was planned to last up to 17:00 hours but one of the participants had to leave early due to an important meeting with other department heads. The learning and development department gave me a large seminar room within their learning center, a beautiful brick house from the turn of the last century. The training started promptly at 9 o'clock and was interrupted by coffee breaks before and after lunch and by the lunch break itself.

Unfortunately, only two participants have signed up for training. The learning and development department has advertised the training in their intranet one month prior to the start as it was busy creating the seminar catalog for the next year and couldn't advertise earlier with the respective audience which was limited to physicians and caretakers with executive functions.

One can only speculate about the reasons for the scarce attendance. The employee of the learning and development department guessed, that schedules for assistant medical directors, medical directors, and head of departments are too inflexible in this organization and one-month notice in advance simply wasn't enough time. The participants in the training voiced the opinion, that the general interest in empathy among physicians in their organization is not high and the low attendance would be symptomatic for that.

Directly before the training, I informed the participants that I would be conducting an evaluation interview for my research project approximately one month after the training, which they have not learned from the learning and development department. Both agreed to be interviewed.

Unfortunately, I was very busy in my dual roles as facilitator and observer and couldn't note down the exact times of the duration of the different elements. The times written down are just estimates – or educated guesses as I would have finished the program as planned, if the one participant wouldn't have left half an hour earlier. Shortly after the training (during the train ride back to Berlin) I wrote down my impressions and observations from the training program with the event still fresh in my memory.

### Participants

In order to protect the identity of the participants I will only speak in general terms about them. Both participants were female, one was around 30 (P1) the other close to 60 (P2).

Participant P1 is an assistant department head, whereas participant P2 did not reveal her exact position within the organization. It remained unclear whether she was an executive or not. I didn't want to question her further in fear of losing half of my audience...

### (I) Greetings and organizational stuff (Duration 20')

Both participants expressed their enthusiasm for attending the training program. Participant P2 seemed a bit shy and reserved but expressed a great desire to further dive into the topic of empathy. Participant P1 was happy to attend another workshop as she had been on sick leave for quite some time.

Both participants claimed to have visited similar programs in the recent past. P1 has visited a series of self-development programs and P2 has long experiences with a form of Buddhist meditation (but no experience with loving-kindness-meditation). Both participants shared personal stories in the introduction round where empathy played a role like caring for a diseased relative.

After introducing the objectives, I asked the participants whether they had additional topics they would like to discuss in the workshop and whether they were okay with the curriculum I have hatched out. After getting their consent, I pointed to a flip chart where the participants could write down topics during the workshop when needed. Nobody took me up on that offer. Both were fine with the program as it was and we commenced the actual workshop.

## (II) Introduction the empathy concept (Duration 20')

Both participants were happy to learn something about the empathy concept at the beginning of the training, took seats and listened attentively to my short presentation.

In the short discussion after my input it became obvious, that their prior knowledge about empathy was limited to common understanding. They have formed the opinion that empathy was good and something they wanted for themselves and for their patients. Both of them did not show interest in the scientific background information which did surprise me. As I had given similar programs to less educated audiences, I expected more in-depth questions and prepared for a more scholarly input. However, the part on the *functionality and dysfunctionality of empathy* caught their attention and was considered very important. Avoiding *compassion fatigue* was an issue for both participants and they were glad, that I have planned an element on that topic.

Both participants seemed to have gotten a good understanding of how the training would become useful for them in their professional life, so that the transferability of the training content was not to become an issue.

## (III) Empathy statue (Duration 15')

In lieu of other participants I had to take part in the activity myself. Both disciplines showed statures that reflected their actual mood of the day. Their positive emotions were detected by the other participant respectively. According to my impression and based on the feedback of the participants, this activity successfully focused the attention on the other person. Both participants eagerly participated.

Interestingly, it was noted by all participants (including me) that empathic reflection of the other two persons pertaining to one's mood captured aspects new to the person showing the stature. That was the case in all three runs of the exercise. We talked about the Johari-window (Luft 1984) which both participants were familiar with and how the exercise helped to uncover the *unknown-unknown* and *blind spot* segment of the window.

Right when I introduced this exercise, I made it clear to the participants that it served as a "warm-up" for the training to come by sharpening their *empathic accuracy* and getting them acquainted with play-acting for the role-plays to come. They weren't expected to mimic their patients in daily life, which one of the participants, P1, would have found disturbing. Transfer to their professional life was therefore not an issue, but the exercise was accepted due to its usability in the context of the training program.

## (IV) Critical empathy incidents (Duration 15')

Both participants had no issues remembering one positive examples for empathy and one negative, where empathy was experienced as lacking. Within 15 minutes they wrote down examples for that on scrap paper and talked about them openly in the plenum. Interestingly, the good examples for empathy were experienced outside the workplace whereas the instances where empathy was missing, at the workplace.

My impression was, that the activity served its purpose and helped the participants to focus their attention on empathy and recall events, where it played a role in their lives. The incidents would come handy for the role-playing sessions to come.

#### (V) + (VI) Non-violent communication – input and activity (Duration 120')

The input was well received. Both participants listened attentively and found the concept to be very interesting. For both participants it served as a refresher. They had attended a similar program and were aware of the basic concepts but could not recall any details<sup>21</sup>. Both participants agreed that it was a useful refresher.

I modeled the NVC process with the help of a participant taking an example from private life to which the participants could relate easily. The process was received well by the participants. The partner in the role play felt the NVC process work and noticed my emotions subside when I went through the four steps.

For the training activity the participants choose target persons from their professional life – a colleague and a patient. Both participants had to do two reruns as they did not apply the NVC technique but communicated the way they were used to speak with colleagues/patients. I found it remarkable that it took some effort and three repetitions to break their communication routine, which became even more apparent in the following paraphrasing roleplays.

After being introduced to the concepts of NVC, both participants were initially a bit skeptic concerning transferability into the daily dealings with patients. After the activities we had another discussion round and the participants' attitude had changed. They saw how it could make their life easier when they could apply a technique that would sooth patients rather than aggravating them more.

#### (VII), (IX) Empathic paraphrasing – input and activity (Duration 25')

The short input was received with interest, but no further questions were asked. Showing the short YouTube-clip of Carl Rogers doing empathic paraphrasing to model the technique for the participants proofed to be a failure. They understood little more than the body language from the clip as their English was not good enough. Before starting the actual activity, I modelled the technique myself with the help of a participant who I was paraphrasing (in German).

For the first run and the consecutive ones, the participants chose example from their experience working at the clinic. They made some progress during the activity. After each turn, feedback was given, what each of the person taking part in the activity had felt, while I, as the facilitator, gave feedback regarding the aptitude with which the technique was applied. Surely, an afternoon session is by far not enough to teach someone the technique of paraphrasing. Nevertheless, it did help participants to focus their full attention in the other person, empathize with her/him without falling into the traps that kill empathy as mentioned in the input and shown on the slides (see 5.3.3.7).

The training activity for paraphrasing triggered a process of personal sharing. One of the participants, P2, became very emotional during the exercise. She shared some parts of her past



with the group and was treated very empathically by the other two. Interestingly, the activity kind of took off and participant P1 used *empathic paraphrasing* to empathize with participant P2. P1 also wanted to share main themes of her life, what was troubling her, and how she strived to break free from that.

As facilitator I was a bit torn: on the one hand it is to be expected that emotions are churned up in an empathy workshop and I personally think that by attending to them in an empathic and NVC way a lot can be learned by every person involved, on the other hand, the curriculum had to be followed to a certain extent to make it comparable when the training was to be repeated with other participants. Moreover, the participants weren't on the workshop on their own time but being paid by their employer to pick up skills pertaining to their job and not to sort out their personal life.

After I felt that the personal stories of the participants have received sufficient justice, we had a short break and then moved on to the next activity and to the professional sphere, again. Discussions of transferability of the behavioral skill were superfluous as it was evident that both participants were highly invested in the technique and wished to apply it in their professional life. It matched their own ideas of treating patients and colleagues.

#### (X) Role-plays on critical incidents (Duration 90')

After the break we turned to the critical incidents to act them out in the role-plays. I gave the participants a short introduction as what was planned in the next 90'. At this point, they had experiences with role-playing already as activities III, VI and IIX prepared them for the "main event" of the day.

Participant P1 wanted me to play the angry relative of a patient who had a complaint and felt strongly that his/her relative was not treated properly. In this case, as well, we had to repeat the role play three times as P1 did not apply the paraphrasing technique but resorted to looking coyly (which I described as making "bambi eyes" to her) at the aggressor all the while asking in a bureaucratic fashion for name and reason of admittance of the relative.

Though P1 professed to give the process of *empathic paraphrasing* a try, she clearly struggled with her communication routine. I did not question her perceptions of the effectivity of the displayed behavior in her daily dealings with enraged patients but insisted on trying to apply the techniques that the workshop endorsed. When she eventually did give them a try, the change in atmosphere was noted by participants P2 who acted as an observer and gave feedback accordingly. As the role-playing partner, I told her, that I felt my anger dissolve as she paraphrased my words and feelings. She herself had the same impression as she confessed.

Participants P2 had two cases she wanted to act out in the paraphrasing role-play. The first one concerned an angry patient, too. According to P2, patients often come to her in an angry emotional state because admission treats them coldly. In the role play she wanted to try out the paraphrasing techniques to calm down the patient and show him/her empathy. As with P1 it took a more than one trials (2) before she started to paraphrase the patient and part from her habitual ways.

The second critical incident of participant P2 concerned one of the members of the admissions staff that in her opinion caused the patients to become so aggravated. P2 had no disciplinary power over these colleagues. She is a couple of years her senior and described them as being constantly in a bad mood and always waiting for the shift to end. In the situation to be acted out, the colleague refused to acknowledge P2 by continuing to operate her smartphone. Again, it took two reruns before P2 started to use the process of NVC as practiced expressing her feelings and to use paraphrasing to mirror the replies of her colleagues. When she managed to break habit, she and P1 who played the part of the colleague as well as I as the observer felt a shift in the quality of the communication. She accepted the collegial and the facilitator's feedback very well after each run and made an earnest attempt to change her behavior.

Transfer discussions of both the *empathic paraphrasing*, *NVC*, and *empathy* as a whole were held frequently. As P1 and P2 got better at applying the techniques, they seemed to see more ways of applying them in their daily life – in dealings with patients and colleagues. This is, of course, an overview and impression of mine.

#### (XI) Compassion and self-compassion (Duration 15')

For this part, unfortunately, only limited time was left as participant P1 had to leave earlier and participant P2 wanted to act out two cases in the role-play session that took a lot longer than planned. Both participants expressed a desire to do the guided loving-kindness-meditation and were eager to learn about the research projects that proofed their effectiveness.

We couldn't finish the meditation as time ran out, but the participants got a good idea what it was about. Both confessed, though, that they did not want to take up neither the self-compassion nor the loving-kindness meditational routine but stick to their respective routines.

#### (XI Transferring workshop content

Element XI as an extra element had to be skipped due to lack of time. Nevertheless, since we did have extensive discussion on training transfer throughout the whole day and after each element, I do feel that this important part of the training program has seen the attention it deserves.

#### (XII) Feedback session (Duration 5')

Both participants said that they found the session very useful and that they liked the atmosphere very much. The feedback forms that the clinic provided were handed out by me to be filled out by the participants later and sent back to learning and development.

#### Conclusion

Immediately after training program 1 and without having interviewed the participants, my impression is that one day is not sufficient for such a training program. Though the length of empathy interventions is not supposed to be a mediating factor for effectiveness it might not be a coincident that the empathy program conducted with medical students were all planned out over a longer course of time (see section 3.2). A program stretching over multiple days would have been preferable. Assuming from the reactions of the clinic administration to this

proposal, this might be difficult in Germany where soft-skills training for physicians has just started and is still a novelty for many clinic groups.

Behavioral patterns seemed to be deeply ingrained. Although both participants claimed to be knowledgeable about *empathic communication* techniques, they had considerable issues applying them in the context of this workshop. Observing their behavior with patient and colleagues in their actual professional environment and measuring the perceived empathy would be highly interesting. That the role-plays provided a realistic setting was mentioned by both participants who were astonished how “real” they felt emotionally. It therefore may not be too farfetched to assume that they display the same kind of behavior in professional life.

Actually, showing *empathic behavior* that is perceived as such by the patients seemed to be an issue for P1 and P2. It would be highly interesting to see if this is true for a greater number of medical practitioners. In the qualitative interviews this subject should be addressed to evaluate whether the training program helped the participants to show empathic behavior by introducing them to communication techniques like NVC and paraphrasing.

The small size of the group was noted by both participants as very useful. They appreciated the lengthy trainer feedback and the reruns of role-plays as well as the confidential atmosphere that induced the sharing of emotional episodes in the workplace and in private life. That the facilitator actively took part in the activities and in the role-plays, did not seem to hinder this process – on the contrary, it seemed to support it. Not having to participate in the role-plays myself, would it have made easier for me to observe, though.

Both participants shared a lot of personal information in the workshop – both from the professional and the private sphere. In the beginning of the workshop, predominantly stories from their personal lives highly charged with emotional content were told that involved losses of dear ones, personal injuries (and the resulting awkwardness of being sick in one’s own hospital) and wrong life decisions. Only later, when we turned to the role-plays did the professional sphere become more prominent and dealings with patients and colleagues, successful und unsuccessful CPRs, tragic cases, etc. were addressed.

It became obvious, that – even if the empathy intervention has no effect on leadership behavior and *perceived empathy* with patients and subordinates, it does seem to help the participants themselves as receiving and giving empathy is a great thing in itself and that the healing effect, that other studies (see section 3.2) have attested was tangible by everyone in the workshop.

#### 6.1.2 Training 2: One-on-one training with the manager of a fitness studio

The training was conducted on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 and lasted from 9:00 to 17:00 hours with 1 hour of lunch break. Logistics would have it, that the training had to be conducted for the one participant in her own apartment, which, luckily, was spacious enough.

As with training 1, I was again in the role of facilitator and observer but had the chance to jot down my observation on the train ride home immediately after the training. Again, the duration of the different elements of the program are only (educated) estimations.

#### The participant

The participant P3 (female, thirty-something) has been managing a fitness studio in Southern Germany with forty-five full-time-employees and around six-thousand members for over half a year. Being fairly new in this position, she was grateful for the opportunity to receive a soft skills training which her employer did not provide for managers in her position.

#### (I) Greetings and organizational stuff (Duration 10')

The participant P3 was very eager to take part in the program and expressed a great interest in empathy and related topics. She had not attended similar programs in the past. Having studied business administration and having been in management positions for around five years, she was no stranger to leadership models but was not acquainted with the social sciences. The introduction round did not take much time considering the number of participants. The outline of the program was accepted wholeheartedly, and no changes or additional topics were suggested.

#### (II) Introduction the empathy concept (Duration 45')

The first element took a lot longer than initially planned as the participant had a keen interest in the topic and many questions – regarding the empathy concept but also regarding empathic leadership. As it was a one-on-one session, postponing answering her questions to a later point seemed out of place.

Interestingly, as with the participants from training 1 this participant also stressed that empathy played a great role in her daily dealings with subordinates and that she considered herself to be a leader that treated her subordinates with empathy and appreciation. Though she did not use the word herself, her leadership style can be characterized as being transformational and she put a lot of energy into fostering high quality LMX with her subordinates. This could, of course, only be gleaned from her description as I could hear from her subordinates how they perceived her leadership style.

#### (III) Empathy statue (Duration 15')

Though we were only two, this introductory exercise was very successful and – according to the immediate feedback of the participant - served its purpose in shifting the attention to the emotions alive in the other person expressed through the bodily stature. Both the participant and I felt seen by the other and noticed a moment of empathy that was generated by the mirroring of the body posture and mimic of the other person.

#### (IV) Critical empathy incidents (Duration 10')

The participant could immediately think of an incident where she thought empathy was lacking. The incident dealt with her superior who was holding the participant's position before but got promoted to regional manager of the corporation holding multiple fitness studios in Ger-

many. Her grievance with her superior was, that she was being openly accused of being negligent in a group meeting with her peer – managers in a similar position as she. She felt, that she was not being treated with empathy as the mistake she made was unavoidable in her situation and not a big deal.

(V) + (VI) *Non-violent communication – input and activity (Duration 70')*

The input on NVC was met with great interest. The participant saw the relevance for her daily work immediately. After I have modeled the first round of the activity, the participant took an example from her daily life as a manager to give the process a try. I was asked to play an employee who works at the reception desk but fails to greet customer upon entering the premises and has been reminded repeatedly to do so by the participant.

While going through the process the participant realized the benefits of looking at observations, feelings, and needs separately as it increases *self-empathy* and self-awareness for those needs. It is not the breaching of company rules anymore that she realizes has been troubling but the felt lack of respect by said employee towards her for blatantly neglecting her orders. When in the role play she went through the NVC process, a change in atmosphere was noticeable to both of us the moment she spoke from the heart that she felt her need for respect being neglected.

Due to having only one participant we went through the process of NVC multiple times with different backstories until the participant felt that she practiced the process enough to feel so comfortable doing it that she could try it at work. After the role plays the participant spend some time discussing how to transfer the newly learnt skills into her daily routines as manager and could immediately think of many scenarios where it could proof useful.

(VII), (IX) *Empathic paraphrasing – input and activity (Duration 120')*

This time, the participant was sufficiently versed in English to understand Carl Rogers modeling *empathic paraphrasing*. She listened attentively to the presentation on the theoretical background and uses of paraphrasing and was excited to put it into practice in the ensuing activity.

As in training 1, I modelled the behavior in the first runs using my own scenario in the role play. After that, when it was the participant's turn, we used scenarios from her world in the fitness studio. The level of reality was, again, impressive, as emotion flared up when getting into the roles. We did altogether three rounds of complaining customers with me and the participant playing different parts each time. The participant noted that the change of perspectives in the role play helped her to understand the point of the customers better.

The participant visibly became more alive, when we switched the topic of the role plays from angry customers to the simulation of an appraisal interview with a top performing but unhappy subordinate of the participant. When I addressed the change in mimics, the participant confessed that she did not like dealing with complaints from customers but liked interviewing employees. She saw the value of *empathic paraphrasing* for getting a better idea of what the

employee wanted out of the job and in what directions he wanted to develop himself in the future.

Again, the transfer talk was part of the exercise and the participant did not take long to clearly see, where the technique could become useful.

#### (X) Role-plays on critical incidents (Duration 90')

This element merged with the element before. As we were only two, separating this two did not make sense.

#### (XI) Compassion and self-compassion (Duration 30')

After explaining the theoretical background, we went through both sheets with the directions for the self-empathy and the loving-kindness-meditation. While explaining, we discussed at length the usability for managers. As the participant had the impression that many of her subordinates as well as customers “dumped” their emotional issues on her, she expressed great interest in this self-help techniques. The support from her superiors was according to her little or none existing. It was obvious, that she was under quite some pressure.

Just reading the directions for both meditations from the sheets caused a change in the participant’s mood. When speaking about her issues as a newly employed manager of forty-five employees, she sounded often stressed. Even thinking about self-empathy and compassion alleviated that feeling of stress. As the participant plans to take up some form of mediation anyway, chances are quite good, that a routine will stick.

#### (XI) Transferring workshop content

Transfer as an extra element did not need to be introduced as we discussed the transferability directly after the introduction of each new element.

#### (XII) Feedback session (Duration 5')

The participant liked the session very much and gave good feedback. Of course, being the only participant, it would have been hard for her to give negative feedback. On the other hand, in one-on-one sessions the participant has much more opportunities to change the course of the event to his/her liking.

#### Conclusion

Doing the training only for one participant afforded us with the opportunity to train each element thoroughly. Social learning in this case was, of course, only limited to watching me modeling the techniques.

Since the participant was very interested in the topic, she was highly motivated to think of ways to integrate the new thoughts and techniques into her daily routine as a manager and inspire co-workers to pick up a similar leadership style as hers which – in theory – has a lot in common with transformational leadership and requires similar empathic skills. It will be very interesting to see, what she will implement into her daily routines when I interview her roughly one month after the training.

Roundabout two-month after the seminar, the participant sent me a WhatsApp-message with a copy of her boss' feedback. She used *empathic communication* from the training during a role-play she conducted during a leadership-training and praised for her appreciative way of dealing with the other person. The participant was very happy about that and attributed it to the skills she picked up in the training.

### 6.1.3 Training 3: Open seminar with diverse participants

The training was organized as an open seminar (i.e. not limited to a specific organization or person) which people from different backgrounds attended. The event was hosted on a Saturday at the house of one the participants, as it was the most convenient way. It lasted from 09:00 to 17:00 hours with 1 hour of lunch break. The participants came from the expanded network of one of the participants who "heard" about the research project from a colleague of mine. Participation was free of charge.

#### The participant

Altogether, it was eight participants, two of which were not in a leadership position but requested to attend anyway – one an elementary school teacher (P10), the other an accountant (P11). Five of the other participants had direct reports in their respective organizations. Among them was the CEO of an engineering company (P4) and his second in command (P5), a medical general practitioner (P8), the branch manager of a bank (P9), and the branch manager of a company from the entertainment industry (P7), and the quality manager of a larger chemical company (P6). Although the latter did not have direct reports, the participant had great expectations that the training will help her to interact with the managers who had to answer to her in quality management affairs. It will have to be seen, if she can be included in the sample.

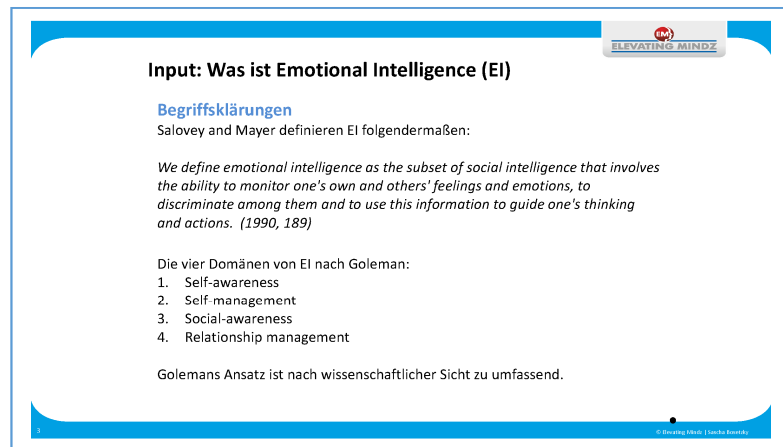
#### (I) Greetings and organizational stuff (Duration 30')

The introduction round took longer than in the previous two trainings as there were more participants. After introducing myself and the research project, the participants told a little about themselves and what they expected of the training session. Since everybody was there voluntary, the mood was very positive.

Motivations to attend the program were manifold: some of the participants wanted to learn good communication techniques for dealing with certain subordinates, colleagues, and superiors in a satisfying way for everybody involved, others thought empathy and EI to be exciting concepts for improving the organizational climate and for increasing employee loyalty. The two participants not in a leadership position were either just interested in the subject or wanted to improve their dealing with the parents of the school children taught.

## (II) Introduction the emotional intelligence concept (Duration 45')

The intervention was labeled as an emotional intelligence training following the hunch of a colleague who claimed that this would attract more participants. I introduced an extra slide (see Figure 13) with the definition of EI by Salovey and Mayer as well with Goleman's domains of EI whose works were known to some of the participant beforehand.



The slide is titled "Input: Was ist Emotional Intelligence (EI)" and features a logo in the top right corner that says "ELEVATING MINDZ". The content is as follows:

**Begriffsklärungen**  
Salovey and Mayer definieren EI folgendermaßen:

*We define emotional intelligence as the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. (1990, 189)*

Die vier Domänen von EI nach Goleman:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-management
3. Social-awareness
4. Relationship management

Golemans Ansatz ist nach wissenschaftlicher Sicht zu umfassend.

Figure 13. The emotional intelligence concept

After pointing out how empathy connects to the definition of EI by Salovey and Mayer and stressed the complimentary nature of the two concepts (see 4.5), I quickly switched to talking about the empathy concept as in the trainings before. As in the other trainings, the subject of the empathy concept and related topics was met with great interest. Some of the participants started to ask questions immediately, which I answered right away.

## (III) Empathy statue (Duration 15')

This warm-up exercise was done in the garden of the venue. After being a little shy, the first participant ventured forward and did a statue which the others mirrored. Another followed while the rest of the participants were only observing and mirroring without wanting to take a more active part. The effect of mirroring was noticed by everybody as the two participants showing the statue confirmed most of the emotions felt by the group mirroring. In the feedback rounds of this exercise I intervened a couple of times to redirect participants' attention to simply telling what they felt during the exercise and not trying to interpret the stature and the intentions of the participant showing the stature.

## (IV) Critical empathy incidents (Duration 10')

None of the participant had difficulty coming up with an empathy incident.

## (V) + (VI) Non-violent communication – input and activity (Duration 80')

The process of NVC was met with great interest by all the participants. When explaining the concept, I had the impression that all participants listened with great attentiveness. When I modeled the process with the help of a participant portraying a case from my own life, I was having sort of an epiphany when moving from the *feelings* to the *needs* step realizing the underlying need of a *feeling* for the first time. Interestingly, this was noticed by many of the participants who addressed their observations after the role-play was done. It increased the motivation of the participants to do the activity themselves. Though this will probably not be possible to reproduce for every empathy intervention but experiencing the process on oneself seems to be a powerful motivator for the group.



We decided against splitting up into two groups for the main activity. The two role-plays that were done were equally enlightening for the actors and the spectators alike. The scripts for these role-plays were taken from the critical incidents from element (IV). The role-plays gave ample opportunity for taking the perspective of the other person involved in the real-life scenario, that – in the role-play – was played by one of the participants.

#### (VII), (IX) Empathic paraphrasing – input and activity (Duration 100')

Modeling the activity proved to be somewhat challenging as the participant who offered to play my partner in the role-play started to describe the critical incident written down in element (IV) in a very monotone voice with far too many details. After paraphrasing some of the details, I had to intervene and directed the participant's attention to the underlying emotions by asking how she felt in this situation. Though technically I had to swerve from unalloyed *empathic paraphrasing*, the process still worked, and, in the end, the participant became aware that this critical incident was actually a positive experience and ended the role-play with a big grin.

As it turned out, in the ensuing discussion many of the participants stated that they often run into employees who use up a lot of their time with seemingly endless monotone monologues and found the *empathic paraphrasing* mixed with a few questions guided towards emotions to be a good method of getting to the button line without hurting feelings. The activity was done very meticulously by all the participants who split up into groups of three. Though the setting was outside the workplace, the conversations in the subgroups were to the point and centered around the transfer of the method into everyday life.

#### (X) Role-plays on critical incidents (Duration 90')

We managed to do just one role-play as time was running out. The topic of this role-play was how to react properly to an employee's oral presentation of the tragic death of a close relative with the right amount of compassion, how to avoid *personal distress*, and how to manage that employee *emotionally intelligent* while having to have an eye on productivity as well.

The discussion afterwards centered on the transferability of *empathic behavior* for leaders of profit-oriented organizations which also pertained to the general practitioner who had limited time to spend with each patient to make ends meet. There was a general agreement that with empathy and EI it would be easier to reach an acceptable balance for everybody and stay true to oneself as well as healthy.

#### (XI) Compassion and self-compassion (Duration 30')

As in the other trainings, I did not lead the participants into a meditation session but went through the process step by step after explaining why and how *self-compassion* and compassion exercise work and when they are best applicable.

