

Leadership Development In New Zealand: A Production of Leadership Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The current lofty status of leadership as a solution to ongoing social and economic problems draws attention to the diverse network of actors and institutions required to elevate and maintain its position as a strategic and moral imperative. One powerful approach to this is to look at the way leadership is produced commercially by the leadership industries. As Guthey, Clark & Jackson (2009) suggests, the most appropriate model for understanding the leadership industries is through a Production of Culture lens (Peterson, 1974). This thesis therefore illuminates the ways in which leadership concepts and practices are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved via the leadership development industry in New Zealand.

Through a series of interviews with key producers and a focus group with consumers and intermediaries; this thesis seeks to understand how leadership has been produced in a New Zealand context. Findings contribute to the development of the production of leadership perspective by elevating the tension held by participants who simultaneously hold leadership as a commodity whilst trying to retain the significant symbolic characteristics they associate with it.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ACKNOWLEDGE.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
FIGURES AND TABLES	vi
PROLOGUE	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	2
1.2 GENERAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	4
1.3 LEADERSHIP CONTEXT IN NEW ZEALAND	8
1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 LEADERSHIP	15
2.1.1 Leadership Research in New Zealand.....	15
2.1.2 The Romance of Leadership.....	22
2.1.3 Leadership Development	26
2.2 THE SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE	28
2.2.1 The Production of Culture.....	29
2.2.2 The Production of Culture and Ideology.....	33
2.2.3 The Production of Culture and the Influence of Bourdieu.....	35
2.3 THE PRODUCTION OF LEADERSHIP	38
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	43
3.1 CRITICAL REALIST PARADIGM	44
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN	46
3.3 RESEARCH METHODS	49
3.3.1 Focus Groups.....	50
3.3.2 Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews	51
3.4 DATA COLLECTION	53
3.4.1 Participant Selection.....	53
3.4.2 Data Capture	54
3.4.3 Transcription	55
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS	56
3.5.1 Thematic Analysis and Grounded Theory.....	56
3.5.2 Data Coding and Theme Emergence.....	59

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	61
4.1 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS.....	61
4.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS.....	63
4.3 OVERARCHING THEMES	64
4.4.1 Leadership Industry Affirmation	66
4.4.2 From Ambivalence to Rejection of the Commercialisation of Leadership.....	75
4.4.3 Criticism of 'International Leadership' and 'Cookie Cutter' Approaches	84
4.4.1 The Construction of the New Zealand Leadership Development Industry.....	88
4.4 CONTRASTING FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS	97
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION	99
5.1 DISCUSSION.....	100
5.1.1 Leadership Industry Affirmation	100
5.1.2 From Ambivalence to Rejection of the Commercialisation of Leadership.....	102
5.1.3 Criticism of 'International Leadership' and 'Cookie Cutter' Approaches	104
5.1.4 The Construction of the New Zealand Leadership Development Industry.....	105
5.1.5 Summary	107
5.2 IMPLICATIONS	108
5.3 LIMITATIONS	109
5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH	111
5.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	112
EPILOGUE.....	113
REFERENCES.....	114
APPENDICES	126
A) Participant Information Sheet - Interview.....	127
B) Participant Information Sheet - Focus Group	129
C) Permission Sheet - Interview	131
D) Permission Sheet - Focus Group.....	132

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES

2.1 Leadership theory taxonomy	23
2.2 Leaders and followers jointly produce leadership.....	24

TABLES

1.1 Leadership institute and their target sectors	10
2.1 General themes of Australasian leadership research.....	17
3.1 Critical realism: domains of reality.....	45
3.2 Analysis of quotations	59
3.3 Example of first level these to overarching themes	60
4.1 Focus group first level themes.....	62
4.2 Interview first level themes	63
4.3 Interview & focus group overarching themes.....	65
4.4 Leadership industry affirmation first level themes	66
4.5 From ambivalence to rejection of the commercialization of leadership- first level themes	75
4.6 Criticism of ‘international leadership’ and ‘cookie cutter’ approaches-first level themes	84
4.7 The construction of the NZ leadership development industry-first level themes	88
4.8 The historical summary of leadership development in New Zealand.....	89

PROLOGUE

I can't remember the first time someone told me I could be a leader or that I needed to show leadership. It has been an ever-present concept in my life for as long as I can remember. At least as far back as intermediate school I can recall the adult world telling me about it. They wanted more of it on the basketball court, in the orchestra, in the classroom and in the community. I didn't even notice the ambiguity of the concept, being developed as a leader seemed a totally natural thing.