Some of the participants voiced the concern that they would become to “soft” and less capable of making uncomfortable but necessary decisions. I assured them that being compassionate doesn't have to mean that one loses sight of what is best for the organization and that it is not to be confused with sentimentality.

### (XI) Transferring workshop content

Discussions on transfer of training content happened right after or even in between exercises. Participants were not only eager to learn about *empathic behavior* but wanted to apply it in everyday life. An extra transfer session was therefore not necessary, nor did we have the time for that.

### (XII) Feedback session (Duration 5')

All the participants felt they received their money's worth... On a more serious note, there was consensus in the group that the knowledge and skills learnt during the day were very important for them and that they wanted to apply them in their daily life as a leader (or school teacher, private person, etc.) They liked the way, I presented the inputs and facilitated the exercise.

### Conclusion

It was very inspiring to see how a group of participants from many different backgrounds was so interested in the topic. It showed the relevance of empathy and EI for modern leadership that takes part in the war on talents. The nature of an open seminar had it, that the participants had an expressed interest in the topic and was willing to sacrifice the sacred Saturday for this topic.

That participants were coming from different background made the discussions very lively. Unlike in seminars that are held for members of a specific organization, talks were centered on the topic and on leadership instead of politics and the newest scuttlebutt. The leadership issues that were discussed did not vary observably across the different professions and positions.

## 6.2 The qualitative interviews

### 6.2.1 Interview P1 – 03.01.2018

#### Expectations and biases

As this was the first interview in this research project, I was excited beforehand. I expected the participant to be quite eager to apply what she had learnt in the seminar but was a little doubtful that she would succeed in trying to change something about her behavior. In the training she had troubles getting out of her usual rut of treating patients.

#### Observations and reflections

I was disappointed right away when the participant told me that she doesn't lead any persons in her organization. Right at the start of the training I wondered why she only talked about her colleagues and the patients but not about subordinates. After receiving the information that all the effort and costs for the training was for nil (P2 had already cancelled the interview at this point), I had to digest the bad news for a moment. Then I decided to look at this interview (and the training program) as a test run and was interested in learning how the participant experienced the program and what she was able to apply in her daily work.

I felt happy upon hearing from her that she was able to apply NVC and *empathic paraphrasing* in communication with patients and colleagues and profited from the program.

#### 6.2.2 Interview P5 – 22.05.2018

##### Expectations and biases

In the training I liked the attitude of P5 who was eager to learn and displayed an open mind. I would expect him to have at least tried to apply some of the techniques learnt in the training.

##### Observations and reflections

I had a very good feeling after the interview. During the interview I felt a surge of happiness when the participant told about his experiences with applying *empathic paraphrasing* in his work as a leader and having success with it. I used *self-compassion* at this point to acknowledge, reflect, and, ultimately, to control the feeling, as I almost immediately realized that it would not be good for the quality of the interview to revel in the positive feeling of achievement – I ascribed some of the behavior of the participants to myself.

#### 6.2.3 Interview P3 – 25.05.2018

##### Expectation and biases

As the participant P3 was enthusiastic in the training, I expected her to have applied a lot from the training in her daily life as a leader. Being only about 4 months in the leadership position at the time of the training, she was still in the process of defining her role as leader. Also, she values supportive behavior very much but has received little from her superior. I had the impression, that she is a fast-moving person that seems to be more the hands-on than the reflective type. Should my impression be true, it might be more difficult for her to engage in perspective-taking and empathy and she would jump to problem-solving mode too quickly. I feel safe to say that I don't have any biases in the sense of personal issues towards the participants.

##### Observations and reflections

Unlike in the interview with P5 I felt less elated when P3 told me how she picked up techniques from the training which supposedly helped to increase her empathic behavior with followers and her own superiors. It is probably because by now I am used to the feeling and am not surprised anymore that the training had some effect on the trainees.

The interview went well, and I had the impression of becoming more accustomed to the topic and the circumstances of the interview – meeting my trainees for the second time but not as trainer but as interviewing researcher. At one point, the interviewee forced me to leave my role as interviewee and become the expert trainer again when she asked for advice concerning the usage of *empathic paraphrasing*. Upon short consideration, I handled the possible dilemma by addressing the change of role directly. After giving advice, I announced that I will be switching back to role of interviewer. The interviewee accepted the change of roles and did not asked for advice again and stayed in the role of interviewee for the rest of the interview.

P5 addressed the importance of a short brochure for her I sent to the participants after the training. Before important appraisal interviews with employees or when having to engage in presumably difficult feedback talks, P5 consulted the brochure to refresh her memory.

#### 6.2.4 Interview P6 – 28.05.2018

##### Expectations and biases

Having observed this participant in the training, my expectations concerning the application of the techniques are somewhat mixed. P6 was really enthusiastic about empathy but also harbored the impression that everybody around her was lacking it. While this might be true, it could also be that P6 simply talked so much, that her colleagues mentally checked out and couldn't listen anymore. In the training program, I observed this behavior a couple of times in group discussions as well as in two role-plays where I interacted with her. She didn't mind it, when I interceded using *empathic paraphrasing*. I do expect, that P6 tried to apply the techniques but that she also tried to convince her colleagues to act more empathically which she announced to me during a conversation in one of the breaks. It will be interesting to hear of her experiences after the training program.

##### Observations and reflections

After the customary asking for consent for the recording and processing of the interview, P6 started right away to tell me that she didn't apply much of the techniques, as she doesn't lead any employees. This statement met with disappointment on my part. P6 displayed a lot of enthusiasm during the program and saw many different ways of applying the content. While she said that she didn't have disciplinary power over employees, she insisted on being included in the pool of interviewees as she was a technical manager and had people report to her on technical matters.

Right at the start of the interview, all that enthusiasm during and after the training session seemed to have faded away. While in the interview with P5 I had to control my happiness, here I had to control disappointment at first that this interview isn't going to be yet another testimony to the greatness of the training. Then feelings of irritateness surged up as P6 mixed up concepts and claimed that EI is no more than *common sense*, that she knew all before and that jogging is her form of *loving-kindness-meditation*. I started to paraphrase her more and felt the soothing effect. P6, however, seemed to be oblivious to my changes in mood.

After about twenty minutes I changed my interview strategy as I felt I was getting nowhere and P6 went in circles around one single story which only remotely concerned EI. I started to ask more direct questions, probing her for more feedback on the training and the techniques. For example, I asked her how she would rate her ability to gauge her feelings and needs (in regard to the NVC-scheme) on a scale from 1 to 10.

After the interview I decided not to include her in the sample, as she clearly was in no leadership position and the interview would not contribute to the research question.

### 6.2.5 Interview P4 – 29.05.2018

#### Expectations and biases

During the training the participant delineated his strategy of displaying a “bad mood” when coming to work in the morning as a way of keeping employees at a distance so that he could attend to his own work and be only bothered by *urgent* requests. My expectation would be that P4 has rethought this strategy when learning about the spreading of emotions.

I look forward to this interview as P4 is my most important source judging from the position and number of FTE that report to him. I place a lot of importance to the data gotten from this interview.

#### Observations and reflections

I started the interview in a good mood. Later, I got somewhat impatient, when P4 told incidents in too much detail. Also, I switch roles a couple of times between interviewer and trainer and felt the need to announce the switch in the interview. I was a bit disappointed that P4 didn't have that much contact time with his direct reports, as he was on a business trip as well as on vacation.

### 6.2.6 Interview P7 – 31.05.2018

#### Expectations and biases

P7 created the impression in me during the training to be a manager that cared for his followers. He was visibly touched when talking about a part time employee who suffered personal losses and told her boss about that during work.

#### Observations and reflections

In this interview it was especially hard for me to keep the roles of interviewer and trainer separated. At several instances I responded to rather direct questions concerning the training content. At other instances, I felt the need to rectify the interviewee and set things straight as I didn't want him to memorize wrong facts from the training. Nevertheless, I learnt a lot about the way he used EI in leading employees.

### 6.2.7 Interview P9 – 29.05.2018

#### Expectations and biases

I don't have many expectations. My bias would be, that P9 appeared emotional very neutral and might have not applied to much in the training. On the other hand, I sort of expect to be surprised.

#### Observations and reflections

My expectation to be surprised were met as interviewing P9 was very insightful. The training was a refresher for him but encouraged him to re-implement behavioral routines that he had forgotten about. At times in the interview I was at loss keeping the conversation going and

sometimes asked rather direct questions. P9, however, seemed to be quite eager to answer the question, which weren't formed very expertly.

#### 6.2.8 Interview P10 – 31.06.2018

##### Expectations and biases

Since P10 worked as an elementary school teacher, it was clear, that I couldn't use the data generated in this interview directly for answering the research questions. The participant wanted to be interviewed and I didn't want to turn her down. Furthermore, the interview data could also help to check whether the training conducted by me was only useful in that context as well. That the elements of the training design are effective in many different professional and non-professional contexts has been proofed in the literature on empathy development programs already (see 3.1). The question here is more: is that the case for "my" program as well.

##### Observations and reflections

The interview was pleasant and turned out to be very interesting. The participant found many different usages for *empathic behavioral techniques* when dealing with the parents of her students, colleagues and superiors. She also made interesting observations concerning the effect the training program had at herself.

#### 6.2.9 Interview P8 – 03.06.2018

##### Expectations and biases

P8 created the impression (and said so in the training) of being more on the factual side of communication, which is somewhat in line with my stereotype of white, male, middle-aged medical general practitioner in Germany. Empathic listening with patients has not been his focus. The seminar was visited by him as he expected to improve his dealing with his employees by using EI.

##### Observations and reflections

The interview with P8 wasn't the easiest one. He didn't seem to give me much information. I felt the need to ask many questions to get at least some info. At times I felt, my questions were going to deep and were an intervention in itself as I asked about the feelings of the persons around him a lot.

I was disappointed at first, as P8 told at very beginning of the interview that it didn't make any differences whatsoever. Why P8 attended the training, is remaining mysterious to me. I suspected an underlying desire to become more empathic which seems to be unlikely after the interview.

### 6.3 Analysis of the data

It was a good thing that the analysis of the interview was done with a QDA software that allowed me to listen to the interviews while reading the transcripts. The transcription service

doing the work made a couple of gross mistakes that altered the meaning of the sentences. These mistakes I was able to weed out that way. The audio files added a layer of depth to the data, that only very time-consuming forms of transcribing offer. Even then, the tone of the voice is lost which at times helped me to understand the data much better as it offered a wealth of context.

### 6.3.1 The open coding

#### 6.3.1.1 *Insights and experiences*

Already the first stage of the GT process of coding the data yielded very interesting results. Even, if the data is not dense enough to allow the building of theory, the preliminary results of the open coding seem offers valuable insights which are worthwhile to be reported here.

Right when reading the first lines of the transcribed interviews, it became obvious that the long immersion in the topic of the dissertation left its imprint on my mind. The concepts, that sprang up when starting to code the interviews, were very close to the concepts I have reviewed in this work up to the point when the empirical part started. Diving into the field with little prior knowledge as Strauss and Corbin (2015) suggested would have probably led to a different code system. When thinking about a specific behavioral pattern in the data, I couldn't help but code it according to the theories on empathy, EI, and leadership that I have read so far.

It helped to regularly recall the main research question to stay focused and not get side-tracked with other topics. I noticed a certain tendency to jump at passages where the interviewees talked about the effects of the empathy intervention as if it would be my task to proof the effectiveness of empathy intervention. Having only had 11 participants (9 of whom were interviewed and 6 of these were coded) this study would not be able to produce valid results in this regard as has been discussed in section 5.3.1. Nevertheless, before starting the next level of analysis of the data, I would also like to summarize the results of the open coding in a quantitative way knowing full well that they are not statistically valid – Maxwell (2009) called these *quasi-statistics* and suggested it as a way to improve study quality. The preliminary results paint an interesting picture and would be similar to an exploratory study on the effectiveness of empathy interventions for leaders.

What surfaced multiple times while coding the interview, was the dual role of interviewer and facilitator of the intervention. In the 6 interviews transcribed, I have coded 10 instances where either I was asked a direct question concerning the topics of the intervention or I myself switched roles in the interview to supply some additional information to the interviewee, to rectify him/her or to give a motivational statement. It was harder than I thought to keep these two roles apart. During the interviews, I felt the need to announce the switch of roles – “I am now talking as the trainer and not the interviewer!” When interviewees were presenting an understanding of empathy or the techniques we have discussed and trained during the inter-

vention that was – in my opinion – diverting quite substantially from what I taught, the educator in me had to be restrained not to interrupt the interviewee’s stream of thought and be able to record what has been learnt after all. In this regard, I was mostly successful and kept my interference as trainer in the interview to a minimum.

That being said, from the data itself it doesn’t appear to be discernible whether it actually made a difference that facilitator and interviewer were the same person. It would be well in the realm of speculation to say, that it helped the interviewees to share personal insights because they knew the persona of the interviewer beforehand or that they gave socially desirable answer to not hurt my feelings that the interventions didn’t have an effect on them. Participants reported differences in the impact the intervention had on them. These differences can be due to multiple factors: past experiences, situation in their respective organization, personality and trait empathy, motivation to attend the training and, afterwards, the motivation to apply the training content, cognitive abilities to understand the subject matter and transfer it to one’s professional situation, etc. From the data of the interviews, it is not apparent, that my feelings were being spared. Participants did share a lot of thoughts ranging from indifference to the training topic to enthusiasm.

I observed that the impression I have gotten from experiencing the interviewees in the training intervention did not change during the interview. For example, P8 who wasn’t very enthusiastic during the intervention and did not participate much in the exercises also remained distanced during the interview, gave little information and neither reported nor indicated changes in behavior. P3, on the other hand, who was very enthusiastic during the intervention had a great deal to tell about her experiences applying the empathic communication techniques in the interview. For the next step in coding, the *axial coding*, I will take these attitudes toward the empathy training into account. In a sense, it is a bit sad, that I cannot report an “awakening experience” like in the church scene of the Blues Brothers movie where a participant realizes all of a sudden, the merit of an emotional intelligent approach to leadership. However, some drastic changes in leadership behavior were reported.

#### 6.3.1.2 *Descriptive results after open coding*

Before and while writing down the results of the first coding run, I consolidated the code system that encompassed the lower-level concepts that evolved during that run or were preconceived prior to the analysis. Consolidating the code system turned out to be an important process and helped to get a first overview over the entire set of data and move into more abstraction. During the process of *open coding* I already assigned some higher order categories to facilitate the management of the code system with the QDA-software which organized the codes in a collapsible data structure much like the Windows Explorer.

These preliminary results are not supposed to settle the main research question of *how* the empathy intervention changed the quality of leadership behavior but rather *if at all* and serve as a form of *quasi-statistics* as mentioned above. Should it turn out, that the intervention didn’t have any effect on the participants at all, the consecutive steps of GT (the *axial coding*, the forming of higher-order concepts and the grounding of theory) wouldn’t make much



sense. As coming up with a grounded theory is the objective of this research project, the reporting of descriptive results is an intermediate step, though it is the goal for many other qualitative studies (Kim et al. 2017).

For this overview, I have selected those codes that indicate, *if* the intervention has had an effect on the participants and changed their leadership behavior. I have omitted codes that are more likely to be relevant for the forming of theory and which will be listed in section 6.3.2. Also, not listed in Table 5 are those codes that describe leadership behaviors which did not fall into the pattern of *empathic communication* or *EI leadership behavior* as well as codes that describe general leadership behavior like *Communicating with subordinates*. In instances where the participant has done that in an empathic way, the segment has been coded twice. The complete code system is to be found in section 8.2 of this work.

To get a more complete picture how the training and its effect were perceived by the participants, I will discuss each section separately and provide quotes from the interviews to substantiate my claims. While the interviews were held in German, I wrote the memos in English. Though it was a little difficult at first to switch between the two languages, it helped me to reflect the meaning of the participants' words. The memos to the codings listed in Table 5 which I included as endnotes were also written in English. When stating direct quotes from the participants, I took care to conserve as much of the original sense as possible by keeping the context of the whole interview in mind. Nonetheless, a translation is always an interpretation. The original quotes are attached in the endnotes at the end of this section for those readers, who can read German or trust Google more than my skills as translator.

Table 5. Frequency of application of selected codings

Selected codes	P3	P4	P5	P7	P8	P9	Total
<b>The empathy intervention</b>							
Feedback on the empathy intervention <sup>22</sup>	3	1	1	0	2	1	8
Recalling the empathy intervention <sup>23</sup>	6	2	1	2	3	5	19
<b>Empathy</b>							
Empathic accuracy <sup>24</sup>	1	0	5	0	0	0	6
Perspective-taking <sup>25</sup>	0	1	0	2	4	1	8
Self-empathy <sup>26</sup>	4	1	6	1	1	2	15
Other-Empathy <sup>27</sup>	9	3	15	0	3	7	37
<b>Behavioral EI skill set</b>							
Others expect EI from participant <sup>28</sup>	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Motivation is expressed to train EI skills <sup>29</sup>	2	0	2	0	0	2	6
<i>Emotional Intelligent Leadership style</i>							
Showing EI leadership style <sup>30</sup>	7	7	0	0	0	11	25
Self-reflection <sup>31</sup>	6	4	10	5	7	3	35
Emotional regulation <sup>32</sup>	1	6	12	0	4	1	24
Implementation of EI leadership behavior <sup>33</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Leveling out differences in LMX <sup>34</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Seeking shared contentment <sup>35</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Caring for group emotion <sup>36</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Considering fairness <sup>37</sup>	0	2	0	0	0	4	6
Showing consideration <sup>38</sup>	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
LKM and Self-empathy meditation <sup>39</sup>	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Non-violent communication</i> <sup>40</sup>	12	4	3	1	5	2	27
Observing without judging	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Sharing of emotions	1	15	0	1	1	4	22
Sharing needs	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Sharing requests	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
<i>Empathic communication</i>							
Mock-Empathy <sup>41</sup>	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Showing empathic communication <sup>42</sup>	2	2	6	0	2	1	13
Improving empathic communication <sup>43</sup>	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
Difficulties applying EI communication tools <sup>44</sup>	0	2	2	3	1	0	8
Empathic paraphrasing <sup>45</sup>	7	1	12	1	0	0	21
Giving attention <sup>46</sup>	3	0	0	1	0	5	9
Compassion instead of personal distress <sup>47</sup>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Self-assessment of empathy skills <sup>48</sup>	2	0	2	2	3	0	9
<b>Effects of the empathy training intervention</b>							
No effects reported <sup>49</sup>	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Effects on the participant him-/herself <sup>50</sup>	1	3	5	0	0	4	13
Frequency of application <sup>51</sup>	2	1	0	1	0	0	4
Effects on the participant AND others/ OR on others <sup>52</sup>	14	2	11	0	0	10	37
Feelings resulting from applying EI tools <sup>53</sup>	1	0	3	0	0	3	7
Experiencing obstacles applying training content <sup>54</sup>	0	0	6	1	0	0	7
<b>Motivational aspects</b>							
Motivation to apply training skills <sup>55</sup>	4	0	3	5	0	2	14
Seeks situations where empathy is important <sup>56</sup>	0	0	2	0	0	5	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>420</b>

Table 6. Code overlapping

Selected codes	FB on the e. interv.	Recalling the e. interv.	Empathic accuracy	Perspective-taking	Self-empathy	Other-Empathy	Others expect EI from participant	Motivation expressed	Showing EI. style	Self-reflection	Emotional regulation	Implementation of EI.	Leveling out LMX	Seeking shared c.	Caring for group e.	Considering fairness	Showing consideration	LKM and Self-e.	NVC	Observing w. judging	Sharing of emotions	Sharing needs	Sharing requests	Mock-Empathy	Showing e. comm.	Improving e. comm.	Difficulties applying e. comm.	Empathic paraphrasing	Giving attention	Comp. instead of p.s.	Self-assessment of e.skills	No effect reported	Effects on the participants.	Frequency of application	Effects of e. skills	Feelings from e. tools	Experiencing obstacles	Motivation to apply	Seeks situations	SUMME				
Feedback on the empathy intervention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	
Recalling the empathy intervention	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	17	
Empathic accuracy	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Perspective-taking	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Self-empathy	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	21	
Other-Empathy	0	1	3	1	5	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	3	0	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	39	
Others expect EI from participant	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Motivation is expressed to train EI skills	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	
Showing EI leadership style	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	9	2	0	0	0	4	0	38		
Self-reflection	0	1	0	1	4	1	1	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	26		
Emotional regulation	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10		
Implementation of EI leadership behavior	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2		
Leveling out LMX	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Seeking shared contentment	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5		
Caring for group emotion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Considering fairness	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Showing consideration	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
LKM and Self-empathy meditation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
NVC	2	2	0	0	3	3	0	0	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	0	0	2	2	0	0	33		
Observing without judging	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Sharing of emotions	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	
Sharing needs	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3		
Sharing requests	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Mock-Empathy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Showing empathic communication	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	1	0	0	2	0	0	17		
Improving empathic communication	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	
Difficulties applying e. comm. techniques	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	11	
Empathic paraphrasing	1	2	0	0	1	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	6	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	29		
Giving attention	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9		
Compassion instead of personal distress	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Self-assessment of empathy skills	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13		
No effect reported	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1		
Effects on the participant her-/himself	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	5	0	23	
Frequency of application	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4			
Effects of empathy skills applied	0	3	0	0	3	5	0	0	9	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	6	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	47		
Feelings resulting from applying e. tools	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	12		
Experiencing obstacles applying training	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9		
Motivation to apply training skills	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7		
Seeks situations where e. is needed	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	16			
SUM TOTAL	5	17	4	7	22	38	2	7	38	26	10	2	3	5	2	4	4	0	33	3	8	3	1	1	17	6	8	29	9	0	13	1	23	4	47	12	9	7	16	444				

Table 6 shows how often the different codes overlap and are associated with each other. To reduce the size of the table, I deleted the parent-categories that are seen in Table 5. The page is still in DIN A3, which makes a big screen advisable when studying it. While Table 5 gives a good overview of the codes used in total and per participant, Table 6 gives an indication how the codes are related to each other and what the coder had in mind when coding the interviews.

### Empathy

When participant mentioned different forms of empathy, either spontaneous or prompted by my question (“How do you think your employees felt, when you did that?”), this code was used. Due to being instigated from time to time by me to reflect on their own emotions or the emotions of others, this category doesn’t give an accurate indication of the effect of the training. It is also not possible to determine how often the perception of empathy played a role in the participant’s life before the training intervention as no data exists in this regard. P5, for example, stated that he had already a habit of closely scanning his counterpart for emotions before the training:

*“And in this regard, I would say, I had pretty good antenna [for the emotions of others] before [the training].”<sup>57</sup>*

He did, however, note that by learning *empathic communication techniques* he can now make better use of his perception of empathy in others and seeks rather than avoids these situations.

Nevertheless, the distribution of the frequencies of codings in the cross-table gives some indication on the reported impact the empathy intervention had on the participants or how important being empathic is for them. P5 got the most codings in the *Empathy* category covering 18% of the entire interview, followed by P3 with 6% coverage, and P9 with 4,75%. These three participants also reported the strongest overall training effects. P8, on the other hand, was prompted quite a lot from me to take his employees’ perspective or feel their feelings to nudge the interview in the right direction. He reported no training effect.

The interview itself can be seen as an intervention in its own right as it motivated participants to think about empathy and recall empathic incidents. Some of the participants responded more strongly to this intervention than others. P5 spent a lot of time during the interview asking himself how the other person might have felt, which is reflected by the highest frequency of 15 in the sub-category *Other-empathy*. P7’s thoughts during the interview mostly circled around his own – perhaps pressing – issues which left less room reflecting *other-empathy*.

The code *Other-empathy* was used 37 times in total but only 14 times without overlapping with other codes. As seen in Table 6, *Other-empathy* quite often overlapped with other codes (39 times) which seems consistent with the underlying concepts of *empathic communication* and EI leadership. When participants were describing instances where they applied EI leadership techniques or were communicating empathically while showing consideration for other’s

emotions gives a good indication that they actually grasped the concept correctly and were applying what they talked about.

*“Actually, for every single employee a little more time, to plan, to address things also personally, in order to get a reaction, too. When I distribute work to glean from the reaction: is that one shortly before being overworked or is he at boredom.”<sup>58</sup> (P9)*

In the above coding, P9 talks about his understanding of EI leadership and how he uses empathy to allot each member of his department the right amount of work. P3 gives another example when describing how she applies the NVC process while being keenly aware of the emotions of the other person and herself:

*“The same is, of course, also true, when we take the other steps of non-violent communication. For example, the feelings, that I try to the/ yes, the counterpart, yes, to observe the feeling and not like: Gosh, why are you so bitchy again, although, maybe that wasn’t bitchy at all, but maybe I didn’t really evaluate my feelings properly and then I have noticed for myself: Gosh, maybe it was me.”<sup>59</sup>*

Of course, as the participants described an event from memory all sorts of distortions are possible. Nothing beats Levenson and Ruef’s (1992) experimental set-up of measuring *empathic accuracy* in this regard. Nevertheless, while not knowing how accurate the participants are in their assessment of other-emotions and in their remembrance of it, they are trying to understand the other person’s emotions. As the literature in section 2.9 has shown, this is the most important prerequisite for being empathic. Insofar, these codings tell something about the empathy level, too.

#### Behavioral EI skill set

It took some deliberation on my part to organize the different *empathic communication techniques* taught in the training intervention and aspects of *emotionally intelligent* leadership behavior as discussed in section 4.5 within the evolving code system. While doing so, it became painfully obvious that a tight definition of EI, or for that matter, *empathic leadership* is lacking. In his book *Primal Leadership* Goleman (2013) was not attempting to provide such a definition for a critical academic audience but gave manager a *vade mecum* encompassing different behavioral skills –some of these requiring more and others less empathy and EI.

The criteria for the code *Showing EI leadership style* have been written down in the corresponding memo (see endnote 30). They are gleaned from the definitions of Salovey and Mayer and Davies as cited in section 4.5.1. The other codes under this category were either inspired by said definitions (*Self-reflection, Emotional regulation, Caring for group emotions*) or emerged while coding the interviews (*Leveling out LMX, Seeking shared contentment, Considering fairness, Showing consideration*) as these codings didn’t seem to fit in other categories. While this is no proof that these concepts are part of an EI leadership style, it might be a starting point in the search for a proper definition.

The code sets *Empathy*, *NVC*, and *Empathic communication* could also be subsumed under category *EI leadership style*, but I decided to keep these concepts under an independent heading. Though in my opinion, *Empathic communication* and *Empathy* are the most important building blocks of an *emotionally intelligent* leadership style, they have an existence outside leader-member-situations and are therefore not included in this category but under the parent category – *Behavioral EI skill set*. The understanding being here that empathy is the most important component of EI, but that EI is not empathy.

The other concepts listed under *Behavioral EI skill set* are explained by the memos found in the endnotes (linked for convenience). They arose when coding the interviews but were often shaped according to the theoretical background of the training intervention which I shared with the participants. *Mock-empathy*, a subcategory of *Empathic communication*, was created when reading the participant's words in the relevant segment of the interview which did not sound like empathy. From the context I concluded that his conception of empathy differed from the understanding taught in the training.