After a while, the idea of leadership became addictive because it was both empowering and legitimising for me. Leadership was a defining part of my identity. I had an almost uncontrollable urge, both when I was in a group and when any type of leadership role was on offer, to be the one in front. As an older high school student, I would frantically buy and read any celebrity's book with leadership in the title, most of which would discredit my work if I was to disclose them now.

Through my undergraduate degree the word began to pop up more and more, though the lines between leadership and good management were being blurred as the roles were mixed both on campus and within my workplace. Even so, the leadership development opportunities propagated themselves through my timetable. I was even involved in the Massey University Leadership Programme: a ruse for outsourcing student retention to other students in exchange for development opportunities.

When I arrived at the University of Auckland for postgraduate studies, leadership was there as the answer to my problems. What was I going to study? How was I going to do my research? I knew I was interested in mergers and organisational culture, but even then the leadership lens was applied all the way through to my dissertation.

Despite in-depth examination of the idea through my postgraduate studies, leadership is still utopian to me. I'm even currently an active participant in long term leadership development, participating with Excelerator: The New Zealand Leadership Institute in their 'Future Leaders' programme. I was first told I should do this programme when I finished a management paper on leadership in my Honours year. One of my lecturers

was a facilitator on the programme and thought I should do it. I guess you can display leadership in the classroom after all.

I wanted to try and place myself inside my research in some way. I've embarked on this journey to make sense of the cultural phenomenon called leadership which I grew up surrounded by. It has shaped the decisions I've made, the expectations I put on myself, and the role I saw myself playing in the world. But the more I think about it, the less natural it seems. It's this curiosity about my leadership in my life that I want to bring to this research.

The stickiest metaphor I've picked up through the Future Leaders programme is that doing leadership can be about asking the right questions. The facilitator I mentioned earlier, Brigid Carroll, likened it to a hockey match - you're dribbling, passing, stealing, intercepting, but at some point you just push the ball out into a new empty space. In that moment you create potential, opportunity, and energy for something great to happen. I've been given a few of those passes this year, and the challenge of doing this thesis was one of them.

So now I'm going to ask you to put down your reverence for the word 'leadership', like I've had to, and put something out into space for a while so that you can help me answer the question: why and how has leadership played such a big role in my life?

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Talk of leadership permeates nearly all spheres of modern life. It is demanded of us as individuals and we demand it of everyone else; our politicians, our managers, our sports people, our teachers, our students and our petrol station pump attendants. More so than ever before, leadership has been deemed vital to the success and survival of our businesses, governments, communities and selves.

Our societal discourse, particularly that surrounding organisational success, has long since reached a tipping point for attributing leadership to successful outcomes. Organisations have been ‘called to arms’ to pursue with vigour top leadership talent if they are to attain organisational success and longevity (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin & Michaels, 1998). Talk in the past of leadership development reaching its zenith (Day, 2001) has been outpaced by the rapidity of the adoption of leadership development programmes by the wider organisational landscape. For some time, organisations have viewed leadership as a direct source of competitive advantage (McCall, 1998; Vicere & Fulmer, 1998), driving demand for leadership development and coaching.

These sentiments have been both elevated and reinforced by scholarly research and publications as well as popular media. Much of the academic community has embraced this status quo, proliferating an estimated 800 approaches to leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2008), including suggestions that leadership is innately human (Bass, 1985) and a ‘natural’ bias (Meindl, 1985). Furthermore, a book search on Amazon turns up over 360,000 titles containing the word ‘leadership’ (Amazon, 2009).