The distribution of the frequencies in the cross-table shows that, first of all, the participants' interest in the subject matter varied, and secondly, that – when interested – they had particular topics they concentrated on. It would be worthwhile to investigate, why some of the participants preferred some areas over others. However, it is a nice coincidence, that of the four participants expressing an active interest, they each chose a different area.

P3 has mainly focused on NVC, P4 on a single aspect of NVC – the *sharing on emotions*, while P5 talked a lot about his experiences applying *empathic paraphrasing* in his role as team leader. *Showing empathic leadership* was the code most often used with P9's data. He also displayed an interest in additional topics like *Considering fairness*, *Showing consideration*, *Caring for group emotions* which other participants didn't. Followed by P3, P9 seemed to take EI leadership in its entirety the most serious:

*“That one is responsive to the feelings of the employee. That one notices, today it won't work that well. That one/ it is/ I don't know, if it is a certain fairness. But whether it/ that one is being considerate regarding the employee's productivity. There are days, when it just won't work for some. Then he can't concentrate, because, I don't know, the child is sick, the father, and so forth. That one, when he needs time, is able to listen.”<sup>60</sup>*

The code with the highest frequency in this category was *Self-reflection*, which is partly due to the fact that interview questions prompted the participants to reflect their leadership style, their emotions, how others see them, etc. On the other hand, it was noticeable that the topic itself motivated the participants to start self-reflection processes themselves. It is, unfortunately, not possible to determine how self-reflective the participants were before the training and how much the topic itself has motivated them to more introspection which could then be seen as an effect of the training.

P7 gives an example of *self-reflection* by describing in the example below what he does after an important conversation with employees:

*“Of course, I am giving myself a personal feedback, go through the conversation, and, of course, I am thinking, how things went and what could have been done better, and at the end, of course, are the objectives, did I reach my objectives?”<sup>61</sup> (P7)*

A critical incident as team leader was retold by P5 in retrospective showing how he reflected the conversation he had with a colleague of his:

*“Well, yeah, that was not really empathic. No, that was not empathic. Well, it was simply, well, it didn’t matter what the others were thinking or feeling or what they wanted to tell me, that really didn’t matter. I didn’t want to be considerate of nobody. I just wanted to rant and rave.”<sup>62</sup>*

In many instances the usage of the *empathic communication tools* was reflected by those participants who had a keen interest in applying them.

*“What really has changed is, that I now and then, as I said, reread this process of nonviolent communication [as written in the training brochure]. You know, I glanced at it every seven to ten days and then I have noticed, that I, as I said, often judge and not just stating facts, but directly judging.”<sup>63</sup> (P3)*

P3 recounted her pitfalls in the application of the NVC process which she talked about at multiple times in the interview. As in this case, *self-reflection* was often connected to the expressed desire to improve oneself at this kind of *empathic behavior*. These instances I coded with the categories *Improving empathic communication* and *Motivation is expressed to train EI skills* when the focus was broader than just communication.

*“Well, then I notice, that I for myself, that I have to work at it [empathic paraphrasing] a bit, but even in this case I was totally surprised. Most of all in conflict situations with members [of the fitness club] who came to complain about cleanliness, for example, that they felt very/ Well, appreciated is the wrong word, but that they just by, that the paraphrasing, that I repeated that, well, they just felt heard.”<sup>64</sup> (P3)*

A couple of participants expressed at various times *Difficulties in applying EI communication tools*. These difficulties were seen as being caused by an inadequate skill level in the application of these tools (as in the example above), a stronger urge to resort to more assertive forms of communication, in the effectiveness of the tools itself or in the circumstances including the counterpart in the conversation.

*“And there are, of course, many, many conversations we have, and (...) but those, I believe, would be difficult to handle with this empathic communication technique, these conversations. Because he [the boss of P7] doesn’t have*

*the capabilities to follow a conversation, even the most important one, for more than two, three sentences.*"<sup>65</sup> (P7)

Some of the codings (6 out of 8) under the category *Difficulties in applying EI communication tools* can also be seen as incidences where the participants reflected themselves and their communication skill level. In example above and in another incident the context was reflected. So, in a sense, these codings can also be seen as indication for the effectiveness of the training intervention as it got participant to reflect the application of *empathic communication tools*.

The overlaps of codings of the *Empathy*-category seen in Table 6 have been already discussed in the section above. Other overlaps remain to be discussed. Many display an inner coherence of the concepts involved. *Self-reflection*, for example, quite frequently overlaps (26 times altogether) with other codes like *Self-empathy* (4 times), *Emotional regulation* (3 times), *Motivation expressed to train EI skills* (3 times), *NVC* (4 times), etc. All these processes require a certain amount of *Self-reflection* and, maybe most importantly, participants are asked to recall instances connected to these concepts from the recent past. Of the 35 codings with *Self-reflection* in only 15 cases this code stood on its own.

*Showing EI leadership style* occurred altogether 25 times but only 7 times without overlapping with another of the selected codes from Table 6. In total, it overlapped 38 times, varying from participant to participant depending on the individual tendencies toward specific aspects of the *Behavioral EI skill set*. It most overlapped with instances where participants referred to NVC. The latter itself heavily overlaps with other categories, too. Most of which have already been mentioned. I take it again as a good sign, that the participants referred to *Other-empathy*, *Self-empathy*, and *Self-reflection* alongside talking about the NVC process. They had applied the process, made experiences which were often emotional in nature and could reflect them afterwards. The occupation with the communication technique has been in most cases (4 out of 6) not an academic endeavor but was oriented at practical applications.

In conclusion, the whole category *Behavioral EI skill set* seems apt to give a good indication of how much the participants transferred the training content into their professional lives. Those 4 out of 6 participants, who made an effort to implement *EI behavioral skills* had interesting stories to tell, emotional effects on themselves and others to recall, or difficulties to report.

### The empathy intervention

When participants referred to the empathy training intervention on their own accord during the interview, I coded these instances either with the code *Recalling the empathy intervention* or with *Feedback on the empathy intervention*. The former was used when participants recalled the intervention itself, referred to its content, or the event itself. When participants gave feedback, direct or indirect, on the intervention, the instance was coded with the latter.

*"When P4 [name changed] said, when I am not in the mood for my employees in the morning, then I enter with an extra-fool mood, so that nobody is going to annoy me. That was so pivotal for me. Doing something like that, that, for me, is so/ I don't want to end up like that.*



...  
Every morning I am remembering that.”<sup>66</sup> (P9)

The quote has been coded *Recalling the empathy intervention* as the participant recalled an incident from the event itself. Though this particular incident was not planned by me, it was a good example how social learning happens in groups even with a bad example.

„Well, in hindsight it would have been helpful [to spend more time talking about needs in connection with NVC]. Because, in hindsight, I realize that I have issues with that, with the needs. But during the training, I didn't notice that it wasn't enough on that topic. I have just noticed that when I applied it [NVC], when I tried to apply it, I have to say.”<sup>67</sup> (P5)

*Feedback on the empathy intervention* is the code for this quote, as the participants not only recalled the intervention but also mentioned an aspect that could be improved: he noticed that he had issues naming the need that was underlying the emotions he felt himself or that he perceived in others. *Recalling the empathy intervention* is in a sense included in the *Feedback*-code, as giving feedback without recalling is not possible. The *Recalling*-code I counted as instances where the empathy intervention had an effect of some sort on the participants and overlapped with codes from the *Effects*-category. After all, things that didn't impress people are usually hard to recall.

In the interview itself, I did not directly ask participants for feedback on the intervention. First of all, I did that directly after each session and secondly, I didn't want to focus the participants' attention on fault-finding – which takes up a lot of processing power in a German mind. The instances coded came up naturally when participants talked about their experiences with applying training content. As can be seen on Table 6, the *Recalling*-code often overlaps with specific *empathic communication tools* like NVC or *empathic paraphrasing* as participants remembered these tools in connecting with the training.

Contrary to the overlaps discussed so far, the other ones in this category do not seem relevant for this discussion. When participants talked about NVC they remembered instances from the intervention provided this was the only time they came into contact with that particular paradigm.

#### Motivational aspects

Of the fourteen instances when participants expressed a more general motivation to behave more empathically/*emotionally intelligent* and the code *Motivation to apply training skills* was used, nine times it is not associated with any of selected codes displayed in Table 6 and stands on its own.

“Well, I try, all that, which we did in the training, I try to put into practice.”<sup>68</sup>  
(P5)

In the five other cases, the *Motivation* is expressed along with codes of different concepts. P9 in the interview, for example, interweaves recollections of the training intervention and statements from participants heard there with voicing his motivation to go about a change in his leadership behavior:

*“This is what I mainly took away [from the training], where I often remember many statements from that day or put that into perspective. Remembering myself, again. From this point, yes. It occupies. Well, it occupies me, and I try, I think about it in many daily leadership situations. Now, you do something different than before. Before, simply ordering. It is like that, have a nice day. Like P8 [name deleted] said that. This is done like that, now! Instead, just, just, thinking how do I get the colleagues on board in a different way.”<sup>69</sup>*

Others mixed expressions of motivation with the desire to implement aspects of NVC or *empathic communication* into their daily routines as leaders while reflecting on their leadership behavior so far. These motivational statements, like the ones above, can be seen as powerful indications that the participants either have changed something about their leadership behavior or are at least motivated to do so. For that reason, I deleted overlaps with codes from the *Effects of the empathy training intervention*-category in the process of consolidating the code system.

The matter is somewhat different from the code *Seeks situations where empathy is important*. Codings marked with this code never occur on their own. I left overlaps with codes from the *Effects*-category as they were, since the *Seeks*-codings covered only a very small portion of the data. The code in itself is highly interesting, since I marked with it all the instances where participants described how they actively seek situations where empathy is needed.

*“Well, really, I am noticing now, how, well, I approach human beings differently, because I can these feelings, I can deal with the feelings of others better.”<sup>70</sup> (P5)*

In the whole paragraph, for which – among others – I used the code *Effects on the participants him-/herself*, the participant talks about how the *empathic communication* techniques from the training intervention have helped him so far, though not being a pro yet, because he feels differently himself. He also gave an example where he purposefully sought out an emotionally charged situation which, prior to the training, he would have avoided.

P9 gave a similar example. After the training intervention, he started a routine where he put more emphasis on face-to-face communication and actively invited colleagues into his office to discuss matters – instead of resorting only to short email-based communication as was customary in his organization before:

*“And then I put it there [a written note on a table with a request for a personal meeting]. Can you come into my office this afternoon because of that, then we can talk in peace?”<sup>71</sup>*

Since face-to-face situations demand a much greater intensity of empathic exchange (and have probably been avoided for that reason), this can be seen as an indication for a change in behavior which the participant attributes more or less directly to the training.

Only 2 of the 6 participants reported actively seeking situations where empathy is important. The other 2 participants where the training seemed to have a greater effect, however, did not report avoiding these situations before. Before the consolidation of the code system, I included the code *Avoids situations where empathy is important* referring the different motives that Zaki describes (2014). Only P8 describes an instance where he retreats to the doctor's office instead of dealing with the nursing staff which could be seen as avoiding empathy. His motives, however, are not clear and it could have been other factors like lack of time that drove him into his office. P7 expresses at various places a motivation to apply EI skills:

*“Okay. Ultimately, I would be happy, when [or if? This is a matter of interpretation when translating from German] I can take away many, many positive aspects from that. It's a pity, that I didn't have many opportunities yet, to apply that in professional life. But I think, a lot of things will come up and I will have many, many opportunities to have such kind of conversation in this [emotionally intelligent] manner.”<sup>72</sup>*

Though P7's motivation is high, he is the one that talks the most about the *Difficulties of applying EI communication tools* which might dampen the transferal of his motivation into actual behavior – at least in the present situation.

#### Effects of the empathy training intervention

Under this category, instances were coded where participants talked about the effects the training had on themselves, their employees, and their professional life. They were either prompted by my “grand tour question” (see section 5.3.4) or recalled these instances freely when talking about their experiences applying the training content after the training. As with the code *Motivation to apply training skills* the effects of the training intervention are being hinted at directly or being inferred by me on the grounds of statements concerning changes in behavior that could be attributed to the attendance of the training session.

All but one participant reported effects of some sort. P8 said right away, that the training intervention “has not really rubbed off on me. Neither do I feel better nor worse.”<sup>73</sup> When inquiring whether the training has changed his leadership style, he replied:

*“I would say no, but I didn't really have any special leadership issues or situations, where it was required to say something – to the personnel or something.”<sup>74</sup>*

Also, later in the interview, P8 did not indicate that he has been influenced by the training except for some instances of *Self-reflection* and *Emotional regulation*. Luckily, the other participants were more enthusiastic about the effects of the intervention. P5 reported a change in the way he treats conflicts at work:

*“Well, before [the training intervention] I would not have gone near somebody, who was visibly shaken up. Because, I wouldn’t have known how to speak with him. And now, it is like I approach him and have an open ear. And I start to repeat again, to paraphrase, what his issue is and thereby I am dealing with that.”<sup>75</sup>*

P4 did not recognize a change in leadership behavior, “... but in the way I communicate maybe.”<sup>76</sup>. Considering that leadership by definition is done through communication, he did report a change when looking at his statement from this angle. In the course of the interview he was able to recount a couple of incidents where he employed a communication style based on openness and the *sharing of emotions* being inspired by NVC.

P3 reported the most incidences where the effects of the training were noticeable. As she only recently started a new job as branch manager, she was eager to learn empathic communication techniques and employed them frequently with positive results:

*“... I believe [that] four employees told me, that they felt seen for the first time and that the employee appraisal talks are being held now on eye-level. And that is, of course, something beautiful, when/ Well, bevor it was, of course, not nice, that it didn’t happen like that, but now it is, of course, nice to notice, that some of the employees are flourishing.”<sup>77</sup>*

Maybe the most profound effect on subordinates was reported by P9 which he attributes to changes in his leadership style after the training:

*“That one doesn’t increase the performance [by acting in an EI way], that I have noticed, but contentment increases. And maybe that in the long run will result in/ and when it just causes the sick days to go down.  
...  
In this time [the five weeks after the intervention] I didn’t get a single sick leave. Doesn’t have to be significant. But it stands out. Well, I noticed it myself. When you approach the colleagues [the subordinates] in a positive way, then they don’t take frustration sick leaves. And then, simply because of that, I have achieved an increase in performance.”<sup>78</sup>*

P9 also noticed an increase in contentment among his team and himself, which I coded with the category *Shared contentment*. He was the only one reporting this effect which P9 attributed to his more *emotionally intelligent leadership style* which would be an effect of the training intervention. Two other participants also talked about positive feelings when applying *empathic communication tools* in a similar fashion: “And I notice myself, that is [also] the case with employees, when I talk with employees, that I become calmer myself.” (P3)<sup>79</sup>

P7, on the other hand, only talked about his difficulties applying the empathic communication tools like NVC or *empathic paraphrasing* and did not recall positive instances of applying EI leadership behavior: “That one, perhaps, experiences a certain rejection because one displays

a greater openness...<sup>80</sup> I will discuss the case of P7 in the section below, as he might be a bit out of the norm. He wasn't opposed to EI leadership per se nor was he indifferent.

On the whole, the frequencies in said section of the cross-table reflect my impressions from the interview concerning the enthusiasm of the participant to apply EI leadership techniques in their daily life. In the interview 4 out of 6 participants recounted many instances where they experienced an effect on either themselves or on others and how they felt when behaving empathically.

I also coded sequences when participants talked about the *frequency of application* of EI behaviors to get an overview how much it has permeated their professional lives. Only 4 out of 6 made a statement in this regard, while P8 and P9 did not. P9, however, has changed a lot of his daily routines as a department head after the training intervention to make his leadership style more emotionally intelligent, so that, in a way, he has reported the highest frequency. P8 did not change anything in his behavior, while P7 "frequently" ran into difficulties applying *empathic communication tools* but nevertheless expressed a high motivation to do so in the future.

Of the 37 times the code *Effects on the participant AND others/ OR on others* was used, only 11 times the code stood on its own and participants were only talking about the effectiveness and not of other aspects of the training. With 47 times, this code overlapped most with other codes as I used it as a way to mark the most valuable passages of the interviews for determining the impact of the training on participants. It overlapped most with *Showing EI leadership style*, *NVC*, *Other-empathy*, and *Empathic paraphrasing* since these were instances where the participants showed the greatest changes in behavior.

*Effects on the participant him-/herself* was used less than the code above. Participants mostly talked about the effects of the training in connection with the people around them. Of the 13 times in total, 5 times it was not used in connection with the selected codes but stood on its own. Its pattern of overlapping was the same as with the *Effects on others*-code.

### 6.3.1.3 Discussion of the descriptive results

Would the goal of this work be to present descriptive results, the list of quotes from the participants would be much longer. But they are only preliminary results and suffice to paint a compelling picture. Having the difficulties of qualitative studies in mind discussed in this work and also in the meta-analyses of the authors cited in section 3.1 and the qualitative studies from 3.2 to provide "real" statistics instead of just *quasi-statistics* (Maxwell 2009), the results still seem to be pretty solid. 4 out of 6 participants describe changes in behavior multiple times in the interviews. For them the question, *if the intervention had an effect* could be answered with a clear "most likely – at least in the four to five weeks after the training intervention". For 1 participant out of 6 the training didn't have a noticeable effect. The participant did think about the subject matter but had not reported any changes in behavior. For 1 participant out of 6, the intervention had an effect insofar as it raised his expressed motivation to apply the

training content in the future, though he had not done so in the four weeks prior to the interview.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it is not possible to define clear cut criteria like in quantitative studies to determine the effectiveness of the training and calculate the significance of the findings. However, the quotations from the interviews will make my decision to state that the training was effective in 4 out of 6 cases reproducible. Negative cases are there, too, which shows that the training has not been effective in some cases. Feedback from participants on the results will be hard to get as for once, the final stage of this dissertation coincided with German vacation time and secondly, my time to finish this study is running out fast.

It is somewhat a pity, that only six participants appear in Table 5 and Table 6 since almost twice as many took part in the training interventions. Though participants P2, P6, P10, and P11 (P1 eluded the interview) would not have contributed to answering the question whether the training intervention changed their leadership behavior, their data would have helped to estimate the overall effectiveness of the program. Without having coded P2's, P6's, and P10's interview, I took notes and got a good overview of their evaluation. Interestingly, by my rough estimation, they would fall into the same quota of 2/3 reporting an effect and 1/3 not. P2 and P10 were very positive about the training experience itself and the application of the *empathic communication tools* afterwards. P10 has had similar trainings in the past. For her this intervention was more a refresher. P6, being very enthusiastic in the training, was rather difficult to interview as she didn't open up and reported no usages of the training content.

There are, of course, a couple of limitations to these preliminary results, that need to be mentioned, although they are self-evident. Coding is a somewhat subjective process, especially when one has to do it alone and cannot apply Hill's consensual method (1997). However, most of the codings speak for themselves. Many of those have been cited above. More in this vein will come in section 6.3.2 when the next level of data immersion starts. Whether *Recalling the empathy intervention* in itself can serve as evidence for the effectiveness of the training is up for debate. The least would be that I have some entertainer qualities and the participants remembered the intervention for my natural charm<sup>81</sup>. At best, the right people listened to the right content at the right time and were able to transfer it to their professional lives, made good experiences applying it and thus integrated EI behavior into their inventory of leadership behaviors. Since the participants visited the training voluntary presumably out of a preexisting interest for the topic (about P8 I am not so sure), I am leaning toward the second explanation but a third, fourth, etc. could also be possible. Other codings with the codes *Motivation expressed*, *Empathy*, *Behavioral EI skills*, and *Effectiveness* seem less debatable in most instances but the interpretation of the meaning of those codings is also subjective.

No prior information on the participants is available before the training concerning their *behavioral EI skill level* and aptitude concerning *empathic communication* or, as a matter of fact, *empathy*. Quantifying the effect of the training on the participants is therefore not possible. The assessment of the effect in this study depends on the self-report of critical incidents of

the participants. It is hard to judge how accurate their memory worked. To measure the success of this endeavor more accurately, the viewpoints of their followers would also have to be considered which was not possible in this research project.

That being said, the lively accounts and the many real-life stories of applying the EI tools and making experiences with them speak for themselves. As a trainer I was happy that so many of the participants made that many good experiences with the training content. The least that can be said regarding the effect of the training is, that five weeks after the training 4 out of 6 participants reported a positive effect on their leadership behavior. According to them and to what they think their employees perceive them, it has changed for the better. Exactly how, will be attempted to determine in the next section.

Collecting the preliminary results also had a very positive effect on the progress of this work as it helped to consolidate the code system, to get a good overview over the descriptive results by putting together Table 5 and Table 6, and to immerse myself in the data which will be of use for the next levels of analysis.

### 6.3.2 The axial coding and forming of higher order categories

#### 6.3.2.1 Insights and experiences

Starting early into the *open coding* I was constantly switching between documents when a new code emerged. This intensified with the *axial coding*, as the less relevant passages of the data were not blocking the view any more and more direct comparisons between different codings were possible.

In the first stage of *axial coding*, I was looking at the *Antecedents of applying an EI tool*, a category under which I collected instances where the participants talked about pre-existing conditions for applying an *EI behavioral tool*. The codings were analyzed in depth and split into different sub-categories. While this is only partially connected to the building of theory, it proved to be a good start into the *axial coding* while yielding interesting insights on how to ensure the effectiveness of an empathy intervention.

The summary the process of GT (see section 5.3.6) was useful beyond showing that the writer of the dissertation has studied the theory before starting the work. It helped me greatly to regularly turn to the summary and to reread relevant passages in the much-cited work. Sticking to the process of GT was a rewarding experience, as it turned out to be quite a joyous experience to witness higher-order categories emerge from the data. Applying the *paradigm* (Corbin and Strauss 2015) of *contextual conditions*, *actions* and *interactions*, and the actual and perceived *consequences* for the participants, helped to uncover patterns of behavior and motives.

Table 7. Coding with the paradigm

Selected codes	P3	P4	P5	P7	P8	P9	Total
<b>Behavior before the empathy training</b>							
Contextual conditions	3	1	7	6	8	7	32
Actions-Interactions	0	0	4	6	7	6	23
Consequences	0	0	2	6	6	1	15
<b>Changes in Leadership behavior</b>							
Contextual conditions	14	6	8	0	0	13	41
Actions-Interactions	21	9	12	0	0	24	66
Consequences	21	7	27	0	0	26	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>258</b>

As a first step, I analyzed instances where the participants describe their behavior before the intervention – either when marking it themselves as “old” behavior or when the context allowed such an inference. I analyzed those segments in which the participants described *Critical incidents* from their dealings with subordinates, superiors, stakeholders, etc. and not instances, when the participants answered my direct questions. This step yielded very interesting insights into the mindset of the participants. The category *Behavior before the empathy training* was created in the first round of coding but was now split up according to the categories of the GT paradigm: *Contextual conditions*, *Actions-Interactions (AI)*, and *Consequences*. When the behavioral narratives of the participants were categorized like this, patterns started to become visible in the *contextual conditions* that best fit into the category *Personality traits* and its sub-categories (see below) and were coded as such.

In a second step, the changes in behavior (*Changes in Leadership behavior*) that either the participants or myself attributed to the empathy intervention were analyzed in said fashion. Again, mostly codings from the category *Critical incidents* were used here, when participants described their behavior, the context in which it happened and its perceived or expected consequences. These codings overlapped greatly with the codings from the *Effects of the empathy training intervention* category which demonstrates some rigor in adhering to the process.

Table 7 shows the distribution of the instances the participants told about behavior before the empathy intervention and behavior that has changed after the intervention (regardless whether the participants attributed the change to the intervention or not). This cross-table is in line with the results reported in section 6.3.1. Those participants who didn’t report an effect or where no effect could be discerned, are those who have mostly talked about behavioral patterns that they were well familiar with and that did not change. P8 didn’t see a need for a change and was happy with the way things are and P7 didn’t have the opportunity yet, to apply different behavioral patterns or couldn’t for some reason or other. P3, P4, P5, and P9 talked a lot about instances where they were acting in a novel way, which especially P5 and P9 juxtaposed with instances of old behavioral patterns before the empathy intervention.

After that step had been done, more and more concepts “weaved” itself together (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 157) and started to integrate into a *core idea*, which became visible incrementally in the data after numerous screenings of the codings. It can, of course, not be ruled out,



that more insights are hidden in the data would the analysis have continued. At this point, I feel that a point of *theoretical saturation* is reached, though no more participants are being interviewed. The *core idea* seems fit to adequately answer the research question, which will be attempted in section 7.3.

6.3.2.2 *Antecedents of applying EI behavioral tools*

The coding for *Antecedents of applying an EI* actually started at the first stage of coding, the *open coding*. I did not include this category in the descriptive results, because some of the findings indicated the potential for the subsequent stages of the coding process by telling something about the *contextual conditions* before performing *Actions-Interactions* which in this case would be a showing *EI behavior*. While coding the data according the GT *paradigm*, I returned to this category and found interesting patterns in it.

Table 8. *Antecedents of applying EI behavioral tools*

Selected codes	P3	P4	P5	P7	P8	P9	Total
<b>Antecedents of applying an EI tool</b>							
Easy access to the topic <sup>82</sup>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Being relaxed and not stressed-out <sup>83</sup>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Having a good relationship <sup>84</sup>	1	1	0	0	0	2	4
Drive to improve communication skills <sup>85</sup>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Worrying how one's behavior is being perceived by others <sup>86</sup>	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
Being self-reflected <sup>87</sup>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Feeling responsible <sup>88</sup>	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Having time at hand <sup>89</sup>	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Being concentrated <sup>90</sup>	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>

Table 8 displays the different antecedents that I found in the data. In itself, the antecedents are not that important for the building of theory and provided some, but not many new insights. For example, for P5 having an easy access to the *EI behavioral techniques* was an important antecedent for him actually applying these techniques. Why it was easy for him to acquaint himself with the techniques, is not clear, however.

*“Well, I really have to say and before I wouldn’t have, I thought it possible, but I wouldn’t have expected it. That I can apply these techniques so quickly, that I can even feel something about.”<sup>91</sup>*

P5 and P3 have talked the most about their antecedents of applying *empathic techniques*. For the organization of the training, they are delivering valuable information. By stressing the *technique* nature of NVC and *empathic paraphrasing*, I seemed to have made a lasting impression on both. They are repeating this concept multiple times and it seemed to have helped them applying them in the context of leadership – technique sounds agentic to some extent! That being concentrated and attentive to the target person is very conducive to empathy has been established by many studies (see section 2.9). The same is true for being in a calm state

of mind, not self-occupied, or stressed-out. P3, P4, and P9 found it easier to behave more empathic with those colleagues, whom they had a good relationship with, which is also in line with the general findings on empathy (see section 2.9).

More groundbreaking have been the clues that the code *Worrying how one's behavior is being perceived by others* gave as these were the first instances in the memos when I reflected about the possible relationship between the *agreeableness* personality trait and the behavior of the participants. Of the 8 times the code *Agreeableness* is used, it overlaps 4 times with the code *Worrying...* After having realized the value of looking for evidence hinting at personality traits in data as part of the *contextual conditions*, more instances of *Agreeableness* have been found which will be reported [below](#).

### 6.3.2.3 Personality traits as contextual conditions

When coding the *Critical incidents* according to the *paradigm* of *Contextual conditions*, *Actions-Interactions*, and *Consequences*, I started to notice that trying to understand which aspect of the participant's personality might have surfaced when the participant described past or changed behavioral patterns seemed to yield interesting insights. The personality aspects were then coded using well-known personality related concepts as behavioral anchors. It is, of course, my interpretation to attribute certain statements of the participants to certain personality traits and it shouldn't be taken literal when I, for example, write that PX has shown *agreeable* behavior. The description of *Agreeableness* as an anchor simply indicates the possibility that the participant could be high in *agreeableness* (McCrae 2009).

Using these description of personality traits as anchors has been help- and insightful in the analysis of the participants' behavioral patterns. For future research, having the participants take personality tests before the intervention, would be a welcomed addition to the qualitative procedures. The concepts describing personality traits were taken from different sources and will delineated in detail in this section.

Table 9. Displaying aspects of personality traits

Selected codes	P3	P4	P5	P7	P8	P9	Total
<b>Personality traits</b>							
Emotional stability	4	0	3	0	0	3	10
Emotional instability	1	1	1	1	2	0	6
Helplessness	5	3	4	7	0	6	25
Agency	10	5	8	0	3	13	39
Agreeableness	1	2	2	1	0	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>88</b>

Although the distribution of the codes among the participants (Table 9) is only telling half the story, I still included the table – luckily, space is not an issue in online publications! More interesting for theory building has been the order in which these codings appeared in the interview which will be reported below.

The codes encompassed altogether two personality traits from the Five-Factor model (Costa and McCrae 1992): *neuroticism* with the two dimensions *emotional instability* and *stability* and *agreeableness*. *Helplessness* as a concept/code is not a personality trait per se and is inspired by the work of Seligman (Maier and Seligman 1976; Seligman 2006). The same is true for the concept/code of *Agency* which, according to different authors, encompasses different motives for behaviors like *dominance*, *task-orientation*, *goal-orientation*, *self-affirmation*, etc. and is often seen in opposition to *communion* which consists of caring and altruistic traits (Abele 2003; Abele and Wojciszke 2013; Horowitz et al. 2006; Locke and Heller 2017).

*Emotional stability/instability* did not yield any particular new insights but supported the claim for the effectiveness of the intervention from another angle. Passages of the data which seemed to warrant the code *Emotional instability* overlapped 7 out of 7 times with the code *Behavior before the empathy intervention*. Participants reported instances where they couldn't cope with a situation, were in a particular foul mood at work or were irritable. Those instance where participants recounted experiencing feelings of inner calm, concentration, and self-assurance were connected 10 out of 10 times with the code *Changes in leadership behavior* but also coincided with the application of *behavioral EI skills* and can be seen as an effect of those which has been shown by Seehausen et al. (2012).

*"Okay, I can apply that [empathic paraphrasing] and notice, how I get calmer"*<sup>92</sup> (P3)

### Agreeableness

Agreeableness has been defined as a personality trait that is characterized by being sympathetic, considerate, likable, warm, compassionate, and behaving in such a way (Costa and McCrae 1992, p. 657). I used the code whenever participants

- expressed a desire to be liked by their colleagues and subordinates.

*"... and that, I believe, is being perceived very well [by my subordinates] and that was the statement after the [appraisal] talk as well and that was really great."*<sup>93</sup> (P3)

*"In this connection, it is important for me to be liked, too."*<sup>94</sup> (P4)

- treasured harmony in dealing with colleagues (superiors, equals, and subordinates).

*"Well, what I can't stand/ I am generally a person that needs harmony."*<sup>95</sup> (P9)

- want to create win-win situations where everybody is happy.

*"So that in the end, everybody is happy. That can only be the goal.*

...

*Okay, that was a great suggestion by P7 [name deleted], that's how we can do it."*<sup>96</sup> (P7)

- have a desire to create situations of shared contentment.

*“Both are happy with that, then one feels naturally better. I want to, that/well, that is very important to me, too.”<sup>97</sup> (P9)*

- show an expressed interest how conversation partners perceive them and spent a considerable amount of time worrying about that.

*“Well, I’d be interested to learn sometimes, how my conversation partner has perceived all that emotionally. Well, I am trying to perceive that by the behavior and so on.”<sup>98</sup> (P5)*

- want to fit in with others.

*“I did that some time ago. But because other colleagues aren’t doing it, it has subsided more and more.”<sup>99</sup> (P9)*

It is noteworthy, that all but one of the participants made remarks that can be coded as an expression of *agreeableness* and the associated motives. It would make sense, that persons who are leaning towards this personality trait would invest their precious weekend or vacation time for a voluntary empathy intervention. A correlation between *agreeableness* and *prosocial* behavior has been shown to exist. People high in *agreeableness*, for example, are able to overcome the parochial nature of *empathy* and extend generosity to nonkin (Graziano et al. 2007). Capara, Alessandri and the tireless researcher of all empathy related subjects, Nancy Eisenberg, not only have summarized the exiting bulk of literature on the topic but have added to the research by showing how *agreeableness* is connected to prosociality via self-transcendence, empathy and self-efficacy beliefs (Caprara et al. 2012). The importance of this trait has also been shown for *transformative leadership*, where it is equally important, that leaders are able to transcend or, at least, include their particularistic goal for the welfare of the team/organization (Rubin et al. 2005).

It is generally accepted that personality traits like *agreeableness* are stable after persons reach their thirties which was true for all the participants (Myers et al. 2014). That the empathy intervention changes their level of *agreeableness* is therefore somewhat unlikely. To what degree the effectiveness of an empathy intervention is moderated by the level of *agreeableness* would be an interesting topic for further research and could be easily found out by using quantitative measures. The relationship between trait *agreeableness* and an increase of empathy after an empathy intervention is also not clear to me as *+agreeableness* and empathy seem to be interrelated.

For this research project, all that can be said is, that the 4 out of 6 participants where the training showed an effect, also made statements that can be categorized as being *agreeable* in nature. One participant showed *agreeableness* but no behavioral changes in leadership behavior, but this could very well be caused by overwhelming experiences of *helplessness* which will be discussed below.

## Helplessness

The code *Helplessness* has proven to be as much of an eye-opener as the code *Agreeableness*. It revealed shared patterns across different documents. I coded instances with the code *Helplessness* when participants described situations where they felt helpless at that moment to effectuate a change or initiate an action. In some of these situations the locus of control was external, in some of them internal yet they were still not able to exert control over the situation. So, in a sense, *helpless* is the very opposite of *agentic* which will be discussed in the next section.

The coding *Helplessness* was used in instances when participants

- felt that they were perceived unfavorably by their superiors.

*“... and I, you know, the small, chubby brunette, wasn’t seen and appreciated.”<sup>100</sup> (P3)*

- had to deal with employees who performed below par and refused to “crank it up a notch”.<sup>101</sup>

*“And that is worst-case for me [that only this one employee is left in the sales team as the others are on sick or vacation leave], because her numbers aren’t what I need [as a branch manager].”<sup>102</sup> (P3)*

- weren’t able to reward employees their bonuses due to a blotched accounting software migration and had to face a room full of disappointed subordinates.
- had to deal with staffing shortages and had to be extra careful to retain existing high-performing employees (whose bonuses they couldn’t pay for the time being).
- were caught in the middle between government regulations and customer requirements.
- were avoiding emotionally charged situation because of perceived lack of communication skills to address the conflict.

*“Because, I didn’t know how to address that person.”<sup>103</sup> (P5)*

- reached dead-ends in communication with subordinates.

*“..., one is not reaching anything in these talks; one doesn’t find a solution; oneself has the feeling that the conversation partner, the persons on the other side, don’t want to go in this direction, in which one wants to steer them a bit and one doesn’t see any success.”<sup>104</sup> (P7)*

- had to deal with unsupportive superiors.
- had to deal with aspects organizational culture they didn’t like but were upheld by their superiors and colleagues.
- were stuck in the sandwich position of demanding boards/superiors and intractable employees who practiced work-to-rule:

“... when something comes from the board, it has to be done by tomorrow. There is no way to say, ‘I can’t do it, or I have something else to do today or something else is on the agenda’. It has to be done. It doesn’t cause enthusiasm on both sides [the participant’s side and his subordinates who have to do part of the work].”<sup>105</sup> (P9)

In summary, *Helplessness* occurred when participants became keenly aware of their dependence on their subordinates to reach their personal goals (cf. Schein 2013), were subject to institutional constraints, couldn’t act in a given situation as they wanted to do due to personal reasons, had to submit to the will of their superiors or were caught in the sandwich position characteristic for the middle management.

In the data, the codings *Helplessness* are always in close proximity to the codings of the *Behavior before the empathy training* category or overlap with it. The accounts of the changed behavioral patterns did not include instances of *Helpfulness*. Participants adopted a whole other tone which led me to code these instances as *agentic behavior*.

### Agency

Spotting instances of agentic behavior when coding the interviews according to the GT *paradigm* of *Actions-Interactions* doesn’t seem farfetched. What makes these instances special, is that they are often preluded by situations in which *helplessness* was experienced. The participants got into action-mode again which is expected of them as managers. The action mode usually was announced by phrases like “and then I have said...”, “and then I am speaking openly with him...”, “had her come to my office to talk...”, “Well, on the one hand I have made it clear, that...”, “and that I wanted to stop...”, “then, I am addressing that...”, “now, I am turning that back...”, etc.

In the light of traditional gender roles *agency* is sometimes seen as a male domain and *communism* as a female (Abele 2003). While this is certainly a wide-spread social reality and the gender studies have done a great job bringing it to the open for discussion, this is not what I had in mind, when coding for it. I do have my own biases, of course, but in this case, *agency* is meant to describe instances, when participants regardless of gender take charge and do something meaningful in accordance with their own goals; when they are not reacting or enduring circumstances, but actively shaping the social reality of their respective organizations, teams, or leader-member-relationship. Other authors, for example, make a claim, that there are also collective forms of *agency* when agents are acting for and not against an organization (Raithelhuber 2018). This view of *agency* is part of this concepts.

In many instances, the code *Helplessness* is a precursor to *Agentic*. Using MAXQDA’s analytical tools reveals 15 cases where the 2 codes appear in the same paragraph, while they do not overlap. When going into the individual documents and looking at the meaning units, i.e. passages of the interviews that form coherent units like the *Critical incidents* but are not limited to them, the pattern became more obvious. In 3 meaning units from P3’s data, *Helplessness* was a theme before she became *Agentic*. P4 had 2 meaning units where this was the case, P5 also 2, P9 had 5, and P7 only had instances of *Helplessness* without becoming *Agentic*. P8’s

interview lacked instances of *Helplessness*. In 15 out of the 38 instances where the code *Agentic* was used, *Helplessness* was coded before.

P3 gives an example for *Helplessness* in the section [above](#). She describes a situation where she is helpless in the sense, that she has to motivate a person to do more sales who is hard to approach and company-wise ten years her senior. She cannot fire her due to this employee being unionized and protected by labor laws. Nevertheless, she managed to become *agentic* by actively approaching her, addressing the matter in a straightforward albeit nonviolent way and thus gaining the employee's support:

*"And then we went into a conversation a bit and then I noticed that I can reach her very well in this way [using NVC]."*<sup>106</sup>

The company of CEO P4 has to mediate between government agencies and their own customers. The former expects them to check on the customers and apply all the rules and regulations without making exceptions. The latter, on the other hand, like the company to be a servile service provider not causing trouble. The account of a critical incident when P4 and his colleagues met up with the agency to discuss matters, was coded as an instance of *Helplessness*. There is not that much a private company of 35 employees can do when facing a government agency. Instead of arguing defensively, the participant reported that he chose *emotional sharing* as a way to take initiative and become *agentic*.

*"And then during this appointment with the agency I have gone into detail what goes on emotionally when one is worn down between the fronts lines. Without the seminar I would have argued with legal laws, regulations, rules."*<sup>107</sup>

After an initial surprise, colleagues and government officials reacted with a lot of interested questions and the participant perceived that they "too had fun to open up a bit."<sup>108</sup>

P5 has given multiple examples of this pattern (one of which has been [cited](#) already). Before the empathy intervention he was shying away from confrontational conversations, because he didn't know to address them. By applying *empathic paraphrasing* as a "technique" he was able to become *agentic*, approach an emotionally stirred up person and say: "Go ahead, just tell me your story!"<sup>109</sup> Knowing how to address grievances and the like, has loosened the knot of *helplessness* for him and allowed him to become more *agentic*.

P9's context of *Helplessness* has been described [above](#): being stuck in the sandwich position of middle management and feeling the pressure of aspects of organization's culture which weren't especially liked by the participant. Other forms of *Helplessness* he experienced were culturally ingrained forms of communication that were not helping to motivate his team, resolve conflicts, and meet the demands of the board:

*"Because everything can be done by email, calling by telephone is a nuance. Because you call colleague B and he is not at his desk, then you have to call*

*back, then you have something different. And I myself took care to do everything by mail. And I had colleagues, even when they are sitting two offices apart, two doors apart.”<sup>110</sup>*

He became *agentic* and made the decision:

*“I am turning that back again and am calling more. That I have in the past weeks, not just because of the seminar, but also before, made it a custom again. And during the day, I am paying much more attention with the speaking, with the employees, with the other colleagues at the bank. Well, I have never spoken as much as in the last quarter. I have the impression, that everything runs more smoothly because of that.”<sup>111</sup>*

By actively introducing more and more elements of *emotional intelligent leadership* into his department, he is changing the culture of his department – even against the resistance of the existing organizational culture and his peers, the other department heads who are frowning at his methods. He made the decision to become more of a leader and adopt a leadership style that has much in common with transformational leadership, though the participant doesn’t use this word while at the same time showing many aspects of what could be part of an *emotional intelligent leadership style* (if that would be properly defined) like caring for the group emotions, considering fairness, seeking shared contentment, giving attention to the emotional issues of subordinates, etc.

*“But now, I am not that much a brick layer any more and more like a foreman, because now you lay some more bricks and I supervise a bit more.”<sup>112</sup>*

After the intervention and after aspiring to implement a more EI leadership style, he noticed a mood change and an increased can-do-spirit in his team to help him with the demands of the board that previously triggered [experiences of Helplessness](#) when the team was in discord:

*“And I have a high quota among the colleagues [to do the extra work from the board], that’s why I am happy. A high quota, which says ‘I’ll do it! We’ll manage that, we’ll manage now!’”*

So, in way, his *agentic motivation* spread to the whole department which before was described by him as being morose and lacking drive.

#### 6.3.2.4 Emergence of Agentic Empathy

##### Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness

After coding for *agentic behavior*, I started to analyze the broader context around the personality trait codings. It didn’t take long until a new pattern started to emerge. The new concept was able to tie loose ends and form a tight fabric (sticking to the GT metaphor of weaving concepts into theory): Participants were actively making use of one or many of the *Behavioral EI skills* to get out of a situation of *Helplessness* and become more *Agentic*. But this is not



where the process ended. The four participants on whom the training showed an effect did not just get into action-mode but displayed a balance of *agentic* and *empathic* behavior.

This might be a natural effect of applying *Behavioral EI skills* like *empathic paraphrasing* or *NVC* and wasn't done consciously, but there are some arguments that the participants might have done exactly that. The participants consciously opted for an empathy intervention and showed motives that by far and large are in line with the personality trait *agreeableness*. They expressed a desire to implement *empathic communication* into their daily routines as leaders and seemed to have succeeded many a times to do so. Being confronted with situation that required actions by them but appeared difficult or even unsolvable before (the *experience of helplessness*) to them, behaving in an *agentic-empathic* way "emerged", i.e. dawned, as an alternative way of leadership behavior when consciously trying to act in an *empathic* way. The word *emerged* is used here to indicate that a leadership style is not appearing out of thin air but as an interaction between the leaders and the followers though the impetus came from the leaders.

The instances where participants were able to become *agentic* after experiencing *helplessness* while striking a balance between *agency* and *empathy* were coded *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness*. In section 6.3.2.3 some of these instances have already been cited showing that participants were displaying *agency* and *empathy* in the sense of a caring, pro-social attitude at the same time after an instance of *Helplessness* was coded. Being a higher-order code *Becoming agentic-empathic* always appears after the code *Helplessness* and overlaps with the code *Agentic* and instances where the application of one of the *behavioral EI skills* is mentioned and ties these concepts together. I find remarkable in this regard, that the application of a *Behavioral EI technique* after an experience of *Helplessness* by the participants coincided with behaving *agentic* in a way that wasn't dominant, assertive or self-oriented but *empathic* as well.

P3 gives a good example for this process in her interview:

*"Well, I am a person, who simply stops speaking with other persons. I just stop, because then I... 'Gosh, if you don't have an interest, then I don't have an interest anymore, too. But without addressing the situation, because I, perhaps I have learnt that in my childhood that it leads to nothing, to address things, because in my family nobody talked about stuff. Now I have noticed: Okay, I got to address things but only with observable behavior and that, yes, that I really do employ on both sides. And that is a beautiful way of communication and makes leading my employees naturally a lot easier, when I see myself more seen in connection with my superiors."*<sup>113</sup>

When I inquired, what she means by saying "makes leading easier", she went on to talk about the advantages of *nonviolent* and *empathic communication* as being clearer because problems are not being blown out of proportion by misunderstood emotions. P3's job forces her to experience situations she would have avoided in the past by sticking to behavioral patterns she feels have been customary in her family. Not knowing how to handle confrontations made her

*helpless* and she would have reacted by avoiding communication altogether. Being equipped with the NVC-paradigm of addressing grievances and with *empathic paraphrasing* she enters the confrontational situation actively and seeks to influence it. She walked right into her boss' office and told him what was on her mind! Only, she did this without ranting but by sticking to the process of NVC: sharing observation, emotions, needs, and requests. The *EI behavioral skills set* broadened her behavioral inventory and allowed her to become *agentic* in more situations.

Another example for *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness* is imbedded in the context of a major critical incident participant P4 mentioned [above](#) as an instance of *Helplessness*. In his company, the migration process to a different accounting software created a lot of difficulties since the company was not able to write invoices to their customers for some time. This did affect the company's liquidity and, as a result, the bonuses of their high-performing employees couldn't be paid for several months. When having to explain to all his thirty-six employees in a meeting that due to the persistence of the software bug they would have to wait even longer for part of their salary, the participant used *Sharing of emotions* to win the disappointed employees over. He mentioned that method, which he called *emotional revelation*, altogether fifteen times in the interview and described it as a great tool for him:

*"Well, I am somebody, who feels rather comfortable with the, yes, emotional revelation. In this connection, it is important for me to be liked, too."*<sup>114</sup>

In his opinion, *emotional revelation* is also functional for increasing the leader-member-relationship in a professional field where companies are fiercely competing for scarce human resources. This is part of the context of the above critical incident. The pattern is similar to the other instances of *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness*. Instead of hiding in his office and writing his employees an email that contrary to long-lasting customs they couldn't make a legal case against the company and should just deal with it, he became *agentic*, called a meeting and stepped in front of the whole personnel. Simply informing them about the hard truth matter-of-factly also occurred to him, but he chose to balance *agency* with *Emotional Intelligence* showing an understanding for the group processes and emotions of his inferiors.

The pattern under discussion was pronounced clearest with P5 who actually gave me the idea for this code. The theme of being in a situation of *helplessness* and becoming *agentic* by applying *EI behavioral techniques* occurs very often in his interview. He never became just *agentic* but *agentic-empathic*. In multiple instances he describes being able to balance *agency* with *empathy*. He felt that by acting in such a way, the conversation with the members of his team changed in quality:

*"That is the right word, trusting, it became more trusting. Before I had at times the impression or one could get the impression, that it is somehow superficial. And with that empathizing, really with the conversation partner, it becomes even more personal."*<sup>115</sup>

Before the empathy intervention, P5 was avoiding social situation where tempers were high, and conflict was in the air. Now, equipped with *empathic communication techniques* he is not “...running away from such situations anymore. Because these emotional states of the employees, now, they don’t cause me, to have, let’s say, to be afraid to address something.”<sup>116</sup>

P5 sums up the essence of the pattern at hand – balancing *agency* and *empathy* after experiencing *helplessness* in the past:

*“Well, on the one side always empathic or, on the other side forceful. But then not empathic anymore – that doesn’t make any sense. Therefore, in the long run, I want to try to get both done simultaneously for the particular situation.”<sup>117</sup>*

The [examples](#) of P9 becoming more *agentic* after experiencing *helplessness* present more instances of balancing *agency* and *empathy*. When changing his management style from management by objectives to an active form of leadership that involved personal contact with his employees, he not only became more *agentic* and less driven by external forces (ergo *helpless*), but also adopted many elements that are part of an EI leadership style balancing *agency* and *empathy*.

*“Well, I had two, three years ago, I had virtually with every single colleague (something?)/ at that time, a lot of things were quite unfortunate. Everybody had some conflict among themselves and I really had every five minutes somebody else from my team standing, who spoke about that colleague, about that one. Or who said: he, with him I cannot work. And then, one does not make any progress anymore. And then, one drives home and is totally frustrated. And one doesn’t know yet, how to go on working with that team.”<sup>118</sup>*

In the passage above the participant describes an impasse he reached with his team some time ago which I coded as a situation of *Helplessness*. It took *agency* in the sense of dynamic initiative on his part to get out of this situation and not throw the towel and ask for a transfer. His predecessors have called his department difficult. Exactly when he started the change process, remains unclear. In some passages, he says that he readopted leadership behavior customary for him before joining ranks with the other department heads. When summing up the interview, he attributes the drastic drop of sick days to nil to the changes he implemented after the empathy intervention. Regardless when the change process started, the effects were quite obvious to the participant:

*“But when the team is just working smoothly/ and that is dependent to a great degree, that one talks reasonably with them/ that one empathizes with them, too. And speaks with them as well and explains and says: now, I didn’t like that. Just, that one tells, I would have expected more from you”<sup>119</sup>*

The participant is not using the word *empathizing* in German but *eingehen* which translates to something like tuning into the feelings of the other person. At other places in the interview he is giving evidence for his interest in the emotions of his colleagues so that using the word *empathizing* seems to be justified in this regard. In this passage, he is again describing his transition from a purely task-oriented style of management to a person-oriented one. So, he is empathizing with his colleagues, speaking to them, and formulating expectations. At other places he describes that he – like P4 – is *Sharing his emotions* with his employees to make a point and follow the NVC-process to some degree. Also similar to P4, he is attributing a lot of importance to that *Sharing* and considers it to be part of *Emotional Intelligent leadership behavior*. Not just telling his employees why they should change their behavior but to give them his emotions connected to the observed behavior of the employee as a guideline: “I have said: ‘Right now, I don’t feel really taken serious by you.’”<sup>120</sup> At two others places in the interview with another employee, he gives an example of employing the *Sharing of emotions* to tell his subordinates why their behavior should be re-evaluated.

Besides the *Sharing of emotions*, *Giving attention* to employees by talking to them on a daily basis, delegating tasks based on *individualized consideration* and catering to the team spirit by allowing for informal team meetings during work time (which the team has to make up for by working faster), are among the other methods he employs that can be counted among *EI behavior*. The participant needed to make a change in his department and needed to show *agency* to drive the change. He did that however with the help of a leadership style that could be called *emotional intelligent* since his as well as the emotions of his team mates were considered, the group emotions cared for by showing consideration for the team member, and emotions were used to drive performance. So, overall, the case of P9 gives a good example of balancing *agency* with *empathy after helplessness*.

### Balancing agency with EI

When participants displayed a tendency to balance *agency* with EI by using *behavioral EI tools* outside the immediate context of *Helplessness*, I used the code *Balancing agency with EI*. As Table 10 shows, this code was used more frequently than the code *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness*. The distinction between the two codes is sometimes blurred, as the context characterized by *Helplessness* frequently spans over multiple paragraphs or, as was the case with P9, makes up one of the main themes of the interview (being stuck in the sandwich position of middle-management).

Table 10. Agentic empathy

Selected codes	P3	P4	P5	P7	P8	P9	Total
<b>Agentic empathy</b>							
Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness	6	5	6	0	0	3	20
Balancing agency with EI	4	5	2	0	1	11	23
<b>Total</b>	10	10	8	0	1	14	43

The code *Balancing agency with EI* was mostly used when participants were talking more generally about how they implemented the *Behavioral EI tools* from the training intervention. This

often entailed the need to find a balance between being *agentic* and standing one's ground as a manager while being *empathic* at the same time. The pattern coded here has many conceptual overlaps with the code *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness* as they have the same idea at its core. In the instances of this code, however, the need to become *agentic* was not as pronounced as in the instances that were coded *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness* since a situation of *helplessness* did not need to be overcome.

Even without a pressing context, leading and managing people often requires a certain degree of *agency* in the sense of dynamic goal-oriented acting directed at influencing others. As 5 out of 6 participants showed signs of *agreeableness* and having an expressed interest in EI and *empathy*, it makes sense that the four participants, where the training was effective, were interested in finding that balance between *agency* and *empathy* in the context of leadership situations. The *Contextual condition* of the codings coded with *Balancing agency with EI* was not *Helplessness* but *Agreeableness*. The *Consequence*, however, was the same as of the code *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness*: the emergence of *agentic-empathic* leadership behavior.

*"Well, leadership doesn't just mean, that I tell them what to do, but leadership also means, that I am a shoulder to lean on for them."*<sup>121</sup> (P4)

Here, the *agentic* part is the "telling them what to do" and the empathic part would be the emotional support that is offered to "them" – the followers.

*"That one just allows the employees to talk and that one paraphrases a bit and that, I believe, is accepted really well and that was also the statement after the conversation [with an employee] and that was really great."*<sup>122</sup> (P3)

The code was used in this instance, because the incident happened in a typical leadership situation – during an appraisal and development interview. The participant called the employee into her office for the interview showing initiative and *agency*. At the same time, by employing *empathic paraphrasing* she balanced the *agentic* component of her behavior and of her entire role. That this behavioral pattern was well received by the interviewee seemed to have catered to the *agreeable* side of the participant who reflected how her behavior was perceived.

P8, as well, had an instance that I coded with *Balancing agency with EI* when he talked about the integration of an element of NVC into the daily practice of speaking with the nurses:

*"And that one really pronounces a request then. Not at all from high above, because that we [the doctors] have noticed, that doesn't work with them [the nurses]."*<sup>123</sup>

He has adapted his style of communication which was purely task-oriented and at times demanding and commanding to accommodate the feelings of the nurses who don't seem to like to be bossed around and know their importance for the whole operation. He did not attribute

this adaption process to the training, however, but still referred to the concept of NVC when talking about this incident.

P9 talked the most about his experiences implementing a more EI kind of leadership and the effects that he perceived this undertaking had on him, the team, as well as on performance and sick days. He started a morning and evening round routine after the training intervention (another indicator for the effect the training had on him) where he visits each of his employees in their offices and has a short chat which he leaves purposefully open ended.

*"I have re-acquainted myself to saying again, in the morning just making a round through all the offices. Just in these four weeks [after the intervention]. With like, especially when it interests me, to ask for private things, too. What has been done at the weekend. Also listening and, at the evening, another round. Whether everything is all right. And the work/ well, to switch to more leadership style, to switch to more leadership. To delegate the work personally, to take the time for this. And to say: will you manage that, and can I support you in this? And especially, if the colleague has a day less/ I have simply to my colleagues. But now, I am not that much a brick layer any more and more like a foreman, because, now you lay some more bricks and I supervise a bit more. And that, right now, is not going so bad [German euphemism for it actually going well]. That means, right now I am taking more care of the problems my colleagues are having. Also, the problems they have among themselves."<sup>124</sup>*

The lines in the middle of this passage were quoted before as an example for *agentic* behavior. As there was no immediate experience of *helplessness* in the surrounding paragraphs, I coded this segment with the code under discussion. There was a history of *helplessness*, though, since the team was quarreling among each other and was more intractable than compliant leaving the participant worried how he should fulfill the demands of the board with this team. The change process he initiated, seemed to encompass much more active leadership behavior from his side. He used a metaphor from construction likening himself to the foreman and the other "colleagues" to brick-layers. He did not, however, stick to the common stereotypes concerning construction site lingo but adopted a supportive leadership style and balanced his *agentic* approach with *empathic behavioral* routines.