Considering the above, it is strange then that leadership hasn’t always enjoyed such a pre-eminent and lofty position in society (Fairhurst, 2007). Confounded by scholars’ notorious inability to agree on a definition and with several questioning the existence of leadership as an observational phenomenon at all (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003a); we must begin to question by what means this elevation has occurred. Our current view of leadership is, after all, a historically isolated phenomenon. So despite any observed ‘naturalness’, we must bring into question how and why this is so. As elaborated by Guthey:

However natural, useful, or crucial to human endeavours leadership may seem, it still requires the efforts of many diverse actors and institutions to maintain its position of cultural, strategic and moral prominence. (Guthey, forthcoming: p.1)

This position of prominence, and the way in which leadership has been elevated, has for some time gone unnoticed by both society and the scholarly community. Furthermore, the efforts of this network of actors and institutions that both produce and consume leadership (Guthey, forthcoming) in our society are yet to receive the scrutiny and analysis befitting a multi-billion-dollar industry (Grint, 2007; Sinclair, 2007; Jackson & Parry, 2008). Guthey, Clark and Jackson (2009) suggest that one such approach that recognises the inherent ‘createdness’ of cultural forms such as leadership is the Production of Culture perspective (Peterson, 1974). As summarised by Peterson and Anand:

The Production of Culture perspective focuses on how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved. (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p.311)

As this rationale has accomplished with other cultural forms from art to music, this thesis will attempt to bring attention to the industrial practices that elevate the value of leadership as a cultural commodity and provide an alternative to the romanticised tendencies that proliferate in contemporary leadership thought.

The following sections will provide a broad overview of this thesis’ contents and arguments as well as the general and personal significance of the study. It will finish by painting a brief overview of the leadership industries in New Zealand and providing an overview of the thesis structure.

1.1 PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The prologue of this study places me inside the context of this study but, in addition to my personal experiences around society’s demand for leadership, this thesis culminates from a long journey of events spanning from the serendipitous to the purposeful.

In my first year of research I used leadership as a lens to help me examine the thing that I was really interested in; making mergers and acquisitions work for the people within them. This was spurred on by having been one of the people within a merger that had

found it distinctly dissatisfying. Unfortunately for both parties, the shareholders would also come to agree. But in my research, leadership was a way to help me explain not only why things were done badly, but also provided solace in the agency we have to do them better. My work was here to provide answers and, as in all leadership literature, it seemed that leadership was the sure-fire solution to the massive merger failure rates experienced in every industry. With my literature review and analysis done I proceeded to make recommendations to organisations for the utilisation of leadership to cultivate strong cultural properties and thus preserve the value of their human capital. The work was warmly received and, without even realising it, I had become part of the system that had brought me to the very place I was. I was distributing my own magic leadership recipe and playing my own small part in perpetuating the demand for more and better leadership in our organisations, and more and better theories of leadership from our academic institutions.

Admittedly, this year started in much the same way. Returning from a trip across Asia, I was ready to bring my understanding of the leadership of organisational cultures into the cross-cultural sphere. With a recession hitting the majority of the world and business values dropping globally; it was a sure bet that the financially stable and capable Chinese firms would begin to acquire and merge with foreign organisations. Again, the promise of leadership filled me with hope of completing research that would help spell success for organisations, or at least would be received well by my academic peers, assessors and, most promisingly, employers.

But not all the promises of leadership are always kept. Whether it was trouble with research access, boredom with the literature or the disinterest of my former and potential future employers; my research path was becoming less and less promising and was becoming further distanced, in my eyes, from the reality of what I wanted to understand. Around three months into this journey and at the peak of my disinterest, I wandered into a faculty lecture on The Production of Business Celebrity. Not very many things can make you throw away three months' work, but I reasoned that those who do, do so with relative ease. It took me around half an hour to get up from my desk and go and tell my supervisor I was changing ships. There was, perhaps ironically, a distinct authenticity in talking about leadership the way that lecturer did. There was a freshness and honesty that

I felt my work, and a lot of what I was reading, was lacking. So began the journey that has become this thesis, better late than never.

This departure from the road well-travelled, I hope, is evident. I don't want to talk about leadership as the pixie dust for organisational and personal success. Instead I'm very interested in why I would have done so in the first place and why you would have expected it. In finding this answer I hope to give a reflexive context as to why I'm here doing leadership research in the first place. Along the way there are a lot of other reasons I wanted to do this as well; to be a better writer; learn to do great research; get a great job. But if I leave this programme (and you put down this thesis) with just a little more understanding of why we talk about leadership the way we do, then I will be happy.