P9 used his new-found balanced leadership approach using parts of the [NVC process](#) to try to mend a difficult working relationship with an employee who has been in the bank for many years and has, according to the participant, worn out many superiors over the years. When the employee did not accept what the participant thought to be a peace offering, he made provisions with the board to let her go because he felt, that with the application of an *EI behavioral technique* he had exhausted his possibilities to make her a productive member of his department. So, in a sense, an effect of the empathy intervention has been, that an employee got fired! P3 also used *EI behavioral techniques* to convince a low performing member of her sales staff to transfer to corporate and leave her team. Although these are only two cases, it

could indicate that an *empathy intervention* is not turning people into sentimentalists who shrink away from making hard decisions that are in accordance with organizational goals.

#### *Agentic empathy as core idea*

The two codes *Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness* and *Balancing agency with EI* both share the same underlying idea which has the potential to be what GT calls a *core idea*. The *core idea* can be understood in different ways – depending on the range the forming theory can cover. At its shortest range, the *core idea* describes the balance four participant either in middle management situation or as CEO of a small enterprise have found for themselves after developing an interest in *Emotional Intelligent* leadership and attending a training in that topic. With the help of *Behavioral EI technique* they emerged as *agentic yet empathic* leaders – something they were previously either not able to do or were choosing for whatever reasons not to do. The *agentic-empathic* balance enabled them to comply with personal and organizational goals as well as to create the kind of work environment that suited their own personalities as well as being well received by most of their employees.

The *agentic-empathic* balance can be seen as a *consequence* of the application of the *Behavioral EI techniques* – at least in a temporal sense. The research method at hand is not suitable to propose a causal relationship between the application of said tools and the observed changes in leadership behavior and is also depending purely on the impression of the participants. Nevertheless, the pattern at hand has emerged in the cases of all the four participants where the training has shown an effect. The emergence of the *Agentic empathy* pattern also had several *contextual conditions* – experiences of *helplessness* and an expressed tendency towards *agreeableness* which all the participants shared. The participants also recounted several other more minor *contextual* conditions that have been coded as antecedents to the application of the *Behavioral EI techniques* by me and have been listed in section 6.3.2.2. As the *Behavioral EI techniques* play a pivotal role in attaining *Agentic empathy*, these antecedents should be considered important to the whole concept.

As a *core idea* in the context of leadership, I find *Agentic empathy* very appealing. It marks the reconciliation of two somewhat paradoxical poles of behavioral possibilities. A misgiving about *emotional intelligence* and *empathy* has always been, that too much of it will bar people from acting. In the cases under discussion, the opposite is true. With the help of the *Behavioral EI techniques* the participants became more *agentic* but in an *emotional intelligent* and *empathic* way. That the quality of leadership behavior has changed in that direction after the intervention is surprising. It might be limited to people with a similar disposition to *agreeableness* and prosocial behavior as the participants of this intervention. The results might therefore not pertain to people in other circumstances. In the context of this study, however, *Agentic empathy* as a *core idea* holds up to the criteria that Strauss and Corbin (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p. 189) defined:

1. *It must be sufficiently abstract so that it can be used as the overarching explanatory concept tying all the other categories together.*

*Agentic empathy* as the core idea has emerged in the process of *axial coding* when I laid the *Paradigm of Contextual conditions, Actions-Interactions, and Consequences* over the data. It marks the end of the development process of the participants from reflecting their past behaviors, having an ideal of *Action-Interaction* and taking initiative to realize that ideal for themselves. The *core idea* of *Agentic empathy* is abstract yet is grounded in the oral accounts of the participants. It answers the research question very nicely as it tells how the quality of leadership behavior has changed after the training intervention. It represents the end of the process of code system refinement after the *open coding* (section 6.3.1).

*2. It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all, or almost all, cases there are indicators that point to that concept.*

This criterion is easily fulfilled as seen in Table 10. In 5 out of 6 cases this concept can be found. The case of P8 might be somewhat debatable, but he has also shown some effects after the training intervention. P7 has been favorably disposed towards the whole concepts of EI leadership but never really got into action-mode which means that this concept is barred from him. Altogether, the *core idea* of *Agentic empathy* appeared 43 times across all the 6 cases.

*3. It must be logical and consistent with the data. There should be no forcing.*

Though I could not possibly cite all the 43 passages where the *core idea* appeared, I am sure to have given sufficient textual references to make the choice for this *core idea* plausible. There is, of course, always a pressure involved when writing a thesis or paper to come up with results. That was one of the main reasons why I started to write down results after the *open coding* to have this pressure partially taken from me and enjoy the good feeling, that all the effort of conducting the three interventions wasn't for nil and that the participants were able to transfer some of the training content into their daily lives as leaders.

The emergence of this *core idea* has happened quite naturally by applying the GT process to the data and by moving the spotlight of attention from the outward behavior to the inner motives and personality traits of the participants. 535 Memos portray the path leading to this *core idea*.

*4. It should be sufficiently abstract so that it can be used to do further research leading to the development of general theory.*

At the top of my head, I could think of a couple of research projects that spring from this core idea. It is anchored in the context of leadership behavior in this research project and might be limited to antecedents like being in a helpless situation (or even more limiting: being in the helpless situation of a middle management leader), but it might just have the potential to grow out of this context and become applicable to other social milieus. Some of the cases of participants who partook in the training but weren't eligible to be interviewed gave some indication for an application of this *core idea* outside this immediate context.

*5. It should grow in depth and explanatory power as each of the other categories is related to it through statements of relationship.*



In a way, the *core idea* emerged at the very end of the coding process in full bloom. The process of weaving the different concepts together and the constant movement from the outward behavior to the inner life of the participants has fostered its growth. The relationship of the *core idea* to the other concepts will be outlined below, when the grounded theory is explained in detail.

The concepts derived from the first round of coding as described in section 6.3.1.2 from the base of the [GT pyramid](#). These concepts were derived from the study of the literature, common sense, the content of the empathy intervention as it was perceived and applied by the participants, the effects of the intervention, that the participants either noticed themselves or could be gleaned from the description of their behavior. The second layer consisted of the results of the *axial coding* which helped to analyze the behavior and the motives of the participants in detail. Being derived from analyzing the codings of the *open coding* in detail, the second layer is related to the first layer and has also grown in depth as the motives, personality traits, and inner experiences shifted into the limelight. When connecting the different categories of the *axial coding* and identifying a pattern common to all the cases where the intervention had shown an effect, two more concepts emerged as *core concepts* tying the categories of the second layer together. After reflecting on the two *core concepts* and rereading the memos about them, it became obvious that they had an idea in common – the *core idea* of *Agentic empathy*. Via the different layers, this *core idea* then is connected to all the other concepts and categories.

## 6.4 Grounded theory

### Relationships of the categories

Sharing Kromrey et al.'s faith in the theory building potential of GT (2016), I would like to start that attempt and summarize in this section what has been hinted at in the previous sections. Since only six cases could be used for the building of theory and these six all shared a similar context, I don't want to propose anything else than a short-ranged theory that can at least answer the main research questions and possibly a few of the subsequent ones. The inductive efforts will therefore be limited as I am choosing to stay close to the data and the contextual conditions. In section 7 I will discuss how the theory might also pertain to other contexts.

Figure 14 depicts the relationship of the different categories and concepts that the process of building theory has brought to light. The ordering of the categories follows the logic of the *GT paradigm*. The [blue rectangles](#) stand for the *contextual conditions* of the participants, the [red one](#) for the *Action-Interaction* they took, and the [green one](#) for the consequence of said *Action-Interaction*. The [yellow boxes](#) stand for factors that moderate the relationships between *contextual conditions* in the blue rectangles and the *Actions-Interactions* taken. The black, solid lines signify the direction of the variables' effect and mark the main effects of this theory as has been elaborated in section 6.3.2, while the lilac lines describe the effects of the empathy intervention shown in section 6.3.1.2. The dotted lines symbolize effects that are not supported by the data at hand but follow logic and indicate plausible relationships between some elements.

For the building of theory, I have split the *Helplessness* category into two parts: **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS** and **CONDITIONED HELPLESSNESS**. The former sums up all the instances of *Helplessness* from the data where the participants experienced *helplessness* because of organizational and circumstantial constraints. This experience of *helplessness* is, of course, highly personal. Other people would perhaps not feel the same way, though middle management positions have a certain reputation of causing this experience (Anicich and Hirsh 2017). Into the latter category instances were shifted that had causes that were purely intrapersonal rather than external. The constant experience of situations of *helplessness* can lead to *learned helplessness* as has been shown by Seligman (2006). Vice versa, it is thinkable, that people who are *conditioned* to feel *helpless* regularly have a tendency to experience organizationally and circumstantially caused *helplessness* more often than others, more *agentic* persons. The dotted line between the **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS** rectangle and the **CONDITIONED HELPLESSNESS** rectangle is indicating this mutual influence.

**TRAIT AGREEABLENESS** and **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS** are the two main categories of *contextual conditions* that form the main routes toward the **ACTION-INTERACTION** of the *Behavioral EI skill set*. I cannot glean from the data which of the two variables contributes more to the probability that the **ACTION-INTERACTION** is taken. I suppose that **TRAIT AGREEABLENESS** might have an influence on **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS** which is indicated by the dotted lines. *Agreeable* persons might care more about unsupportive superiors, unruly inferiors, and stressful middle management life. Insofar, being high in *agreeability* might contribute to feeling more constraints by these circumstances and limit one's actions. A devil-may-care attitude might help to avoid these. Regardless of the relationship between these two categories and their contribution to the display of the **ACTION-INTERACTION** under discussion, they have emerged as the main *contextual conditions*.

Of the 6 participants, 4 have taken this road and 2 didn't. For P8 it can be assumed that the degree of **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS** was not high enough to feel an incentive to move towards this particular **ACTION-INTERACTION** (he was not in a middle-management position and he was not aware of any pressing interpersonal issues in his practice) and that **TRAIT AGREEABLENESS** was rather low as he reported few instances in the *Empathy* category and wasn't coded once for *Agreeableness*. P7's case is somewhat different as he was high in both **TRAIT AGREEABLENESS** and **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS**. Why he did not make more efforts to put the *Behavioral EI skills* into action might be due to the moderating factors for the *Behavioral EI skills* displayed in the **yellow rectangles**. He reported instances of *Lack of Agency* as well as of *Emotional instability* which kept him from showing the **ACTION-INTERACTION** under discussion. Another possibility to explain this tendency or add to it, was his statement, that he didn't have the time or the opportunity to put the *Behavioral EI techniques* into practice, which would be another moderating factor from the **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS**. For the purpose of theory building, P8 and P7 did me a favor, as Strauss and Corbin (2015) stress the importance of having outliers and explaining them with the theory. In both cases, this seems to work.

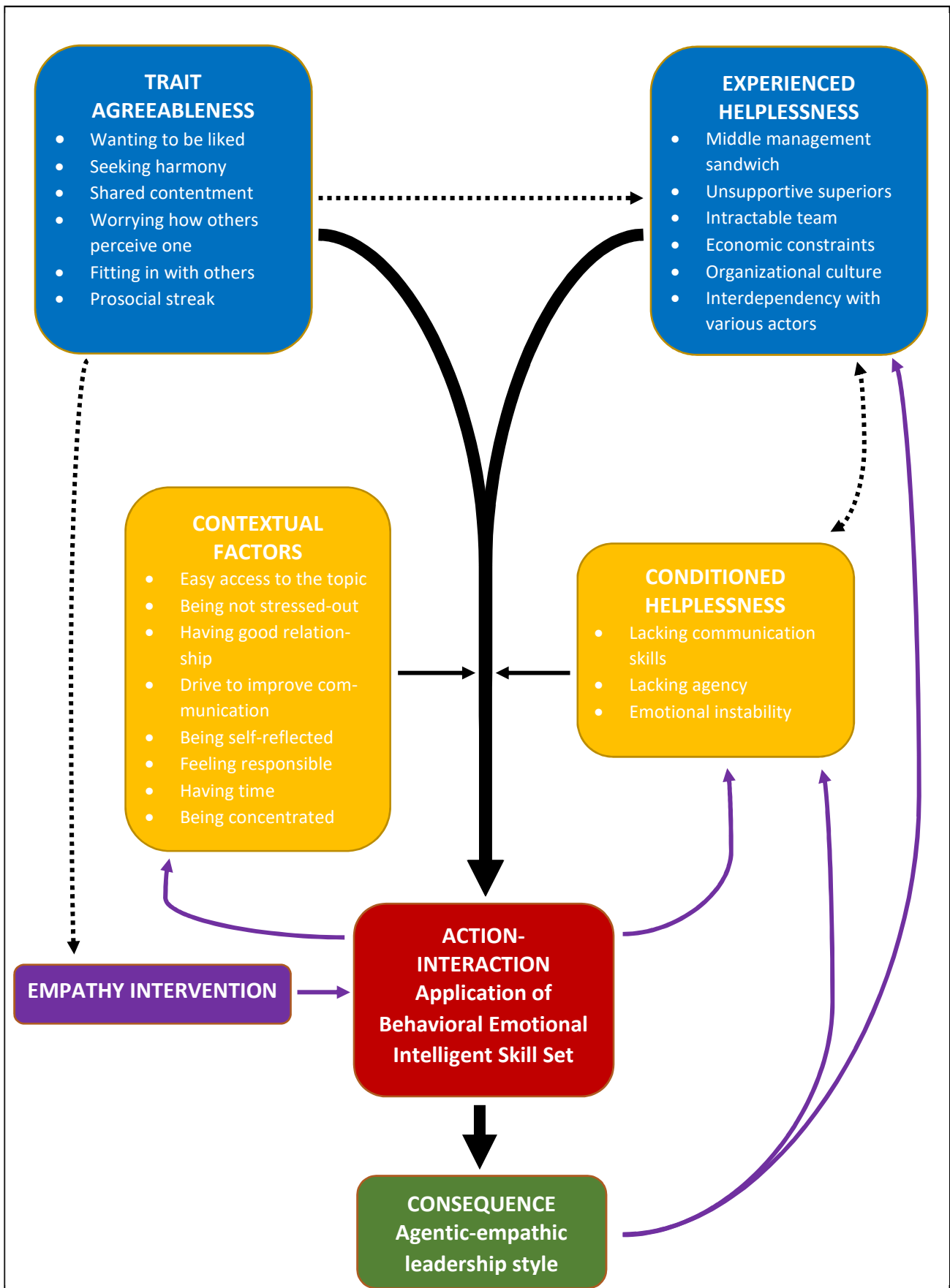


Figure 14. Relationships of the categories

In the four cases where the training intervention had an effect, the moderating factors worked in favor of the relationship between the three variables and promoted the process. As mentioned in section 6.3.2.2, I do not attribute too much importance to the antecedents in the context of this data-set, as they were not mentioned very often by the participants. Empathy research has shown that at least some of these **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS** are important antecedents to the display of *empathic behavior* (see 2.9). **CONDITIONED HELPLESSNESS** as moderator was shown by some of the four participants that were applying the *Behavioral EI skill set* successfully as well. It did not stop them from getting into action mode as the influence was presumably not as high as in the case of P7 or their approach motives for empathy were even higher.

When the *contextual conditions* were met, and the participants got to the point of **ACTION-INTERACTION** and applied the *Behavioral EI skill set*, the consequence in these four cases was that they developed an *Agentic-empathic leadership style*, meaning that a behavioral pattern of balancing *agency* and *empathy* emerged in the context of leadership. To what degree they also showed that kind of behavior in other spheres of life has only been hinted at by the participants and not been investigated by me in detail. P5 and P3 mentioned, that they also applied the training content in their private life but did not go into detail whether they struck the same kind of balance in that sphere. In their positions as leader *agency* was hopefully more in demand than in other contexts.

The lilac box **EMPATHY INTERVENTION** accounts for the fact, that it is impossible to determine in this set-up what *Behavioral EI skills* the participants had before the empathy intervention and what skills they picked up there. That they did learn something of that sort during the intervention was established with high probability from the findings of the *open coding*. Just how much prior knowledge they brought to the table will remain unclear. That the **EMPATHY INTERVENTION** had a major impact on the acquisition of the *Behavioral EI skill set* has been clear from 5 out of the 6 cases. But only in 4 out of 6 cases, the **EMPATHY INTERVENTION** actually had an effect on the display of *Behavioral EI skills* as **ACTION-INTERACTION**.

The two lilac lines from the **ACTION-INTERACTION** box to the **CONTEXTUAL FACTORS** and the **CONDITIONED HELPLESSNESS** box mark the effects the participants attributed to the *empathy techniques* they applied (see section 6.3.1.2). These effects are consequences in itself but not directly connected to the building of theory. They have been researched thoroughly elsewhere. It is to be noted, however, that the application of the **ACTION-INTERACTION** had a very positive effect on some of the moderators and diminished or even nullified the negative effect of others. *Empathic paraphrasing*, for example, was reported to have a calming effect on some of the participants (as has been shown in the literature cited in section 3 and 5.3.3). Applying some of the *EI skills* compensated the *lack of communication skills* as they are in themselves communication techniques. Also, participants reported an increase in *Emotional stability*. This possibly self-enforcing cycle might actually effectuate the display of even more **ACTION-INTERACTION**, which will lead to more *Agentic-empathic leadership behavior*. This cycle will, of course, subside when the unwanted moderating factors have been reduced to the participant's satisfaction.

The **CONSEQUENCE** of the **ACTION-INTERACTION**, an *Agentic-empathic leadership style*, itself has an effect on **CONDITIONED HELPLESSNESS** and **EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS** as has been reported by the participants. Their **EXPERIENCES OF HELPLESSNESS** partly or wholly subsided as they were able to improve relationships with their boss, their employees and other actors. The new-found balance between *Agency* and *Empathy* also helped them with their **CONDITIONED HELPLESSNESS** insofar as *agency* was lacking. Also, in this case, one might assume, that a positive self-enforcing cycle will support the development of a stable skill level of *Agentic-empathic leadership* and the active shaping of sources of *Helplessness* until the participant reaches a comfortable plateau.

To what degree the trait *agreeableness* and the behavioral anchors that I have subsumed under this category are malleable is a whole other discussion, although generally personality traits like the Big Five are thought to be stable after a certain age (Myers et al. 2014). In the context of this research project, there were no indications that the level of *agreeableness* of the participants has changed after the intervention, when applying *Behavioral EI skills* or when they acted in an *agentic-empathic* way. However, it might be worthwhile to research whether motives derived from *trait agreeableness* are contributing to the interest for attending events like the empathy intervention. The dotted line from **TRAIT AGREEABLENESS** to **EMPATHY INTERVENTION** stands for this hunch.

The big news of this research project is the relationship between the **ACTION-INTERACTION** and the **CONSEQUENCE** in the form of the emergence of an *Agentic-empathic leadership style* which 4 of the 6 participants displayed. That they became more empathic was to be expected – after all, they have attended an empathy intervention. The *agentic* part is what is really astonishing. It might be that the participants were kept by their *experiences of helplessness* and their motives for *agreeable* behavior from being more *agentic* in their respective leadership positions. It might be, that they had difficulties defining themselves as leaders as a part of themselves frowned upon the display of unalloyed *agency*. When adopting *Behavioral EI skills*, they might have found a way to balance the *agency* they need to display with the *empathy* they like to display, and an *agentic-empathic leadership style* emerged.

#### *The theory of the emergence of agentic-empathy leadership*

In summary, the theory (grounded in the data through the process of *open* and *axial coding*) is proposing, that leaders with a certain disposition to the personality trait *agreeableness* who have experienced situations of *helplessness* and use *behavioral emotionally intelligent skills* after attending an empathy intervention will have a tendency to display a leadership style whose main characteristic is a balance of *agentic* and *empathic* behavioral patterns which helps them in turn to attenuate situations and conditions that were perceived as helpless before. That *agentic-empathic leadership style* emerges from series of conditions which are partly in control of the leader and partly controlled by other factors like the organizational environment, followers, or even societal influences. These influences are, of course, underrepresented in this study as only the perspective of the leader can be considered. Since none of the leaders planned for an *agentic-empathic leadership style*, the word *emergence* is

quite fitting, especially as leadership behavior is always depended on the leader-follower-interactions. The discussion on leadership emergence and emotional intelligence (see section 4.6.1) inspired me to use this word in this context as well. The balance of *agency* and *empathy* should make for excellent leaders who should have no issues to be accepted as such by their followers.

## 7 Discussion

### 7.1 Range of the theory

It is the sum total of antecedents and moderating factors that limits the scope of this theory to short range since all the relationships found between categories are deeply rooted in the data, i.e. in the context of the participants. All participants who effectively used the *Behavioral EI skills* shared more or less the same patterns of being *agreeable* persons that were stuck to a certain degree in *helpless* situations. In the application of *Behavioral EI techniques* in everyday leadership situations they displayed an *agentic-empathic leadership style* and enjoyed positive effects for themselves and others. What the consequences of applying *Behavioral EI skills* will be for other persons in other *contextual conditions* will only partly be answered by this theory.

It might be safe to assume that most leaders at some point or other run into *experiences of helpless*. To what degree this influences them, is another question and would be up to the degree of their *conditioned helplessness*. Whether they would also develop an *agentic-empathic leadership style* when partaking in an empathy intervention, would be interesting to see. This theory proposes that a certain disposition to *agreeable* behavior would increase the likelihood for the intervention to have an effect and lead to *agentic-empathic leadership behavior*. The one participant who did not show a tendency toward *agreeableness* also did not report a change in leadership behavior. So, arguing from the data, which is the whole point of GT, *agreeableness* would be needed and is reducing the range of the theory. However, it is to be kept in mind, that the degree of *agreeableness* was only inferred from the detailed description of leadership behaviors as well as from coded statements. More research in this regard is certainly needed, where participants are asked, before the empathy intervention, to fill out a standardized test of the Big 5 like the NEO-FFI to get supporting data.

On the other hand, if the *Behavior EI skills* have the potency to help *agreeable* person to become more *agentic* it is, at least, imaginable, that they might have a similar balancing effect on *agentic* persons making them more prosocially oriented. Unfortunately, this type of person wasn't part of the study which is due to the issues of finding participants for this study (see 5.3.2). Empathy interventions have demonstrated to have an effect on a variety of participants – even those who do not want to attend (see 3.1.1.5). So, there is “well-informed” hope that a similar empathy intervention would have an effect on people, too, who do not have an inclination for *agreeable* behavior in the first place. Without the *contextual conditions* of AGREEABLENESS and EXPERIENCED HELPLESSNESS the range of the theory would increase dramatically. Further research with a greater variance of the participants would definitely be needed.

The *Agentic empathy* balance emerges with the application of the *Behavioral EI techniques*. The research method at hand is not suitable to propose a causal relationship between the application of said tools and the emergence of these changes in leadership behavior and is also depending purely on the impressions of the participants. That this pattern is shared by all the four participants where the training showed an effect, is, however, indication enough to

warrant further research in that direction which might also extend the range of the theory. The term *emergence* is chosen intentionally for the display of *agentic-empathic leadership behavior*. Leadership behavior needs to be seen in the light of the leader-follower-relationship as LMX research has shown (see section 4.3). The emergence of a specific kind of leadership behavior is therefore always dependent on the followers whose perspective has not been part of this study.

Another possibility that has to be considered is, that the empathy intervention itself was designed and conducted in such a way as to produce the effect under discussion – promote an *agentic-empathic leadership style*. Regarding the design which has been listed in detail (see 5.3.3), that possibility can probably be ruled out. As for the conduction of the training and the persona of the training I would also find it somewhat unlikely to have such an effect on the participants. In professional life, people have called me many things but being overly *agentic* was never among that. When facilitating trainings, I do not believe in exerting too much influence on the participants as I trust in the self-organizing power and the intrinsic motivation of most of my participants. Truthfully, I would feel flattered, if my participants would describe my facilitating style as *agentic-empathic*. Determining my influence on the outcome would be quite easy in other, better financed research projects by just having the session be facilitated by someone else, while measuring the personality traits of the participants and the facilitator. It would, however, be a pity if the outcome would be different, as *agentic-empathic* worked really well for the participants of this study.

## 7.2 Application and usage

The theory, as it is, has the most application value for leader high in *agreeableness*. Unfortunately, the relationship between *agreeableness* and leadership is somewhat ambiguous and has been shown to be little correlated to leadership itself (Judge et al. 2002). Of the five factors of the Big 5, *agreeableness* is the least researched one (Jensen-Campbell and Graziano 2001)<sup>125</sup>. In the minds of many task-oriented leaders, overly *agreeable* persons might come across as conflict-shunning as it seems to be a stereotype transported by many (e.g. Simic et al. 2017). However, *agreeable* leaders can be highly effective when one inches away from the image of a leader as being a kind of military commander. The *war for talents* needs different leaders than the war against marauding horsemen.

That leader *agreeable* behavior is a predictor of transformational leadership behavior (Rubin et al. 2005) and fosters the perception of HQ LMX by the followers, has been shown in the literature (Bernerth et al. 2007). *Agreeableness* has also been identified as an antecedent of *ethical leadership* (Özbağ 2016) as well as fostering a climate of justice (Mayer et al. 2012). However, the theory under discussion has shown, that the application of *Behavioral EI skills* did not increase *agreeableness* in participants but *agency* in a balanced way – making *agreeable* leaders more effective.

That *agreeableness* doesn't not necessarily mean that conflicts are shunned has been shown in the study by Jensen-Campbell et al. (2001): because *agreeable* persons are highly invested



in personal relationships, they have a higher motivation to solve conflicts satisfactory for all parties involved and have a tendency to be more responsive to conflict. This was observable in the data as 5 out of 6 participants displayed responsiveness towards conflict. A perceived lack of adequate conflict-solving techniques exemplified by P5 might have caused the shunning and not the tendency towards *agreeableness*. When the participants got acquainted with communication techniques that allowed them to be true to their personality, conflicts were approached actively.

What this research project has shown is, that the attendance of an empathy intervention and the application of *Behavioral EI skills* like NVC and *empathic paraphrasing* have helped participants high in *agreeableness* to develop an *agentic-empathic leadership style*. The accounts of the participants leading their followers with this kind of leadership style demonstrated that leaders displaying empathy, concern for group emotions, shared contentment can contribute a lot to the attainment of organizational goals – especially, when being able to show balanced *agency* when needed. All participants, who have applied the *Behavioral EI skills* had highly interesting effects to tell about (see section 6.3.1.2) which coincide with the emergence of an *agentic-empathic leadership style*.

The usage of this theory for leadership development would make a lot of sense when a personalized approach is taken, i.e. when leaders high in *agreeableness* but lacking *agency* etc. are to be developed. For the application in leader development programs that are directed towards entire classes of newly appointed leaders as is done in many large organizations, the theory would have to be tested further to extend its range beyond the limiting factors. An organization will also have to be clear, exactly what kind of behavioral patterns they want to see in leaders. Not only the theory has its usages but also the consequential style of leadership that is related to the theory: *agentic-empathic leadership*.