The next section will discuss the general significance of this study to scholars and practitioners.

1.2 GENERAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This thesis is of general significance as a result of contributions towards literature, use of a novel ontological and epistemological approach, and theoretical and empirical contributions to the production of leadership perspective. This section will elaborate on each of these points. Firstly, by contextualising the contributions to literature within two fields; namely leadership and cultural studies. Secondly, through an outline of the novel use of a critical realist perspective. Thirdly, a discussion on the theoretical significance as well as empirical contributions to the recently proposed Production of Leadership perspective, and the significance of this approach for both scholars and practitioners. Fourthly, an assertion as to the significance of the research to the New Zealand context of leadership development and research. This section will conclude with notes on the means by which the thesis is differentiated and the primary research questions that it will attempt to answer.

Traditional perspectives on leadership generally take on a more micro-level approach; whether this is leader-centric, follower-centric or discursive. Although scholars working on follower or social attribution theories have an understanding of the individual and group level constructions of leadership, there has been little research into the significance of the greater business dynamics that produce them. With this in mind, we are looking to

move up from the individual and group in order to examine leadership at the sociological and industrial level. Observations at this level raise questions not only about the inherent createdness of the idea but also give credence to critical scholarship in the leadership field. For example, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2006) describe leadership as the ‘extraordinisation of the mundane’ and urge scholars to bring into question the existence of leadership as a visible phenomenon. This drastic disconnect between the observations of scholars and the proliferation of leadership products and discourse problematises the current literature. To both counter this, and in acknowledgement of the aforementioned ‘createdness’, this thesis proposes that “it is important to understand leadership as a product of many organisational, promotional, and discursive practices” (Guthey et al., 2009). Embedded in this is the benefit that it will assist in providing a more reflexive sense of the literature’s own role in the process of leadership production.

The second field of literature drawn upon in this thesis is the sociology of culture. As opposed to problematising the incumbent literature, this thesis intends to, as suggested by Guthey et al. (2009), expand and re-apply our existing understanding of the cultural industries by applying them to leadership. In particular this thesis will draw upon the Production of Culture perspective as set out by Peterson (1974) and Hirsch (1972) as well as additional contributions to the perspective by Tuchman (1983), DiMaggio (1982), and Battani (1999).

This thesis also provides a point of significance by bringing a novel epistemological and ontological approach to studying leadership. For some time, organisational studies have lacked any form of unification other than vaguely similar subject matter (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000). Much research, such as business economics, management accounting, and strategy, has taken the position that their work is little different from the natural sciences and therefore positivistic in nature. Other areas such as organisational behaviour tend to have taken a postmodernist turn, rejecting positivism as a starting point (e.g. Morgan, 1986; Alvesson, 1987). Leadership literature produces a similar dichotomy, some researchers approaching leadership as a quantifiable phenomena (e.g. Bass & Avolio, 1994) while others, as interpretive (e.g. Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich, 1985, Grint, 2000) or discursive (e.g. Fairhurst, 2007). Cursory observations of the literature can commonly lead to the conclusion that these represent the only two options for approaching research (Parker, 1992). However, there have been numerous sociologists

who have rejected the tenants of both labels. One such alternative, and the one that this thesis will pursue, is that of critical realism (Bhasker, 1989). This has been identified as a third possibility for engaging in organisational research (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p.5) and has been effectively demonstrated in organisational studies which account for behaviour at the societal level (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Critical realism essentially suggests that social entities such as class relations exist independently of our investigation; our inability to directly observe them does not discount their relevance, separating the perspective from positivism. Likewise, social entities exist as separate to our interpretation of them and thus, the perspective opposes traditional postmodernist views as well. As this thesis will be proceeding with meta-observations of an extensive network of actors and institutions, critical realism provides a stance that can better observe the processes of production.

This thesis contributes empirical evidence at two different levels of analysis; the producers of leadership products and the group that consumes these leadership products directly. Despite only being exploratory in nature, the findings of the interviews and focus group provide validation for the perspective and grounds for further research within the different groups.

It is also expected that this work will be of interest and significance to practitioners as well as scholars. Firstly, a perfunctory glance at the employment classified advertisements would have most believe that we must all possess leadership skills in order to succeed in this job market. Furthermore, given that much of organisational leadership is currently in the hands of the aging baby-boomer generation, there is a burgeoning need to develop the next generation of leaders and organisational demands reflect this. This leadership vacuum, whether natural or created, brings about demand for more and better kinds of leadership; the process by which this occurs is something this thesis hopes to bring to light. Secondly, as long as individuals invoke the leadership concept as a means of attributing personal potency, leadership will remain a field worthy of study (Calder, 1977). Finally, leaders embody and perpetuate our society's dialogue over how business and society should be run, therefore scholars and practitioners alike cannot afford to ignore that complex network of voices and interest that influence and contribute to this dialogue.

This thesis also attempts to understand what has been said about leadership in New Zealand to date. The literature that has been written about leadership in New Zealand reflects broader trends in leadership literature globally, which are heavily psychology based and predominantly positivist. As there is fairly limited literature about leadership development in New Zealand, there are important questions about how we are going to do it in the future; are we going to develop it based on a positivist paradigm? An interpretivist paradigm? This thesis, and the Production of Leadership perspective, proposes that these sorts of decisions should be made with full knowledge of how leadership has been produced first. So in this sense, the Production of Leadership perspective can be seen in this thesis to help set the agenda for future leadership research and development in New Zealand.

In addition to points of significance, this thesis seeks to differentiate itself by several means. Firstly, it incorporates theoretical development throughout the literature review and proposes an argument for the approach as opposed to an all-encompassing review of current thought. Secondly, and reflected in the former, this thesis seeks to synthesise sociological theories into the leadership literature, a field typically dominated by psychologists and organisational behaviorists. Thirdly, this thesis also proceeds with a more reflective understanding of its own role in the production and reproduction of leadership knowledge.

Given the above points of significance this thesis seeks to achieve, the following research questions have been pursued:

- What are the industrial and social processes that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity and how do these present themselves in New Zealand?
- How do the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices in the production of leadership?

As the Production of Leadership perspective is very new and does not sit well with many conventional approaches to leadership, it is interesting to understand what the practitioners view of their own industry is. Furthermore, since the leadership industries in New Zealand are a set of cottage industries that are still very much being constructed by their participants, the way in which they view and interpret the industry will have

significant effects on its future. Answering these two questions has driven all decisions regarding the content of the thesis; from the structure of the literature review, the research design, the methods adopted and the directions of the discussion around the findings. Now that we have discussed the general significance of the project, the following section will provide a contextualised explanation of the field in which the research was completed.

1.3 LEADERSHIP CONTEXT IN NEW ZEALAND

This section will provide an overview of the context in which the leadership industries operate in New Zealand. The purpose of this section is to emphasise why New Zealand provides a suitable, though unique, location for exploratory research into the leadership industries. This will be done by discussing the basic demographics, significant cultural features and the presence of leadership institutes and other leadership-centric organisations. In the first section of Chapter two, this purpose will be further pursued with an exploration of the academic leadership field in New Zealand.

New Zealand is a water-bound, Commonwealth nation on the Pacific Rim, comprised of two main islands with a population of over 4.3 million people of whom the majority (78%) is of European decent. The remainder of the population is comprised of significant minority groups, namely: indigenous Maori; Asian; and non-Maori Polynesians, with over 20% of the populations claiming identification with two or more ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). Despite the diverse roots of the population, New Zealanders still argue strongly for the existence of a unique identity that separates them, through shared experiences, from being merely a conglomerate of different ethnic backgrounds (Kennedy, 2007). New Zealand is a developed economy, with the majority of the population working in the service industries. Its largest export industries are agriculture, horticulture, fishing and forestry which make up around half of national exports (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

One of the strongest cultural features of New Zealand with significant leadership implications is egalitarianism (Hansen, 1968; Kennedy, 2007). This phenomenon is pervasive in New Zealand culture at all levels, as summarised by Hansen:

Not only should one person not inherit greater life chances than another; none should be allowed to accumulate a great deal more than another through his own efforts or luck. Exceptional performance or capacities are deprecated by both individuals in a relationship. (Hansen, 1968, p.60)