In the *war for talents* as well as in dealing with highly motivated, highly specialized, and highly intelligent employees, P4, for example, found his blend of *agentic-empathic leadership style* to be very effective in attracting and retaining employees. An *agentic-empathic leadership style* could be the right way of leading employees in many wakes of the industry – especially, when highly skilled human resources are concerned. Other participants reported usages of the *agentic-empathic leadership style* and positive experiences as well. One participant used it for winning over difficult employees, leading appraisals and development interviews, and the daily dealings with superiors and followers. Another participant used this newly adopted leadership style to improve the work climate and ultimately the organizational culture in his department, to define a different role as leader for himself, to delegate work in a more considerate way, and to motivate his employees to more performance by avoiding sick days – without having to pay an extra cent in bonuses. Adopting a proactive conflict style and becoming a stronger communicator have been other usages by a different participant.

### 7.3 Answers to the research questions

The theory of the *emergence of agentic-empathic leadership* will be put to test by attempting to answer the different research questions one by one. Each answer is linked for easy browsing with the respective question from section 5.2. The answers found with the help of the theory at hand, however, do not match the sub-questions anymore since the participants didn't adopt *empathic leadership behavior* after the training intervention as anticipated but *agentic-empathic leadership behavior*.

#### MRQ

The answer to the main research question is limited by its short-range. First of all, the leadership behavior of 4 out of 6 participants changed after empathy intervention giving an indication, that the intervention most likely had an effect on leadership behavior. The quality of the leadership behavior changed in a surprising way. After the empathy intervention the four participants who noted an effect displayed a leadership style that gained in *agentic* as well as in *empathic* quality and is best characterized by the balance of these two behavioral patterns. With this *agentic-empathic leadership style* they were able to master many standard leadership situations in a more satisfying and efficient way (for themselves and their teams) and were also able, in at least one case, to trigger departmental change processes for the betterment of the team culture.

The *agentic* quality encompassed active, dynamic, goal-oriented behaviors. The participants displaying that behavioral quality sought out conflict ridden situations by actively approaching conflict partners to settle the dispute. They actively ventured to shape the behavior of their employees in accordance with team goals, team culture and their own behavior. The *empathic* quality, on the other hand, stood at the other end of the scale and equally guided the behavior of the participants who were affected by the training. Though conflicts were sought out actively, they were attempted to be settled in an *empathic way* employing *empathic techniques* like *empathic paraphrasing* or Non-violent communication. The shaping of team culture and team members' behaviors was done with *Emotional Intelligence* using a variety of skills summed up under the term [Behavioral Emotional Intelligence skill set](#). *Shared contentment*, caring for group emotions, giving followers unalloyed attention, *empathic listening*, considerations of fairness, a caring and supporting attitude for team mates were displayed as part of the *empathic* quality of the behavioral changes. The *empathic* part of the changes in leadership behavior were expected by me, the *agentic* part was surprising but integrates seamlessly in the background of the *contextual conditions* of the participants which also limits the range of the theory.

Four to five weeks after the intervention, 4 of 6 participants were able to recount many incidents of applying the *Behavioral EI skills*, their emotional experiences with them and how their own behavior and, in response, the behavior of their followers has changed. The balance of *agency* and *empathy* serves best to describe the direction and the quality of these behavioral changes. Whether or not these changes in quality are ephemeral or stable, will not be determined by this experimental set-up. However, since the participants have described quite radical changes in quality, going back to old behaviors will be difficult. Moreover, four to five

weeks is sufficient time after the intervention that the *seminar-effect*<sup>126</sup> (being so enthused by the influx of new knowledge that one has to try it out the next day but loses interest soon after) has subsided and long-time effects are visible. It could be, of course, that old behaviors “sneak in” from other departments, the surrounding cultures, etc. and participants are not able to maintain their level of *agentic-empathic leadership* for long. Attempting to change the *contextual conditions* leading to *experienced helplessness* as soon as possible seems to be very important for the effect to last.

#### [SQ1](#)

Those participants who applied an *agentic-empathic leadership style* did that on all levels of their respective organization. P5 reported usages only in one-on-one situations and not so much in his dealings with the whole team. P3 as branch manager, acted *agentic-empathic* with her superiors and with those employees of her team that she had intensive and extensive communications with. There were no incidents reported where she extended the influence of her leadership style to the whole branch to, for example, change the organizational culture of the branch. However, this is exactly what P9 attempted with his department. He perceived many aspects of existing departmental culture as dysfunctional and used his new-found *agentic-empathic leadership style* to change it partly in increments and partly quite radically after the intervention. That change process also entailed prolonged one-on-one *agentic-empathic* interactions with his colleagues. The same is true for P4, who reported to use this style in the above given examples – both on a dyad-level but also when addressing the whole organization.

#### [SQ2](#)

While the application of *empathic behavior* might be limited to certain situations, this might not true be for *agentic-empathic leadership behavior*. The participants gave examples from all kinds of different situations where they applied the *Behavioral EI skills* and acted *agentic-empathically*. This kind of leadership style might be much more versatile than just *empathic behavior*.

#### [SQ3](#)

This is a very interesting question but the answer from the data can only be: four to five weeks after the intervention all the four “affected” participants were highly motivated. Since they attempted longer lasting change projects, personal and departmental, it is hopeful that they can make a habit out of acting that way. Longitudinal studies in this regard would be highly useful. An after-seminar-effect where the techniques learnt in training are tried out for a couple of times and then dropped, was, however, not noticeable. All the participants were leaders who had the freedom to actively shape their environment.

#### [SQ4](#)

Here the participants provided very convincing cases for the effectiveness of their *agentic-empathic leadership style*. All of them were highly satisfied with the effect they had on their followers but not all exerted their influence in the same way and not all had the same kind of

influence depending on their hierarchical standing. P3 and P9 had the most fascinating incidents to tell in regard to organizational commitment and compliant behavior which are listed in detail in the sections above.

#### [SQ5](#)

All “affected” participants noticed an improvement in their communication behavior which for them as leaders would definitely mean an improvement in job performance as a leader’s job mainly consists of communication (see 4.1). Performance improvement of the followers were noted by 2 of the 4. P3 recounted two instances where intractable employees could be motivated to show better performance and more compliant behavior. P9 noticed a change in performance for the whole department by the reduction of avoidable sick days and an increased readiness to take up challenging tasks, as well as better collaboration with him and the rest of the department.

#### [SQ6](#)

This question is not easy to answer as there is not much in the data about it. It is safe to say, that the participants have updated their own definitions of “good” leader performance when incorporating *Behavioral EI skills* into their leadership routines and becoming more *agentic-empathic* in the process. Spending more time with his colleagues in a supporting fashion has been one of the new habits of P9 which he will probably measure as “good” performance for himself. Also, the other participants seemed very satisfied with the way they acted after the empathy intervention. By extending their range of influence as leaders with the *Behavioral EI skills* they most likely also extended their own definition of a job well done. According to this newly formed definition they were all doing fine, which was quite obvious from the interview. Some of the participants still saw room for improvement (see 6.3.1.2).

#### [SQ7](#)

To this question only P9 contributed and gave interesting insights. It might be the *agentic* part of the balanced *agentic-empathic leadership style* that helped the most and made it easier for him to go against the grain of his organization’s culture. Just becoming more *empathic* would probably not have done the trick.

#### [SQ8](#)

Again, only P9 has provided a case for this answer and it was given above already. It is unclear, however, whether he had affected other colleagues of his department with his *agentic-empathic* style as he did not talk about that in the interview. The other participant had different organizational set-ups, as P3 was the manager of a branch that didn’t have contact with the other branches, P4 was CEO of a small company and P5 one of his team leaders.

#### [SQ9](#)

As the leaders became more *agentic-empathic* that question is to be answered in a different manner. The effect the intervention had on them and which I called *agentic-empathic leadership* did not make them more lenient from what can be gleaned from the interviews. On the contrary, they displayed more *agentic* behavior than before the intervention which prompted me to code for *agency* in the first place. Being *agreeable* they might have had an issue with

being overly lenient before the intervention, though this was only reported in one case. After the intervention they displayed an *agentic-empathic* behavior and were not shying away from hard decisions as leaders when employees were refusing to follow them.

Again, it has to be stressed that this set of participants reacted to the intervention in the way of becoming *agentic-empathic*. Other participants with other *contextual conditions* might show a different effect, become more *empathic* and, in consequence, more lenient with their followers. Another sub-sequent research question could be “how to ensure that participants of an empathy intervention like that become *agentic-empathic* and not just *empathic*”.

#### [SQ10](#)

The participants did not report any interactions with the competition in the interviews, so this question cannot be answered. As they displayed *agentic-empathic* behavior after the intervention, it is doubtful that they would extend too much empathy to the competition as is sometimes brought up as an argument against empathy intervention for leaders.

#### [SQ11](#)

Not much of the data was on the relationship between individual employees. Many of the participants even had a habit of speaking about them as they were a singular entity: “the colleagues”, “them”, etc. P9 and P4 mentioned that with some employees who they were acquainted for a longer time and were in good standing they had more relationship-oriented interchanges before. After the empathy intervention that “invitation”, however, was extended to other employees as well. So, at least in the case of P9 it can be, that the differential treatment of followers according their LMX status somewhat subsided. One of his employees who did not accept this “invitation” to a better leader-follower-relationship was fired, however.

#### [SQ12](#)

Not that much data is available to answer that question in depth. As in SQ11, there were some examples of the extension of the leader’s attention and support to all team members. More detailed questions could be asked regarding that topic in other research projects.

#### [SQ13](#)

The effects, reported in section 6.3.1.2, point to answering that question with “yes”. While P5 has talked more about personal victories, the accounts of P3, P4, and P9 were all going in that direction. Especially P9 noticed a dramatic change in the departmental climate when he changed his style incrementally to becoming an *agentic-empathic leader* rather than being a task-oriented manager. Both, the *agentic* and the *empathic* behavioral components seemed to have a positive effect on the group climate.

#### [SQ14](#)

No data to answer this question. It would be an interesting research question considering the drastic increase of virtual teams and the inherent difficulties of managing them. It is thinkable, that an *agentic-empathic style* could make life for leading virtual teams easier.

### [SQ15](#)

None of the participants reported any difficulties in this regard. It might be, that being *agentic-empathic* helped to not just be reduced to the role of care-taker on whom people would dump their problems. All the “affected” participants reported spending more time listening empathically to their colleagues than before but none reported instances of *personal distress* afterwards.

### [SQ16](#)

Unfortunately, none of the participants has taken up such a practice. Some of them addressed the subject in the interview but apart from mentioning that they are highly interested, they have not tried it out. Having more time at hand at the intervention would probably be helpful to acquaint the participants with these techniques better.

### Conclusion

The grounded theory of the *emergence of an agentic-empathic leadership style* can provide answers to the main research questions and to many of the sub-subsequent research questions which were formulated with prior expectations of results.

## 7.4 Limitations

The limitations of this study have been partly accounted for by limiting the range of the theory. Other limitations (as mentioned in section 5.3.1) must be considered, too, when evaluating the results of this study. Unfortunately, some of the planned measures to increase the quality of the data could not be put into practice. I simply did not have the time to send all the transcripts to the participants for checking and for discussing the results of the first round of coding with them. I am also quite sure, that most of the participants would have had the same issue as many leaders don't have that much time to spare. *Respondent validation* from the list of [quality criteria](#) was not a given. The same is true for *Triangulation* and *Comparison*. *Discrepant evidence* and *negative case*, however, were not hard to find.

The richness of the data somewhat attenuated the lack of participants validation as listening to the audio files while reading the transcripts helped me greatly immersing myself in the context of the data. The suggested *Quasi-statistics* also had a very favorable effect on understanding the data and moving to the next level of coding. Many of my thoughts have been written down in this work to display my *Reflexivity* and increase *Authenticity* (Lincoln and Guba 2011). The empathy intervention has been described in detail to increase *Reliability* by making it easier for researchers to duplicate this experimental set-up.

Employing different facilitators, interviewers, and coders for the research project would have also eliminated some of the limitations by reducing the possibilities of [distortions](#). The possible influence of the persona of the researcher on the participants was reflected at various places but cannot be ruled out and is hard to identify. Transparency by quoting as many segments of the interviews as possible and making access to the file containing the codings and the memos possible will attenuate these distortions to a certain extent and boost *Confirmability* as well as *Credibility* (Lincoln and Guba 2006, 2011).

Not much of the *consensus* method (Hill et al. 1997) could be applied due lack of contact with knowledgeable colleagues as most of this dissertation was finished during semester break. However, my wife who holds an MA in ethnology could always be presented with the slowly emerging parts of the theory and helped me greatly with her feedback. I did not have to reach consensus in this case being solely responsible for the work but got good indications of being on the right track.

Further limitations to the study are the limited variety of the sample, which further research should avoid (see [below](#)). All participants signed up for the study out of a personal interest in the subject matter of empathy/emotional intelligence. The data also lacked the perspectives of the followers (see [below](#)). The results are therefore limited insofar as participants could have altogether contorted perceptions of their own behavior and how they are perceived by their followers. Future research under more favorable conditions is certainly warranted. While qualitative research itself amounts to much more than just exploratory studies, dissertational research done single-handedly might not. Regardless of the limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the effects of an empathy/emotional intelligence intervention on the quality of leadership behavior.

## 7.5 Future research

Many ideas for future research have already been mentioned above. At this point, they will be summarized for the sake of completion. Considering the limited range of the theory, attempting to extend it by findings participants with different *contextual conditions* would be a priority. Future research would profit from assessing some of the *contextual conditions* of the participants using well-established psychometric test to quantify the relationship between trait *agreeableness*, *conditioned* and perceived *helplessness*. Testing the empathy level before and after the intervention would also yield interesting results as well as thinking of measures to quantify *agentic-empathic leadership behavior*. The perspective of the followers has not been the focus of this study, but is, of course, equally important for the building of a refined theory as well as for the emergence of a leadership behavior like *agentic-empathic leadership*. Future research could attempt to inquire into that perspective as has been the focus of LMX research in the past.

A broader range of participants from a variety of backgrounds would also help. This research project is limited to leaders from middle-management and small enterprises (including the practice of a general practitioner) who volunteered to participate. It might very well be, that the effect of displaying *agentic-empathic* behavior is not limited to those leaders and not limited to the professional sphere. I am convinced that many people would profit from a balanced behavior like that. As many Western cultures, and especially the German one, are described as *either-or* in contrast to *as-well-as* cultures (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2004), finding this balance between *agency* and *empathy* might be more of a Western struggle. Extending the research to other cultural contexts would be very beneficial. Although initially the female-male ratio of the participants was 6:5, for various reasons only one female participant was eligible to make the data pool for the analysis which ended up having a ratio of 1:5. To get a

better understanding of the influence of gender on the results would be preferable in future research.

In this qualitative study many of the strengths of this approach have worked in favor of theory building. I don't think that with quantitative methods this change in leadership quality would have been noticeable. That being said, quantitative methods would come in handy to elaborate the theory and put it to many other experimental tests. A blended approach right from the start would have been the optimum.

The objective of this work was to show how the quality of leadership behavior changes after an empathy intervention and that objective was met by the theory of the *emergence of an agentic-empathic leadership style*. The effects of this leadership style, however, have only been inferred from the data the participants have given in the interviews. While the description of their own experiences with an *agentic-empathic leadership style* and the perceived reactions of their followers is very valuable, more research would be helpful to get a better understanding of the effects of such a leadership style.

Moreover, the whole concept of *agentic-empathic leadership* needs much more theoretical groundwork than this dissertation is able to provide. The intersection with *transformative leadership* (see 4.2) seems to be quite large and there have been attempts to describe *emotional leadership* (see 4.6). Exactly how *agentic-empathic leadership* fits in there and whether it should be categorized as a leadership style of its own or just as an aspect of *transformative leadership* or *emotional leadership* could be a good topic for future research projects.

## 7.6 Summary of the discussion

This research project will add to the research on empathy/emotional intelligence and leadership by providing answers to the question what happens when the emotional intelligence of leaders is not seen as a constant, but measures are taken to increase it. The emergence of agentic-empathic leadership behavior was identified by qualitative research methods in 4 out of 6 participants when they actively shaped their own behavior, their respective organizational and team cultures, and their followers' behavior using the behavioral emotional intelligent skills learned in an empathy intervention they have visited. Four to five weeks after the intervention participants were interviewed to inquire into the changes of their leadership behavior. Acting as leaders in an *agentic-empathic style* had several positive effects on the participants as well as on their followers.

The participating leaders reported being calmer in stress-full situations, being able to handle conflicts better, being able to motivate followers who were intractable before, noting a decline of sick days in their department, and improvements of the work climate in their respective teams. With a balance of *agency* and *empathy* which emerged after the intervention and the application of the emotionally intelligent behavioral techniques the participants were able to shape situations in which they perceived their own influence as limited before in accordance with their personal and organizational goals.



Those participants affected by the intervention and experiencing a change in leadership behavior shared a tendency towards the personality trait *agreeableness* which they expressed in the interviews. Furthermore, the affected participants shared experiences of helplessness, i.e. reduced self-efficacy, sometimes typical for middle management in regard to intractable followers, dealings with superiors, dysfunctional teams, and communication skills. These contextual conditions were seen as antecedents for the application of said behavioral emotional intelligent skills moderated by factors like having sufficient time at hand to engage in empathic communication, not be too stressed-out, and the drive to improve oneself. The study shed some light on the conditions for the application of emotional intelligent behavioral skills in leadership situations and the emergence of an agentic-empathic leadership style but would have certainly profited from a greater variety of participants as subjects.

The results are limited by various factors. The number of participants was small to begin with which led to only four participants displaying a change in leadership behavior after the empathy intervention. All participants signed up for participation in the study out of a personal interest in the subject matter, which had to be disclosed to them before the study. A single researcher facilitated the empathy intervention, interviewed the participants, coded the interviews and built the resulting theory without the help of a team. Possible biases resulting from this approach as well as from a qualitative research methodology in general were sought to be attenuated by adhering to quality criteria suggested by experienced qualitative researchers. Nevertheless, the range of the proposed theory is limited by these factors.

As the effects of the emerging leadership style balancing *agency* and *empathy* described by the participants sound very promising for a variety of application in organizations facing a multitude of challenges, future research in that direction is warranted.

## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 Handouts empathy intervention

The following two handouts were distributed at the end of the empathy intervention and translations of the transcribed loving-kindness and self-compassion mediations that I have found on Dr. Kirsten Neff's website: [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org). As she has used these mediations successfully for her studies, it seemed a good idea to present them to the participants of my study as well.

### Mitgeföhls-Meditation

Die Fähigkeit, Mitgeföhls mit sich selbst und anderen zu empfinden, kann durch gezielte Meditationsübungen gestärkt werden. Wissenschaftliche Experimenten haben gezeigt, dass schon recht kurze Übungen dauerhafte Veränderungen im Verhalten auslösen können. Das Mitgeföhls ist sowohl für einen selbst gut als auch für die Person, auf das es gerichtet ist. Es beschützt einen gegen die negativen Folgen von emotionaler Ansteckung. Im Buddhismus und im Yoga hat diese Art der Meditation eine lange Tradition. Auch die Fürbitte in der christlichen Tradition kann als eine Mitgeföhls-Meditation verstanden werden (meine persönliche Interpretation) und sollte daher die gleichen physiologischen Vorteile mit sich bringen.

Im Folgenden habe ich die Meditation der Liebenden-Güte, die auf der Homepage von Dr. Kirsten Neff verwendet wird und in zahlreichen experimentellen Studien verwendet wurde, transkribiert, übersetzt, strukturiert und gekürzt. Es gibt noch eine Vielzahl von anderen Liebenden-Güte-Meditationen (im Buddhismus als Metta-Meditation bekannt), die sicherlich wesentlich näher an den buddhistischen Quellen dran sind.

#### 1. Sich einstimmen

- Atme dreimal tief durch, um die Anspannungen des Tages zu lösen
- Atme ganz normal weiter
- Rufe Dir eine Person, einen/eine Wohltäter/-in, ins Gedächtnis,
  - die immer und unter allen Umständen gut zu Dir war
  - zu der Du eine sehr unkomplizierte Beziehung hast/hattest
  - die Dich unterstützt hat
  - die sich um Dich gekümmert hat
  - mit der Du Dich sicher fühlst.
- Dies kann die Lieblingstante sein, ein Mentor/Mentorin, ein guter Freund/Freundin
- Die Person sollte möglichst leben und Du solltest Dich möglichst nicht sexuell zu der Person angezogen fühlen
- Stelle Dir vor, dass Du genau vor dieser Person sitzt
- Stelle Dir vor,
  - wie sie sich anhört
  - wie sie aussieht
  - wie Du Dich in ihrer Gegenwart fühlst
- Du wirst dieser Person nun Güte und Wohlwollen senden

#### 2. Liebende Güte mit einem Wohltäter/in

- Denke weiter an die eigene Person und adressieren die folgenden Formeln an diese Person leise oder ganz und Gedanken:
  - Mögest Du sicher sein!

- Mögest Du friedlich sein!
- Mögest Du gesund sein!
- Mögest Du die Leichtigkeit des Wohlbefindens erfahren!
- Wiederhole diese Formeln ein zweites Mal
- Wenn es der Person schlecht gehen sollte, kannst Du auch am Ende jeder Formel sagen „wenn es irgend möglich ist“.
- Versuche reale Gefühle der Fürsorge, der Güte, des Mitgefühls für diese Person aufzubringen und auf sie zu lenken.
- Sollte der Geist abschweifen, kehre wieder zu den Formen zurück und versuche Dich wieder zu fokussieren.

### *3. Liebende Güte mit dem/der Wohltäter/-in und einem selbst*

- Nun stelle Dir vor, dass Du vor dieser Person sitzt, für die Du so tiefe Gefühle besitzt und beziehe Dich selbst in Deine Mitgefühls-Meditation mit ein:
  - Mögen Wir sicher sein!
  - Mögen Wir friedlich sein!
  - Mögen Wir gesund sein!
  - Mögen Wir die Leichtigkeit des Wohlbefindens erfahren!
- Mach Dir bewusst, wie sicher und geborgen Du Dich in der Gegenwart dieser Person fühlst
- Wiederhole die Formel noch einmal

### *4. Liebende Güte mit einem Selbst*

- Jetzt richte Deine Aufmerksamkeit nur auf Dich selbst. Erinnere Dich daran, dass auch Du alle bedingungslose Güte, Liebe, Fürsorge wie alle anderen Menschen auch verdient hast:
  - Möge Ich sicher sein!
  - Möge Ich friedlich sein!
  - Möge Ich gesund sein!
  - Möge Ich die Leichtigkeit des Wohlbefindens erfahren!
- Sollte es Dir schwerfallen, Deine Aufmerksamkeit auf Dich selbst zu richten, so kannst Du zum Beispiel auch Deine Hand auf Dein Herz legen.
- Gehe immer wieder zu den Formeln zurück und zu den Gefühlen der Güte und Fürsorge, die ihnen zugrunde liegen.

### *5. Liebende Güte mit einem/einer flüchtigen Bekannte/n*

- Nachdem Du Dir erst selbst Liebende Güte geschenkt hast, denke nun an eine Person, die Du nicht besonders gut kennst. Vielleicht hast Du diese Person auf dem Weg zur Arbeit gesehen, im Supermarkt, etc.
- Obwohl Du diese Person nicht besonders gut kennst, wird sie – wie alle Menschen – in ihrem Leben auch schon Leid erfahren haben und würde gerne von Leid befreit sein. Auch sie – wie alle Lebewesen – verdient Fürsorge und liebende Güte.
- Lasse diese Person von einem geistigen Auge erscheinen und sende ihr liebende Güte:
  - Mögest Du sicher sein!
  - Mögest Du friedlich sein!
  - Mögest Du gesund sein!
  - Mögest Du die Leichtigkeit des Wohlbefindens erfahren!

### *6. Liebende Güte mit dem inneren Kreis*

- Nachdem Du Dir erst selbst Liebende Güte geschenkt hast und dann Deine Aufmerksamkeit auf einen flüchtigen Bekannten richtet hast, weite jetzt den Kreis von Dir ausgehend aus, wobei Du immer ein Teil bleibst.
- Denke dabei an Menschen, die Dir sehr nahestehen und die Du zu Deinem inneren Kreis zählen würdest: Familienmitglieder, Freunde, etc.:
  - Mögen Wir sicher sein!
  - Mögen Wir friedlich sein!
  - Mögen Wir gesund sein!
  - Mögen Wir die Leichtigkeit des Wohlbefindens erfahren!

### *7. Liebende Güte mit immer größer werdenden Kreisen*

- Erweitere jetzt den Kreis der Menschen und Lebewesen, die Du in die Formeln miteinschließt, kontinuierlich weiter:
- Arbeitskollegen, flüchtige Bekannte, Menschen aus Deiner Straße, Menschen aus einem Viertel, Menschen aus Deiner Stadt, Menschen aus seinem Land. Wiederhole jedes Mal die Formeln, bist Du schließlich die gesamte Menschheit miteingeschlossen hast.
  - Mögen Wir sicher sein!
  - Mögen Wir friedlich sein!
  - Mögen Wir gesund sein!
  - Mögen Wir die Leichtigkeit des Wohlbefindens erfahren!

### *8. Liebende Güte mit der ganzen Welt*

- Wenn Du Dich gut damit fühlst, kannst Du auch die ganze Welt mit in die Formel einschließen einschließlich aller Lebewesen, Pflanzen und der Erde selbst:
  - Möge diese Erde und alle Lebewesen sicher sein!
  - Mögen Wir alle in Frieden und Harmonie miteinander leben!
  - Mögen Wir alle gesund sein und blühen und gedeihen!
  - Mögen Wir alle mit natürlicher Leichtigkeit leben!

### *9. Abschluss*

In der letzten Minute der Meditation Ruhe im Gefühl der Fürsorge, Güte und des Mitgefühls, dass Du in Dir erzeugt hast. Versuche es in Deinem Körper zu spüren. Solltest Du das Gefühl noch nicht spüren können, konzentriere Dich auf die Absicht, es spüren zu wollen.

### *10. Hinweise eines Praktizierenden (Sascha Bosetzky)*

- Wird diese Meditation häufig wiederholt, reicht schon die Erinnerung an die Formeln dazu aus, das Gefühl des Mitgefühls in sich zu erzeugen und sich zu beruhigen.
- Während wissenschaftliche Experimente in Doppelblindstudien die Wirksamkeit von schon sehr kurzen Meditationsübungen bewiesen haben, kann regelmäßige Praxis den Nutzen enorm steigern. Diese Meditation hat eine stresssenkende Wirkung, sodass sie sich zum Beispiel nach einem anstrengenden Arbeitstag oder auch davor anbietet.
- Man kann diese Meditation nicht nur im stillen Kämmerlein üben, sondern auch beim Warten auf dem Zug, indem man sich auf Mitreisende konzentriert. Auch beim Autofahren hat man genug Gelegenheiten, die Formeln für sich zu sprechen.

- Wer Fortschritte in dieser Art der Meditation gemacht hat, kann auch Personen in den Kreis miteinschließen, die man als nervig empfindet, über die man sich geärgert hat, die einem Unrecht getan haben oder die man als Feinde empfinden würde. Dabei empfiehlt es sich, den eigenen Gemütszustand stetig zu beobachten, damit man nicht in negative Gedanken abgleitet. Am besten schließt man Personen, mit denen man negative Emotionen assoziiert, erst zum Ende der Meditation hin mit ein, wenn man schon einen tieferen Frieden spürt. Regelmäßig angewandt, merken viele Menschen, dass ihnen der Umgang mit Menschen, über die sie sich früher geärgert haben, leichter fällt.
- Hat man erst einmal die Fähigkeit entwickelt, in relativ kurzer Zeit Gefühle des Mitgefühls und der liebenden Güte zu entwickeln, kann man diese Methode auch Umgang mit herausfordernden Patienten, Vorgesetzten und Mitarbeitern einsetzen. Die Meditation der Liebenden Güte harmonisiert sehr gut mit der Gewaltfreien Kommunikation, da sie die Empathiefähigkeit wirkungsvoll steigern kann.

Entnommen von Dr. Kirsten Neff, [www.selfcompassion.org](http://www.selfcompassion.org). Transkribiert, (frei) übersetzt und kommentiert von Sascha Bosetzky

## Selbst-Empathie-Übung

Wissenschaftliche Studien haben gezeigt, dass es für einen gut ist, wenn man sich selbst so behandelt, wie dies ein wohlmeinender Freund tun würde. Sich selbst Empathie zu zeigen ist nicht das gleiche, wie in Selbstmitleid zu versinken. Selbst-Empathie verneint nicht negative Gefühle und Schmerzen, sondern hilft uns positiv mit ihnen umzugehen und uns selbst die Unterstützung zu geben, die wir im Moment brauchen.

### *1. Dem Gefühl mit Aufmerksamkeit begegnen*

Wenn man sich schlecht fühlt, hilft es nichts, das Gefühl zu verdrängen. Es ist besser, dem Gefühl mit Aufmerksamkeit zu begegnen und anzuerkennen, dass man leidet.

Zum Beispiel kann man die folgenden Sätze zu sich sagen:

- **Dies ist ein Moment des Leidens.**
- **Gerade geht es mir nicht gut.**
- **Gerade fühle ich mich sehr gestresst.**
- **Aua!**

### *2. Leiden, Stress und Schmerz als Teil des Lebens anerkennen*

Obwohl niemand Leiden, Stress und Schmerz haben möchte, sind sie doch ein Teil unseres Lebens. Manche leiden mehr und manche leiden weniger, aber alle Menschen leiden irgendwann einmal. Das eigene Leiden, eigene Stress und der eigene Schmerz sollten in jedoch nicht von anderen isolieren.

Zum Beispiel kann man die folgenden Sätze zu sich sagen:

- **Anderen geht es genauso wie mir.**
- **Ich bin nicht der einzige, der gestresst ist.**
- **Wir alle sind von Zeit zu Zeit am Kämpfen.**

### *3. Sich selbst ein guter Freund sein*

Nachdem Du die Schritte 1 und 2 durchlaufen hast, frage Dich jetzt, wie Du gerne in so einer Situation angesprochen werden möchtest. Wünsche Dir dann selber einfach nur das Beste.

Zum Beispiel kann man die folgenden Sätze zu sich sagen:

- **Möge ich das Mitgefühl bekommen, dass ich brauche!**
- **Möge ich mich so akzeptieren wie ich bin!**
- **Möge ich mir selber vergeben können!**
- **Möge ich stark sein!**
- **Möge ich geduldig sein!**

Übernommen von Dr. Kirsten Neff, [www.selfcompassion.org](http://www.selfcompassion.org)

## 8.2 The code system with memos

### **1 Agentic empathy**

The core idea

#### **1.1 Agentic empathy\Becoming agentic-empathic after helplessness by EI**

When the participant overcomes helplessness by EI and becomes agentic, this trait will be used.

#### **1.2 Agentic empathy\Balancing agency with EI**

This code has the potential of being the core category that will build theory. When participants are balancing agentic and communal behavioral traits by applying EI tools, this code will be used.

### **2 Behavior before the empathy training**

When a participant talks about his behavior before the empathy training, then this is the code for that. This code, of course, only makes sense, when the participant later on talks about behavior that he that she has adapted after the training. But it called also delineate behavior, that is deemed as customary by the participant and which he/she doesn't want to change at all.

#### **2.1 Behavior before the empathy training\Contextual conditions**

#### **2.2 Behavior before the empathy training\Action-Interaction (AI)**

#### **2.3 Behavior before the empathy training\Consequences**

### **3 Changes in Leadership behavior**

The goal here is to get a picture of how the changing process works and how it does change the behavior and the quality of the behavior.

#### **3.1 Changes in Leadership behavior\Contextual conditions**

This code will be used when the participant talks about the contextual conditions for showing Action-Interactions (AI) that are connected with changes in leadership behavior.

#### **3.2 Changes in Leadership behavior\Actions-Interactions (AI)**

What Action-Interaction occurred after behavior was changes?

#### **3.3 Changes in Leadership behavior\Consequences**

What are the consequences of the change in leadership behavior?

### **4 Personality traits**

#### **4.1 Personality traits\Emotional stable**

The participant reports stable feelings.

#### **4.2 Personality traits\Emotional instable**

The participant reports emotional instability.

#### **4.3 Personality traits\Helplessness**

When the participant describes situation of helplessness - learned or situational. It can also be organizational that the participant feels the weight of the rules of an institution or tradition. The code also applies when the participant experiences instances of great interdependence with another person in the sense of what E. Schein has described as situational humility (Schein 2013).

#### **4.4 Personality traits\Agentic**

When the participant takes charge and does something. Not just reactive but actively changing something. The direction of change being EI leadership.

#### **4.5 Personality traits\Agreeableness**

When a participant shows signs of having the personality traits of agreeableness.

### **5 Inner experiencing of the participant**

#### **5.1 Inner experiencing of the participant\Having fun**

The participant describes having fun.

#### **5.2 Inner experiencing of the participant\Neutral**

The participant reports a neutral feeling.

#### **5.3 Inner experiencing of the participant\Contentment**

When the participant reports feelings of contentment, this code will be used.

#### **5.4 Inner experiencing of the participant\Emotional episode during interview**

When the participant is becoming audibly emotional during the interview.

#### **5.5 Inner experiencing of the participant\Rumination**

This code is for instances where the participant cannot stop thinking about stuff that has happened at work and is constantly mulling over thoughts.

### **6 The empathy intervention**

Everything pertaining to the empathy intervention will be coded here.

#### **6.1 The empathy intervention\Feedback on the empathy intervention**

This code is used when participants are giving direct feedback on the empathy intervention like saying that they enjoyed it, or that they found it a waste of time. Much of this information has been cut off as it was often given when the actual interview was finished. As the transcribing service is expensive, I decided against coding this section. Whether or not they personally liked the intervention is also not really the subject of this research project and says little of the effect (well, it says something about the entertainer qualities of the facilitator!)

#### **6.2 The empathy intervention\Recalling the empathy intervention**

Instances will be listed here where the participant remembers content from the empathy intervention or is referring to the empathy intervention.



## **7 Empathy**

This code represents already a code of a higher category as it subsumes the different empathy categories. It will be used when participants are talking about empathy in general. The sub- categories will be used, when one or other of the phenomena subsumed under empathy are being addressed.

### **7.1 Empathy\Empathic accuracy**

This code is for instances where the participant wonders whether he/she is correct with this empathic perception of the other person. Or, where there are instances where it becomes obvious to the participant that he/she has been correct or incorrect.

### **7.2 Empathy\Perspective-taking**

This code is used when instances of perspective-taking are being found in that interview.

### **7.3 Empathy\Self-empathy**

The participant is showing awareness of own emotions and feelings, describes them actively and hints at them.

### **7.4 Empathy\Other-Empathy**

Instances, where the participant shows empathy for others.

## **8 Behavioral EI skill set**

### **8.1 Behavioral EI skill set\Others expect EI from participant**

This code is used when the participant has the impression that others (employees, private contacts) are expecting him/her to show EI behavior. The motivation to develop in that area, however, does not need to be shown by the participant to be assigned this code. *Motivation is expressed to train EI skills* will be used in for these instances.

### **8.2 Behavioral EI skill set\Motivation is expressed to train EI skills**

This code is used, when the participant realizes that he/she needs more training complying a behavioral empathic skill set while applying it in a real-life situation. This also includes a visible motivation of the participant to stay put and work on the skill set.

### **8.3 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style**

#### **8.3.1 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Showing EI leadership style**

This code will be used, when the participants are pointing at a leadership style that can be called empathic/emotionally intelligent, i.e. when they try to lead subordinates in a way that incorporates different empathy techniques (like the ones learnt in the empathy intervention), when they pay special attention to empathy/EI and how the other person and they themselves feel and when they regulate their own emotions in an empathic way, i.e. not suppressing them or avoiding situations where empathy should be shown. The instances of empathic/EI leadership style should be different from other leadership behaviors the participants have talked about.

#### **8.3.2 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Self-reflection**

This code is used when the participants is describing instances of self-reflection or when it becomes obvious in the process of coding that the participant has been reflecting him-/herself.

#### **8.3.3 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Emotional regulation**

This code is for instances where the participant is describing a process of regulating emotions by using different strategies.

#### **8.3.4 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Implementation of EI leadership behavior**

This code will be used when participants described how they are implementing new behavioral routines that are more in accord with emotional intelligence and empathy.

#### **8.3.5 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Leveling out LMX**

Among the research questions is also the question how empathic leadership behavior influences differences in LMX. This code will be used when the participant gives an example how differences in LMX are leveled out after the intervention.

#### **8.3.6 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Seeking shared contentment**

The idea to this code came when coding P9's interview para#44. The code is used when the participant is not just seeking his/her own contentment but a mutual, shared contentment of the leader-member-dyad and/or the whole team. Contentment is going beyond the satisfaction of having met an objective and describes a less ephemeral state of mind.

#### **8.3.7 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Caring for group emotion**

This code will be used for instances where the participant takes responsibility for the group emotions and actively tries to improve it.

#### **8.3.8 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Considering fairness**

This code will be used when fairness is considered by the participant. This consideration should be in regard to the subordinates or colleagues to stick to the topic of this dissertation. I have been thinking, whether this code actually belongs to the *Behavioral EI skill set* category or to another category. However, as being unfair definitely raises a lot of emotions in Germany, being fair is a good way of creating good group emotions and motivating employees.

#### **8.3.9 Behavioral EI skill set\EI leadership style\Showing consideration**

The code *Showing consideration* entails taking action that considers the situation of an employee and entails having gauged his/her situation with empathy before. That action also means a certain extra effort, that one has to take upon oneself or one has to go a bit out of one's way.

#### **8.4 Behavioral EI skill set\LKM and Self-empathy meditation**

This code will be used when in the interview the part of the empathy interview is addressed that dealt with LKM and self-empathy.

#### **8.5 Behavioral EI skill set\NVC**

This code will be used as a parent code. When a participant talks about the process as a whole, this code will be used. When the participant only talks about one of the four subcategories of the process then the relevant sub-code will be used. When a participant talks about two or more, then the parent code will be used. It turned out that participants often picked only one of the sub-categories of the NVC process and focused their attention on that one.

#### **8.5.1 Behavioral EI skill set\NVC\Observing without judging**

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It has become clear, that it might be a good idea to differentiate the non-violent communication process further. After splitting sharing of emotions and needs, I decided to also split observing without judging from the parent category NVC.

### **8.5.2 Behavioral EI skill set\NVC\Sharing of emotions**

This code is being used when the participant is sharing emotions and needs him-/herself.

### **8.5.3 Behavioral EI skill set\NVC\Sharing needs**

### **8.5.4 Behavioral EI skill set\NVC\Sharing requests**

## **8.6 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication**

### **8.6.1 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication\Mock-Empathy**

When the participant thinks, that empathy tools have been applied, but there is little indication from the context that this has actually happened, that the participant has developed a sufficient understanding of what empathy actually is, or what the EI tools actually are.

### **8.6.2 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication\Showing empathic communication**

This code will be used when the participant is showing a communication style that is empathic but cannot be characterized to be inspired by the specific communication techniques like NVC or *empathic paraphrasing*.

### **8.6.3 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication\Improving empathic communication**

This code is for instances where the participant is trying to improve specifically empathic/EI communication skills (and is not referring the whole set of EI leadership skills).

### **8.6.4 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication\Difficulties applying Empathic communication techniques**

When the participant describes situation or persons where it is difficult to apply empathic communication techniques or when the participant generally talks about his/her difficulties applying them.

### **8.6.5 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication\Empathic paraphrasing**

The code is used when *empathic paraphrasing* as discussed in the training intervention is mentioned by the participant either *as it is* or in the context of applying this tool in a leadership or other role.

### **8.6.6 Behavioral EI skill set\Empathic communication\Giving attention**

This code is used, when the participants recounts instances gives his/her full attention to another person. While this is not directly connected with communication, it is directly connected to empathy.

## **8.7 Behavioral EI skill set\Compassion instead of personal distress**

Instances where the participant tries to distinguish between compassion or personal distress and tries to show compassion.

## **8.8 Behavioral EI skill set\Self-assessment of empathy skills**

How does the participant assess his-/her skills to apply EI skills on others and on self? This code will be used when the participant has been asked directly in the interview to assess his-/herself or when the assessment is done as part of a self-reflectory process. This code and *self-reflection* overlap somewhat. However, self-reflection doesn't necessarily lead to an assessment of one's EI skills. For this instance, the code will be used.

## **9 Behavior as a manager/leader**

This code is for participants who show leadership or management behavior towards other persons.

### **9.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Asserting dominance as leader**

This code is used when the participant shows behavior that is meant to assert his/her position as leader.

### **9.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Critical incident as manager**

This code will be assigned for critical incidents at work either with the participants as subordinate or in a managerial position.

### **9.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Motivating employees**

This code will be used for instances when the participant thinks about motivation of employees - either actively increasing it or worrying to not demotivate them.

#### **9.3.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Motivating employees\Promoting self-organization**

This code will be assigned when the participant promotes self-organized work among employees.

#### **9.3.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Motivating employees\Motivating by bonuses**

This code will be used when the participant mentions attempts to motivate employees by monetary means.

#### **9.3.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Motivating employees\Showing appreciation verbally**

This code is being used, when appreciation is shown to a subordinate.

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Showing appreciation is, of course, also a way of giving feedback to others. So, this code is not that different from the other code "Giving feedback to others". Maybe this can be shown somewhere.

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The appreciation is being shown verbally as opposed to other means of showing appreciation.

### **9.4 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general**

This code is for instances when the participant is communicating in the respective role within the respective organization but not with subordinates. For that there's a special code.

#### **9.4.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Delegating tasks**

Another facet of leadership behavior: delegating tasks. This code will be assigned when this behavior is shown or described.

#### **9.4.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Appealing to reason**

This code will be used, when in a conversation the participant is trying to use the reason or logic to convince/motivate another party (be it a patient or an employee) to take up a certain behavior.

#### **9.4.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Communicating with patients**

A special code introduced for the GP.

#### **9.4.4 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Assertive communication**

I was looking for the opposite of empathic communication. Assertive communication is certainly not the opposite. It is more assertive to the point of being inconsiderate to the needs of others and even dominating a conversation.

#### **9.4.5 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Describing dealings with superior**

Just incidents with the superior are described that are not relevant for the topic at hand - at least at first sight. Nevertheless, the passages are coded for later screening.

#### **9.4.6 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Communicating with third parties**

This code is for professional communication as a manager but third-party persons.

#### **9.4.7 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Communicating with colleagues**

This code is for instances where the participant is communicating with somebody from his/her organization that isn't a superior or subordinate.

#### **9.4.8 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Communicating with superiors**

When the participant talks about communication with her/his superior, this code will be used.

#### **9.4.9 Behavior as a manager/leader\Communicating in general\Communicating with subordinates**

This code is especially for instances, where the discipline is communicating with subordinates.

#### **9.5 Behavior as a manager/leader\Showing concern**

This code is used as parent code when the participant displays concern for different areas.

##### **9.5.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Showing concern\Showing concern for own matters**

The participant display concern for particularistic interest. The interest might be in line with organizational interest but does not necessarily have to be.

##### **9.5.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Showing concern\Showing concern for employee(s) and others**

This code is assigned when the participant shows concern for an employee and is interested in his/her welfare beyond organizational or self-interest.

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To not produce too many codes, this code will also be used when P8 shows concern for patients as the psychological mechanics are similar to showing concern for employees. This is not a leadership situation, of course, but it is a professional duty of the participant to show concern and such outside parochial feelings.

##### **9.5.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Showing concern\Showing concern for organizational matters**

The participant shows concern for matters regarding the organization as a whole. He/she has the organizational welfare (economic or otherwise) in mind.

#### **9.6 Behavior as a manager/leader\Goal as manager**

This code is to be used when the participant is explicitly talking about goals as a manager/leader. These goals can have something to do with the topic of this dissertation but do not necessarily have to.

#### **9.7 Behavior as a manager/leader\Adaptive leadership behavior**

This code is to be assigned when the participant tells about leadership behavior that is being adapted to accommodate different employee and their idiosyncrasies.

#### **9.8 Behavior as a manager/leader\Describing own company, employees, superiors**

When the participant describes their organization, their employees, the structure of the workforce, the kind of business etc., this code will be used.

#### **9.9 Behavior as a manager/leader\Leadership issues**

### **9.9.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Leadership issues\Sandwich experiences**

When participant experience the situation of being in the sandwich position of the middle management and describe feelings that are attributed with this experience.

### **9.9.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Leadership issues\Developing as leader (not EI)**

This code is for instances where the participant is asked to develop as a manager/leader but not in an EI way but more in a regular way.

### **9.9.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Leadership issues\Attitude as manager**

The participant tells about his attitude as a manager.

### **9.9.4 Behavior as a manager/leader\Leadership issues\Feeling authentic as leader**

Instances, where the participant feels authentic as leader.

### **9.9.5 Behavior as a manager/leader\Leadership issues\Reflecting LMX**

This code is being used, when the participant reflects on the leader-member-exchange with his/her subordinates.

### **9.10 Behavior as a manager/leader\Developing potential in subordinates**

When the participant talks about developing an employee, evaluates his/her potential and wonders what a good path in the future for this person would be, this would be the code. It goes a bit in the direction of "Showing concern" but is more specific oriented towards a corporate path.

### **9.11 Behavior as a manager/leader\Assessing behavior**

#### **9.11.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Assessing behavior\Being assessed by others**

#### **9.11.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Assessing behavior\Assessing own behavior**

##### **9.11.2.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Assessing behavior\Assessing own behavior\Liking one's own behavior**

This is for instances, where the participant likes this/her own behavior and does not find fault in it. It also means an area, where the participant things that he/she does not need to improve.

##### **9.11.2.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Assessing behavior\Assessing own behavior\Seeing one's own behavior critical**

This code is for instances when the participant is seeing his/her behavior critical. It is not yet rumination but could turn into that when it happens for too long. It could also be an incentive to improve.

#### **9.11.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Assessing behavior\Assessing other behavior**

Judging, assessing other behavior will be coded with this code. When in the interview the participant starts to form an opinion about another person.

### **9.12 Behavior as a manager/leader\Feedback**

#### **9.12.1 Behavior as a manager/leader\Feedback\Communicating expectations**

A form of feedback when the participant communicates his/her expectations to the subordinate.

### **9.12.2 Behavior as a manager/leader\Feedback\Giving feedback to others**

This code is for instances when the participant gives feedback to others (subordinates, superiors, colleagues).

### **9.12.3 Behavior as a manager/leader\Feedback\Getting feedback from others**

This code is for instances where the participant gets feedback for his/her behavior or is giving others feedback.

## **10 Antecedents for applying an EI tool**

Antecedents (physical, emotional, psychological) that have to be met before an empathic communication tool can be applied? The idea for this code came when I was coding the interview with P3 for the first time, and she mentioned in paragraph three, that one has to collect oneself, before these can be applied.

The question is whether this code would rather be named Antecedents for applying empathic behavior. Having learned empathic behavioral tools seems to be a precondition at least for P5 to even behave empathic. In the context of this research project they all have learned empathic tools, so screening the interviews for conditions might make sense.

### **10.1 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Easy access to the topic**

The participant got an easy access of the topic of EI and empathy and is a quick learner of the skills.

### **10.2 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Being relaxed and not stressed-out**

Not being stressed-out and in a calmer state, could be another antecedent for applying EI tools. *Concentration* is a bit different from that.

### **10.3 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Having a good relationship**

Having a good relationship with the person one is interacting with, could also be an antecedent for applying EI tools. When a participant reports that as a precondition for applying an EI tool, this code will be chosen.

### **10.4 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Drive to improve communication skills**

When a participant expresses or indicates the drive to improve his/her communication skills, this code will be used.

### **10.5 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Paying attention to empathy**

When a participant reports that he/she paid attention to empathy before the training intervention, this code will be used.

### **10.6 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Worrying how one's behavior is being perceived by others**

When a participant reports worrying how others perceive his/her behavior and wants to appear agreeable to others, this code will be used.

### **10.7 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Being self-reflected**

When a participant reports, that he/she has done a considerable amount of self-reflection before applying EI tools, this code will be used.

### **10.8 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Feeling responsible**

The code will be used when a participant reports applying an EI tool out of a feeling of responsibility for a situation, for colleagues or for a project.

#### **10.9 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Having time at hand**

The code will be used when a participant reports needing time to apply an EI tool.

#### **10.10 Antecedents for applying an EI tool\Concentration**

When a participant reports being a state of concentration and attentiveness before applying an EI tool or needing it, this code will be assigned.

### **11 Dual role trainer/interviewer**

This code is used whenever my dual role as trainer/facilitator and interviewer comes into play. Either, because I am asked a direct question by the interviewer or I change roles purposefully to clarify, to motivate, to teach.

### **12 Effects of the empathy training intervention**

When the behavior has changed after the training, then this is the code for that. Basically, what is different or not after the training.

#### **12.1 Effects of the empathy training intervention\No effect reported**

This code will be used when the participant reports that the empathy intervention as a whole or the empathic communications techniques taught in the training do not have had an effect on either him-/herself or on the subordinates.

#### **12.2 Effects of the empathy training intervention\Effects on the participant her-/himself**

This code was added after the first round of open coding to specify the *Effects of the empathy training intervention*. It is used for instances when the participant is talking about instances where the empathy intervention had an effect on just him-/herself and no on others (like team members etc.).

#### **12.3 Effects of the empathy training intervention\Frequency of application**

How often does a participant apply a tool (or other content) from the training? When a participant talks about the frequency of application, this code will be used. The frequency has to be >0, otherwise the code *No effects reported* will be used.

#### **12.4 Effects of the empathy training intervention\Effects on the participant AND others/ or on others**

What are the effects of the empathy skills learnt during the intervention? Here different effects are summarized. The code will be used when the effects concern not only the participants but also the whole team, superiors, colleagues etc. It is a self-assessment of the effects, of course, and depends on the personal observation of the participant which I then code accordingly.

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This code could also turn into "How leadership behavior changed" as there is no code for this category up to now.

#### **12.5 Effects of the empathy training intervention\Feelings resulting from applying empathy tools**

What emotions and feelings does the participant experience when applying empathic communication tools from the training? This code will be used for instances when the participant describes the emotional effects of the application of the tools.

#### **12.6 Effects of the empathy training intervention\Experiencing obstacles applying training content**



This code will be used when the participant runs into difficulties applying the tools taught in the empathy intervention. These are not negative experiences (none of the participants reported those), just obstacles in the implementation.

### **13 Motivational aspects**

#### **13.1 Motivational aspects\Motivation to apply training skills**

The participant expresses a motivation to apply what has been learnt in the training and expresses it by either voicing it directly or hinting at it.

#### **13.2 Motivational aspects\Seeks situations where empathy is important**

This is a pre-conceived code which somewhat violates the spirit of GT. But when proof-reading my dissertation, I stumbled upon a passage (section 2.9.1) where I asked whether an empathy intervention increases the motivation of leaders to seek situation where empathic arousal is likely. I then remembered the interview with P5 where he told me that he does not consciously avoid conflicts anymore after the training as he feels well equipped by empathic communication tools to handle such conflicts.

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## 10 Notes

<sup>1</sup> While this definition excludes other phenomena, at other places Hoffman stresses the connection between emotional and cognitive empathy (1984).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the differences between trait empathy and state empathy see 2.8

<sup>3</sup> Which they define as the imitation of emotional expressions as opposed to the imitation of behavior (Hess and Fischer 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Not only human being evoke empathy but also animals (Taylor and Signal 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Motor empathy, on the other hand, happens in the blink of an eye and does not exert a lot of costs on the empathizer (see 2.3)

<sup>6</sup> It would also be interesting to see, to what extent in-group members are purposefully avoiding knowledge acquisition about out-group member to be able to maintain their counterempathic attitude towards them.

<sup>7</sup> For a definition of *emotional intelligence* and why this concept is used from this point on, please see 4.5.1.

<sup>8</sup> Please note that this is my personal interpretation of the contents of *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Yoga-sutra*, both works I have studied as a yoga practitioner as well as a university student of Indology in the original Sanskrit.

<sup>9</sup> The review on the literature shown (see 4.5.1) has shown that the concept of empathy and *emotional intelligence* in the narrow definition are basically congruent. An empathy development program will automatically increase many aspects of the participant's *emotional intelligence*. The training program as planned here will cover all the aspects of EI in the narrow definition by Davies (1998).

<sup>10</sup> A concern voiced by one of the participants

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, I do not have the chance to extend my interviews to the whole team, which I hope to do at another time.

<sup>12</sup> My translation and paraphrasing

<sup>13</sup> The term has been picked up from Hill et al. (1997) as translation of *Forschungsfeld*, the term originally used.

<sup>14</sup> Again, my interpretation with no claim to generality.

<sup>15</sup> Empathy and *emotional intelligence* are considered to be *feminine* subjects by quite a lot of German men. I cannot present studies to substantiate this claim but speak from experiences in teaching soft skills to IT specialists, electrical and mechanical engineers, who are working in male dominated environment. Communication is often regarded as the deliverance of factual information that helps to solve a tangible problem.

<sup>16</sup> Leaders of large corporations might be an exception according to Dutton (2014) and Hare (2005). But having these participate in this study seems unlikely at this point. Someone, who plans to do that in the future, might have them tested by a psychiatrist before.

<sup>17</sup> At least that seems to be the case in Germany where BMT is in the curriculum of many train-the-trainer-programs.

<sup>18</sup> As the training program was held in German, the slides were in German, too. I have not translated them but have explained the content of the slide in the description of the element.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.presencing.com/social-presencing-theater>

<sup>20</sup> Rosenberg's (2013) words

<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, I have heard this from participants of other workshops I have given, too. It might be worthwhile to explore the half-life-of-knowledge for interventions like that to determine when a refresher becomes necessary. Immediately after the training, participants have voiced their enthusiasm and their resolve to use this communication technique and the associated mindset frequently in work and private life.

<sup>22</sup> This code is used when participants are giving direct feedback on the empathy intervention like saying that they enjoyed it, or that they found it a waste of time. Much of this information has been cut off as it was often given when the actual interview was finished. As the transcribing service is expensive, I decided against coding this section. Whether or not they personally liked the intervention is also not really the subject of this research project and says little of the effect (well, it says something about the entertainer qualities of the facilitator!)