Embedded within egalitarianism is the oft-cited phenomenon - 'tall poppy syndrome'; the observed tendency to find fault with high achievers and to attempt to 'cut them down to size' if they are perceived to think their achievements make them better than others (Kennedy, 2007). This attribution has been demonstrated in Australia to be driven in part by envy and jealousy (Feather, 1993) as well as egalitarian pressure for equality. It also seems to be uniquely Australasian in this form of use. 'Tall poppy syndrome' can occur at both the peer and societal level and target both individuals and organisations (Mouly & Sankaran, 2000). This phenomenon has direct implications for the type of leaders revered in New Zealand society, who would typically, despite great personal achievements, have extreme humility demanded of them. Evidence for this exists in the very low power distance (Hofstede, 1980) results given by New Zealanders when describing desirable leaders (Kennedy, 2007), furthermore:

When coupled with performance orientation, it becomes clear that people are more likely to be judged on their accomplishments than by their background. The cultural emphasis on performance also makes it clear that New Zealanders like winners, but winners need to be humble. (Kennedy, 2007, p.410)

The second cultural theme, with extensive implications to the leadership climate in New Zealand, is the emphasis placed on a kind of rugged individualism that characterises (typically men) as "self-reliant pioneers, brave and heroic, demonstrating initiative under pressure" (Kennedy, 2007, p.400). This manifests in many ways but is best exemplified by the 'number eight wire' (Downs, 2000) archetype of ingenuity; taking a practical problem-solving approach to life, tackling problems outside your normal role and using innovative cost effective solutions using the materials at hand - such as number 8 fencing wire. This notion is well represented in the most respected of New Zealand leaders such as Sir Edmond Hillary; of notoriety not just for the inaugural ascent of Mount Everest, but also as the first to drive overland to the South Pole, which he accomplished using converted farm tractors (Booth, 1993).

There has been significant growth in New Zealand over the last 10 years around organisations dedicated to the proliferation and expansion of leadership capabilities and ideas. The most explicit of these organisations are the various ‘leadership institutes’ currently operating in education, the public sector and private sector.

Table 1.1

Name	Founded	Location	Market Segment
Excelerator: The New Zealand Leadership Institute	2004	University of Auckland	Public and private sector
Leadership New Zealand	2003	Auckland	Across all sectors
Institute for Strategic Leadership	2000	Auckland, CBD	Private sector
Leadership Development Centre	2003	Wellington	Public sector

The Sir Peter Blake Trust, an organisation which sets out to inspire and celebrate ‘Blake style’ leadership in New Zealand, assembled a directory of 26 New Zealand organisations who consider leadership at the centre of their organisational goals.¹ This group included the aforementioned leadership institutes, a wide variety of professional networks (e.g. Asia:NZ Young Leaders network), several foundations (e.g. Halogen Foundation, First Foundation) as well as organisations dedicated to fostering leadership through outdoor experiences (e.g. Outward Bound, Outdoor Pursuit Centre, The Spirit of Adventure Trust). These organisations, despite fairly aligned orientations, demonstrate little interdependence, collaboration or unification at the organisational level. Interestingly though, at the individual level in terms of both individuals providing services at these organisations as well as the members within, there is significant overlap, with many individuals participating in multiple organisations.

Though organisations surrounding leadership are clearly on the rise, this has been a phenomenon fairly isolated to the last five to ten years. There is much anecdotal evidence about the shift from a dominance of managerial training to a leadership focus. One significant artefact of this shift was the change in name of a government organisation: The Management Development Centre which was renamed to become the aforementioned Leadership Development Centre in 2003. This was a reflection of a new

¹ Please see the 2009 issue of *Leadership* magazine, put out by the Sir Peter Blake Trust, for a summation of the roles of all the organisations explicitly committed to the elevation and/or development of leadership in New Zealand.

government initiative; the Senior Leadership and Management Development Strategy, targeted at raising the leadership capability of New Zealand's public sector (State Services Commission, 2005).