<sup>23</sup> Instances will be listed here where the participant remembers content from the empathy intervention or is referring to the empathy intervention.

<sup>24</sup> This code is used for instances where the participant wonders whether he/she is correct with his/her empathic perception of the other person. Or, where there are instances where it becomes obvious to the participant that he/she has been correct or incorrect.

<sup>25</sup> This code is used when instances of perspective-taking are being found in that interview.

<sup>26</sup> The participant is showing awareness of own emotions and feelings, describes them actively, or hints at them.

<sup>27</sup> Instances, where the participant shows empathy for others.

<sup>28</sup> This code is used when the participant has the impression that others (employees, private contacts) are expecting him/her to show EI behavior. The motivation to develop in that area, however, does not need to be shown by the participant to be assigned this code. Motivation is expressed to train EI skills will be used in for these instances.

<sup>29</sup> This code is used, when the participant realizes that he/she needs more training complying a behavioral empathic skill set while applying it in a real-life situation. This also includes a visible motivation of the participant to stay put and work on the skill set.

<sup>30</sup> This code will be used, when the participants are pointing at a leadership style that can be called empathic/emotionally intelligent, i.e. when they try to lead subordinates in a way that incorporates different empathy techniques (like the ones learnt in the empathy intervention), when they pay special attention to empathy/EI and how the other person and they themselves feel and when they regulate their own emotions in an empathic way, i.e. not suppressing them or avoiding situations where empathy should be shown. The instances of empathic/EI leadership style should be different from other leadership behaviors the participants have talked about.

<sup>31</sup> This code is used when the participants is describing instances of self-reflection or when it becomes obvious in the process of coding that the participant has been reflecting him-/herself.

<sup>32</sup> This code is for instances where the participant is describing a process of regulating emotions by using different strategies.

<sup>33</sup> This code will be used when participants described how they are implementing new behavioral routines that are more in accord with emotional intelligence and empathy.

<sup>34</sup> Among the research questions is also the question how empathic leadership behavior influences differences in LMX. This code will be used when the participant gives an example how differences in LMX are leveled out after the intervention.

<sup>35</sup> The idea to this code came when coding P9's interview (paragraph #44). The code is used when the participant is not just seeking his/her own contentment but a mutual, shared contentment of the leader-member-dyad and/or the whole team. Contentment is going beyond the satisfaction of having met an objective and describes a less ephemeral state of mind.

<sup>36</sup> This code will be used for instances where the participant takes responsibility for the group emotions and actively tries to improve it.

<sup>37</sup> This code will be used when fairness is considered by the participant. This consideration should be in regard to the subordinates or colleagues to stick to the topic of this dissertation. I have been thinking, whether this code actually belongs to the Behavioral EI skill set category or to another category. However, as being unfair definitely raises a lot of emotions in Germany, being fair is a good way of creating good group emotions and motivating employees.

<sup>38</sup> The code Showing consideration entails taking action that considers the situation of an employee and entails having gauged his/her situation with empathy before. That action also means a certain extra effort, that one has to take upon oneself or one has to go a bit out of one's way.

<sup>39</sup> This code will be used when in the interview the part of the empathy interview is addressed that dealt with LKM and self-empathy.

<sup>40</sup> This code will be used as a parent code. When a participant talks about the process as a whole, this code will be used. When the participant only talks about one of the four subcategories of the process then the relevant sub-code will be used. When a participant talks about two or more, then the parent code will be used. It turned out that participants often picked only one of the sub-categories of the NVC process and focused their attention on that one.

<sup>41</sup> When the participant thinks, that empathy tools have been applied, but there is little indication from the context that this has actually happened, that the participant has developed a sufficient understanding of what empathy actually is, or what the EI tools actually are.

<sup>42</sup> This code will be used when the participant is showing a communication style that is empathic but cannot be characterized to be inspired by the specific communication techniques like NVC or empathic paraphrasing.

<sup>43</sup> This code is for instances where the participant is trying to improve specifically empathic/EI communication skills (and is not referring the the whole set of EI leadership skills).

<sup>44</sup> This code is used, when the participant describes situation or persons where it is difficult to apply empathic communication techniques or when the participant generally talks about his/her difficulties applying them.

<sup>45</sup> The code is used when empathic paraphrasing as discussed in the training intervention is mentioned by the participant either as it is or in the context of applying this tool in a leadership or other role.

<sup>46</sup> This code is used, when the participants recounts instances gives his/her full attention to another person. While this is not directly connected with communication, it is directly connected to empathy.

<sup>47</sup> Instances where the participant tries to distinguish between compassion or personal distress and makes an effort to show compassion.

<sup>48</sup> How does the participant assess his-/her skills to apply EI skills on others and on self. This code will be used when the participant has been asked directly in the interview to assess his-/herself or when the assessment is done as part of a self-reflection process. This code and self-reflection overlap somewhat. However, self-reflection doesn't necessarily lead to an assessment of one's EI skills. For this instance, the code will be used.

<sup>49</sup> This code will be used when the participant reports that the empathy intervention as a whole or the empathic communications techniques taught in the training do not have had an effect on either him-/herself or on the subordinates.

<sup>50</sup> This code was added after the first round of open coding to specify the Effects of the empathy training intervention. It is used for instances when the participant is talking about instances where the empathy intervention had an effect on just him-/herself and no on others (like team members etc.).

<sup>51</sup> How often does a participant apply a tool (or other content) from the training? When a participant talks about the frequency of application, this code will be used. The frequency has to be >0, otherwise the code No effects reported will be used.

<sup>52</sup> What are the effects of the empathy skills learnt during the intervention? Here different effects are summarized. The code will be used when the effects concern not only the participants but also the whole team, superiors, colleagues etc. It is a self-assessment of the effects, of course, and depends on the personal observation of the participant which I then code accordingly.

<sup>53</sup> What emotions and feelings does the participant experience when applying empathic communication tools from the training? This code will be used for instances when the participant describes the emotional effects of the application of the tools.

<sup>54</sup> This code will be used when the participant runs into difficulties applying the tools taught in the empathy intervention. These are not negative experiences (none of the participants reported those), just obstacles in the application.

<sup>55</sup> The participant expresses a motivation to apply what has been learnt in the training and expresses it by either voicing it directly or hinting at it.

<sup>56</sup> This is a pre-conceived code which somewhat violates the spirit of GT. But when proof-reading my dissertation, I stumbled upon a passage (section 2.9.1) where I asked whether an empathy intervention increases the motivation of leaders to seek situation where empathic arousal is likely. I then remembered the interview with P5 where he told me that he does not consciously avoid conflicts anymore after the training as he feels well equipped by empathic communication tools to handle such conflicts.

<sup>57</sup> „Und da würde ich sagen, habe ich schon vorher relativ gute Antennen für gehabt.“

<sup>58</sup> „Für jeden einzelnen Mitarbeiter eigentlich ein bisschen mehr Zeit, um einzuplanen, um Dinge auch persönlich zu besprechen, um dann auch eine Reaktion zu finden. Wenn ich Arbeit verteile an der Reaktion herauszufinden, ist der jetzt da vor der Überlastung oder steht der gerade bei der Langeweile.“

<sup>59</sup> „Das gleiche natürlich auch, wenn wir die weiteren Steps der gewaltfreien Kommunikation nehmen. Bei den Gefühlen, zum Beispiel, dass ich versuche da auch wieder die/ ja den Gegenüber, ja, wieder zu beobachten in dem Gefühl und nicht: Mensch, was bist denn du nun schon wieder so zickig, obwohl das vielleicht gar nicht zickig ist, sondern vielleicht habe ich irgendetwas mein Gefühl nicht richtig gewertet und da habe ich für mich immer mal wieder gemerkt: Hoppla, vielleicht liegt es auch an mir.“

<sup>60</sup> „Dass man auf die Gefühle der Mitarbeiter eingeht. Dass man merkt, heute geht es nicht so. Dass man da/ es hat auch eine/ ich weiß nicht, ob es eine gewisse Fairness ist. Aber ob es/ dass man auch auf die Leistungsfähigkeit der Mitarbeiter dann Rücksicht nimmt. Es gibt Tage, da geht es bei manchen nicht. Da kann er sich nicht konzentrieren, weil, ich weiß nicht, das Kind krank ist, der Vater gestorben und so weiter. Dass man da Rücksicht auf einzelne Tage und einzelne Leistungsfähigkeiten der Mitarbeiter. Dass man auch mal, wenn er Zeit braucht, auch mal zuhören kann.“

<sup>61</sup> „Ich ziehe natürlich für mich anschließend auch ein persönliches Feedback, gehe dieses Gespräch vielleicht noch mal durch, und mache mir natürlich dann schon Gedanken darüber, wie das abgelaufen ist, und was man hätte besser machen können, und ganz zum Schluss steht natürlich auch noch mal diese eventuelle Zielerreichung, habe ich denn überhaupt mein Ziel erreicht?“

<sup>62</sup> „Ja, schon. Also ja, also empathisch war das nicht. Nein, das war nicht empathisch. Also da war einfach, ganz egal, was die anderen denken oder fühlen oder was sie mir da übermitteln wollten, das war im Prinzip egal. Ich habe auch auf nichts Rücksicht genommen. Einfach einmal lospoltern.“

<sup>63</sup> „Was sich tatsächlich geändert hat, ist, dass ich mir ab und an nochmal, wie gesagt, diesen Prozess der gewaltfreien Kommunikation durchlese. Ich sage mal, ich habe so alle sieben bis zehn Tage nochmal überflogen und da habe ich gemerkt, dass ich, wie gesagt, oft bewerte und nicht einfach nur feststelle, sondern direkt schon bewerte.“

<sup>64</sup> „Also da merke ich auch, dass es für mich selber da noch ein bisschen daran arbeiten muss, aber auch da wiederum bin ich total überrascht gewesen. Vor allen Dingen in Konfliktsituationen mit Mitgliedern bei mir, die sich über die Sauberkeit beschwert haben, zum Beispiel, dass sie sich doch sehr/ Ja, also wertgeschätzt ist das falsche Wort, aber sie haben sich einfach durch das einfach, dass das wortgetreue, dass ich das nochmal gesagt habe, haben sie sich halt gehört gefühlt, um es mal so auszudrücken.“

<sup>65</sup> „Und da gibt es natürlich viele, viele Gespräche, die wir miteinander führen, und (...) die aber, ich glaube, fast mit dieser empathischen Gesprächstechnik schwierig abzuhandeln wären, diese Gespräche. Weil er überhaupt keine Möglichkeit besitzt, einem Gespräch, sei es noch so wichtig, über zwei, drei Sätze hinaus zu folgen.“

<sup>66</sup> „Als P4 [Name gelöscht] dann sagte, wenn ich keine Lust auf meine Mitarbeiter habe, dann gehe ich morgens schon mit extraschlechter Laune rein, damit die mir gar nicht auf den Keks gehen. Das ist für mich so gravierend gewesen. Das zu machen, das ist für mich so ein/ da will ich nicht hinkommen. ... Da denke ich jeden Morgen jetzt quasi daran.“

<sup>67</sup> „Also im Nachhinein wäre das bestimmt hilfreich gewesen. Weil ich halt im Nachhinein sehe, dass ich da jetzt Probleme mit habe, mit den Bedürfnissen. Aber während dem Training selber ist mir das jetzt nicht aufgefallen, dass das irgendwie zu wenig gewesen wäre. Das ist mir halt dann so mit der Anwendung aufgefallen, mit der versuchten Anwendung muss ich ja sagen.“

<sup>68</sup> „Also ich versuche, das alles, was wir auch an Trainings gemacht hatten, versuche ich halt umzusetzen.“

<sup>69</sup> „Das ist so das, was ich hauptsächlich mitgenommen habe, wo ich dann auch häufig an viele einzelne Sätze aus diesem einen Tag noch denke oder das in Verbindung bringe. Mich dann wieder daran zurückerinnere. Von daher schon. Es beschäftigt. Also beschäftigt mich und ich versuche, denke so, in vielen alltäglichen Führungssituationen dann darüber nach. Jetzt machst du es vielleicht doch mal ein bisschen anders als vorher. Vorher einfach auf den Tisch zu klopfen. Das ist jetzt so, schönen Tag noch. Wie P8 [Name gelöscht] das auch sagte. Das wird jetzt gemacht. Sondern einfach mal, mal gucken, wie kriege ich die Kollegen denn vielleicht anders ins Boot rein.“

<sup>70</sup> „Also wirklich merke ich jetzt, wie ich halt anders auch auf Menschen zugehe, weil ich eben diese Gefühle, mit den Gefühlen von anderen besser umgehen kann.“

<sup>71</sup> „Und dann lege ich das hin. Ich sage, müssen wir gleich mal drüber sprechen. Kannst heute Nachmittag mal zu mir ins Büro kommen deswegen, dann besprechen wir das mal in Ruhe.“

<sup>72</sup> „Tja. Letztendlich würde es mich freuen, wenn ich ganz, ganz viele positive Aspekte da rausziehen könnte. Ist zwar schade, dass ich bisher wenig Möglichkeiten hatte, im beruflichen Leben darauf einzugehen, aber ich denke, da wird noch eine Menge auf mich zukommen, und ich werde noch viele, viele Möglichkeiten haben, diese Gespräche in dieser Form zu führen.“

<sup>73</sup> „Hat jetzt nicht irgendwie deutlich auf mich abgefärbt. Weder fühle ich mich besser oder schlechter.“

<sup>74</sup> „Würde ich jetzt erst mal nein sagen, aber ich hatte jetzt eigentlich auch keine besonderen Führungssituationen oder Situationen, wo es jetzt irgendwie geboten war, sich da zu äußern, zum Personal oder so.“

<sup>75</sup> „Also vorher hätte bei jemandem, der jetzt sehr aufgewühlt ist, da hätte ich wahrscheinlich einen ganz großen Bogen drum gemacht. Weil ich gar nicht gewusst hätte, wie spreche ich jetzt mit dem. Und jetzt ist das so, dann spreche ich den zum Beispiel an und habe ein offenes Ohr. Und fange dann wieder an zu wiederholen, zu paraphrasieren, wo sein Problem ist und dadurch setze ich mich halt selber auch damit auseinander.“

<sup>76</sup> „...“, aber in meiner Kommunikation vielleicht.“

<sup>77</sup> „... ich glaube mir vier Mitarbeiter gesagt haben, dass sie sich das erste Mal gesehen fühlen und dass Mitarbeitergespräche auf Augenhöhe stattfinden. Und das ist natürlich etwas Schönes, wenn/ Also vorher natürlich nicht schön, dass es nicht stattgefunden hat, aber jetzt natürlich schön zu merken, wie teilweise die Mitarbeiter auch aufblühen.“

<sup>78</sup> „Dass man die Leistung nicht steigert, das habe ich festgestellt, aber die Zufriedenheit steigert. Und vielleicht bringt das auf Dauer einfach/ und wenn es nur eine geringere Krankheitszahl bringt.

...

In der Zeit hatte ich nicht einen Krankheitstag. Muss jetzt kein/ Kein Wert sein. Aber schon auffällig. Also das ist mir selber aufgefallen. Wenn man den Kollegen positiv begegnet, dass dann auch kein Frustkrankenschein in dem Moment kommt. Und dann, allein dadurch habe ich dann schon eine Leistungssteigerung erreicht.“

<sup>79</sup> „Und also erst mal merke ich bei mir selber, das ist bei Mitarbeitern jetzt zum Beispiel so, wenn ich mit Mitarbeitern rede, dass ich dann selber ruhiger werde.“

<sup>80</sup> „Das man vielleicht auch eine so eine gewisse Ablehnung durch die Offenheit, die man selbst kundtut, dass man die erfährt...“

<sup>81</sup> Smiley faces are probably not popular in dissertations, so I felt an endnote is needed as irony is hard to detect sometimes.

<sup>82</sup> The participant got an easy access of the topic of EI and empathy and is a quick learner of the skills.

<sup>83</sup> Not being stressed-out and in a calmer state, could be another antecedent for applying EI tools. Concentration is a bit different from that.

<sup>84</sup> Having a good relationship with the person one is interacting with, could also be a an antecedent for applying EI tools. When a participant reports that as a precondition for applying a EI tool, this code will be chosen.

<sup>85</sup> When a participant expresses or indicates the drive to improve his/her communication skills, this code will be used.

<sup>86</sup> When a participant reports worrying how others perceive his/her behavior and wants to appear agreeable to others, this code will be used.

<sup>87</sup> When a participant reports, that he/she has done a considerable amount of self-reflection before applying EI tools, this code will be used.

<sup>88</sup> The code will be used when a participant reports applying an EI tool out of a feeling of responsibility for a situation, for colleagues or for a project.

<sup>89</sup> The code will be used when a participant reports needing time to apply an EI tool.

<sup>90</sup> When a participant reports being a state of concentration and attentiveness before applying an EI tool or needing it, this code will be assigned.

<sup>91</sup> „Also da muss ich wirklich sagen und das hätte ich vorher auch nicht so, für möglich gehalten habe ich das schon, aber da habe ich jetzt nicht so mitgerechnet. Dass ich so schnell auch diese Techniken so anwenden kann, dass ich auch was von merke.“

<sup>92</sup> „Okay, ich kann das anwenden und merke, wie ich ruhig werde.“

<sup>93</sup> „... und das, glaube ich, kaum/ kommt sehr gut an und das war auch die Aussage nach dem Gespräch und das war ganz toll.“

<sup>94</sup> „Mir ist es auch wichtig in dem Zusammenhang, mir ist es auch wichtig, gemocht zu werden.“

<sup>95</sup> „Also was ich nicht haben kann/ ich bin ein harmoniebedürftiger Mensch grundsätzlich.“

<sup>96</sup> „Sodass letztendlich dann alle zufrieden sind. Das kann ja nur das Ziel sein. ... Gut, das war jetzt ein toller Vorschlag vom P7 [Name gelöscht], so können wir es machen, und ich habe auch was davon.“

<sup>97</sup> „Beide sind auch damit zufrieden, dann geht es einem natürlich besser. Ich will auch, dass/ also mir ist es auch ganz wichtig.“

<sup>98</sup> „Also, der interessehalber würde mich halt manchmal schon interessieren, wie jetzt mein Gegenüber das alles empfunden hat. Also ich versuche ja schon, das irgendwie wahrzunehmen mit dem Verhalten und so weiter.“

<sup>99</sup> „Das habe ich früher immer gemacht. Das ist aber dadurch, dass andere Kollegen auch nicht machen, immer mehr eingeschlafen.“

<sup>100</sup> „... und ich, ich sage mal die kleine, dicke Brünette wurde nicht gesehen und nicht gewertschätzt.“

<sup>101</sup> In Germany, many employees are protected by extensive labor laws, which makes it difficult for employers to terminate the working relationship.

<sup>102</sup> „Und das ist für mich eher Worst-Case, weil sie halt nicht so die Zahlen erfüllt, die ich brauche.“

<sup>103</sup> „Weil ich gar nicht gewusst hätte, wie spreche ich jetzt mit dem.“

<sup>104</sup> „... man kommt in den Gesprächen nicht weiter, man findet auch keine Lösung, man selbst hat natürlich das Gefühl, dass der Gesprächspartner, die Person auf der anderen Seite, gar nicht in die Richtung gehen möchte, wie man sie quasi so ein wenig lenken will, und man sieht auf der anderen Seite halt gar keinen Erfolg.“

<sup>105</sup> „... wenn von meiner Geschäftsleitung was kommt, das muss bis morgen fertig sein, dann gibt es da keine Möglichkeit zu sagen, ich schaffe das nicht oder ich habe heute was Anderes vor oder ich habe noch was anders auf dem Tisch liegen, dann ist das zu erledigen. Sorgt auf beiden Seiten dann irgendwie nicht für Begeisterung.“

<sup>106</sup> „Und da sind wir halt ein bisschen ins Gespräch gegangen und habe gemerkt, dass ich mit dieser Art bei ihr sehr gut ankomme.“

<sup>107</sup> „Und da habe ich in diesem Behördentermin etwas intensiver ausgeführt, was so emotional in so einem Sachverständigen abgeht, wenn er sich da zwischen den Fronten aufreißt. Da wäre es ohne dieses Seminar, und das war auch relativ kurz nach unserem Seminar, ohne das Seminar hätte ich wahrscheinlich in dem Termin stärker mit rechtlichen / Gesetzen, Verordnungen, Regeln argumentiert.“

<sup>108</sup> „... dass die auch Spaß daran haben, sich dann mal etwas zu öffnen.“

<sup>109</sup> „Bitte schön, dann erzählen Sie das doch ruhig.“

<sup>110</sup> „Sondern man kann alles per E-Mail machen, weil telefonieren ist immer lästig. Weil dann ruft man den Kollegen B an, dann ist er gerade nicht am Platze, dann muss man wieder zurückrufen, dann hat man wieder was Anderes da. Und ich habe also auch sehr darauf Wertgelegt alles per E-Mail zu machen. Und ich hatte Kollegen, auch wenn die nur zwei Büros auseinander, zwei Türen auseinandersitzen.“

<sup>111</sup> „Ich drehe das wieder zurück und telefonieren wieder mehr. Das habe ich mir auch in den letzten Wochen dann, nicht nur aufgrund des Seminars, sondern auch vorher schon, wieder mehr angewöhnt. Und ich befasse mich viel mehr am Tag jetzt mit dem Sprechen, mit den Mitarbeitern, mit den anderen Kollegen in der Sparkasse. Also ich habe da noch nie so viel gesprochen, wie in dem letzten Vierteljahr. Ich habe den Eindruck, dass es dadurch besser läuft.“

<sup>112</sup> „Aber ich bin jetzt hier weniger der Maurer, sondern eher mehr der Polier, weil ihr mauert jetzt ein bisschen mehr und ich gucke mir das ein bisschen mehr an.“

<sup>113</sup> „Also ich bin ein Mensch, der dann einfach mit anderen Menschen nicht mehr redet. Ich höre dann einfach auf, weil ich dann (unv.): Mensch, wenn du das Interesse nicht hast, dann habe ich das Interesse jetzt auch nicht mehr, aber ohne die Situation anzusprechen, weil ich, wahrscheinlich aus meiner Kindheit gelernt habe, dass es nichts bringt, Dinge anzusprechen, weil in meiner Familie wurde nicht geredet. Jetzt habe ich halt gemerkt: Okay und man muss Dinge dennoch ansprechen und die aber nur mit dem beobachtbaren Verhalten und das ja/ Das setze ich tatsächlich um in beide Seiten. Und das ist eine schöne Art der Kommunikation und macht halt das Führen von meinen Mitarbeitern natürlich auch wiederum einfacher, wenn ich mich mehr gesehen sehe in Verbindung mit meinen Chefs.“

<sup>114</sup> „Aber ich bin eben einer, der fühlt sich mit der, ja, emotionalen Offenbarung eben eher wohl. Mir ist es auch wichtig in dem Zusammenhang, mir ist es auch wichtig, gemocht zu werden.“



<sup>115</sup> „Das ist schon das richtige Wort vertrauensvoll, vertrauenswürdiger geworden. Sonst hatte ich schon mal so die Gedanken oder sonst könnte man schon mal den Eindruck bekommen haben, dass es irgendwie oberflächlich ist. Und mit dem drauf einlassen, so richtig auf den Gesprächspartner wird das auch persönlicher noch.“

<sup>116</sup> „...laufe vor den Situationen halt dann nicht mehr weg. Weil diese emotionalen Zustände jetzt bei einem Mitarbeiter, die sorgen jetzt halt nicht mehr dafür, dass ich da so richtig, ich sage mal, Angst vor hätte, irgendwas anzusprechen.“

<sup>117</sup> „Also auf der einen Seite immer nur empathisch oder auf der anderen Seite immer nur kraftvoll dahinter. Aber dann nicht mehr empathisch, das macht ja keinen Sinn. Also ich muss auf Dauer schon versuchen, beides gleichzeitig hinzubekommen für die jeweilige Situation.“

<sup>118</sup> „Also ich hatte vor zwei, drei Jahren hatte ich dann wirklich mit jedem der Kollegen aus (irgendetwas?) / da ist wirklich vieles unglücklich gelaufen. Aber alle hatten irgendwie untereinander Stress und ich habe wirklich alle fünf Minuten jemand anders aus meinem Team stehen gehabt, der über den gesprochen hat, über den. Oder der gesagt hat: der, mit dem kann ich nicht arbeiten. Und dann kommt man überhaupt nicht mehr voran. Und dann fährt man nach Hause und ist total frustriert. Und weiß noch gar nicht, wie mit der Mannschaft wieder weiterarbeiten muss.“

<sup>119</sup> „Aber wenn die Mannschaft einfach ruhig arbeitet/ und das hängt auch viel davon ab, dass man vernünftig mit denen/ auf die auch eingeht. Und auch mit denen spricht und auch erklärt und auch sagt: aber das fand ich jetzt nicht gut. Allein den Leuten zu sagen: da hätte ich jetzt einfach auch mehr von dir erwartet.“

<sup>120</sup> „Ich habe gesagt: ich fühle mich jetzt von dir nicht so ganz ernst genommen.“

<sup>121</sup> „Also Führung bedeutet ja nicht nur, dass ich denen sage, was sie zu tun haben, sondern Führung bedeutet ja auch, dass ich für die eine Schulter zum Anlehnen bin.“

<sup>122</sup> „Dass man den Mitarbeiter einfach mal reden lässt und paraphrasiert ein bisschen und das, glaube ich, kaum/ kommt sehr gut an und das war auch die Aussage nach dem Gespräch und das war ganz toll.“

<sup>123</sup> „Und dass man dann wirklich dann die Bitte ausspricht. Also wirklich eher nicht so von oben herab, weil wir das auch schon gemerkt haben, das geht bei denen nicht.“

<sup>124</sup> „Ich habe mir das wieder angewöhnt zu sagen, morgens einfach die Runde durch alle Büros zu machen. Einfach mal in diesen vier Wochen. Mit so, insbesondere wenn es mich interessiert, wenn es mich wirklich interessiert, auch nach den privaten Dingen zu fragen. Was am Wochenende gemacht worden ist. Auch zuzuhören und am Abend auch nochmal eine Runde zu machen. Ob alles in Ordnung ist. Und halt die Arbeit halt/ zu mehr Führungsstil überzugehen, zu mehr Führung überzugehen. Die Arbeit persönlich zu verteilen, (unv.) mir dafür Zeit zu nehmen. Und zu sagen: kommst du damit klar und kann ich dir noch dabei helfen? Und insbesondere, wenn der Mitarbeiter einen Tag weniger/ ich habe es ganz einfach zu meinen Kollegen. Aber ich bin jetzt hier weniger der Maurer, sondern eher mehr der Polier, weil ihr mauert jetzt ein bisschen mehr und ich gucke mir das ein bisschen mehr an. Und das schien jetzt im Moment nicht so schlecht zu laufen. Das heißt, ich kümmere mich jetzt mehr darum, was die Kollegen für Probleme haben. Auch wenn sie Probleme untereinander haben.“

<sup>125</sup> The quote statement is from 2001 but seems to still hold true as other factors like *extraversion* are still more in the limelight in regard to leadership research and leader selection.

<sup>126</sup> I am not sure whether the *seminar-effect* has been described somewhere but it has been noted by colleagues and me for a long time.