Professional service firms, in particular the four largest accounting firms, all have substantial presence in New Zealand. However, none are explicitly involved in leadership development at this stage, as is practiced in the United States and Europe. PricewaterhouseCoopers in the past brought on the Resilience Institute, a small integral-approach-based leadership development firm as part of their performance improvement department, currently the two, however, operate as separate entities. Organisational (as opposed to individual) demand is instead met by smaller consulting firms that offer executive leadership development and generally incorporate a strong practice of identifying with popular American leadership thinkers and writers, to the extent of bringing them to New Zealand. Though, more commonly, these firms seek legitimisation by having members of their organisation train and accredit overseas.

All of the above elements are significant not just for the contextual awareness they provide, but also because they demonstrate that New Zealand is an appropriate and unique location for exploratory research of the leadership industries. Firstly, the complex cultural environment brought on by both ethnic diversity as well as the challenges of a heavily egalitarian society, means that there are increased demands on the type of skills our leaders must offer. Secondly, New Zealand is a country with relatively high levels of individualism and a competitive labour market. This means that there is a demand to enhance one's leadership capability. Finally, there is a burgeoning high-growth, complexly interrelated and fragmented industry surrounding the supply of leadership products. This provides a competitive industry environment that is still experimenting with different models and means of producing and elevating the importance of leadership products in the New Zealand market.

This is by no means an exhaustive description of the context for leadership development in New Zealand. It instead seeks to provide some context to those from outside of, or unaware of, the leadership development climate in New Zealand so that better sense can be made of the findings, and also to demonstrate the relevance of the New Zealand context to this exploratory research. In the literature review we will discuss the specific leadership research that has occurred in New Zealand and its significance for this thesis,

as such details around the academic publishing community have been omitted from this section. The following section will outline the structure for the remainder of the thesis.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This thesis addresses two key research questions:

- What are the industrial and social processes that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity and how do these present themselves in New Zealand?
- How do the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices in the production of leadership?

To illustrate these, this thesis is arranged in six chapters. This first introductory chapter served to illustrate the purpose and significance of the project for me personally, and for the scholarly and practitioner communities more generally. In addition to this, it provides a context for the reader in terms of the author's background and the nature of the country in which the research was completed.

Chapter two will seek to review the current literature that underlies the Production of Leadership perspective. To this end the chapter will be divided into three sections; leadership theory; the sociology of culture; and the production of leadership. The first two sections will be used to inform and illustrate the development of the final section on the production of leadership perspective. With this thesis seeking to incorporate the theoretical development of a new perspective, the final section of chapter two will conceptualise this theory based on the preceding sections in addition to reviewing the scarce literature on the topic. Whilst this conceptualisation builds off existing literature, it will also play a critical role in examining those elements that have contributed to its development.

Chapter three will outline the research paradigm under which research design decisions were produced. The methodologies and methods used in this research will then be explained and justified. This will be done by first outlining the critical realist paradigm including ontological and epistemological implications followed by the specific design of the research. From there a discussion of the specific research methods used will be outlined. In this case: multiple case studies of the roles of leadership development

organisations inside the meta-case of the leadership development industry in New Zealand. This chapter will conclude with a discussion around the data-collection practices and the thematic analysis as influenced by grounded theory that was enacted on the data.

Chapter four outlines the findings of the focus group and interviews. As will become clear in this section of the thesis, the notion that leadership is a cultural commodity produced and delivered by a set of industries makes sense to some, but not all, of the practitioners with whom I spoke. This brings to the fore a certain ambivalence about approaching leadership from a production perspective, or talking about leadership development activities as a set of industries. This chapter will discuss the findings by outlining the results of the initial coding phase and the relevant extracts for the four overarching themes discussed in chapter five.

Chapter five discusses the findings and concludes the thesis with implications, limitations and thoughts on future research possibilities. We proceed by discussing the research questions in relation to the data presented under the four overarching themes identified in the findings chapter: Leadership industry affirmation; from ambivalence to rejection of the commercialisation of leadership; criticism of ‘international leadership’ and ‘cookie cutter’ approaches and finally; the development of the New Zealand leadership development industry.

The thesis concludes with an epilogue of personal reflections on leadership and relevant references and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature that under-girds a Production of Leadership perspective (Guthey et al., 2009). It will be made up of three sections, the third building the perspective based upon the first two.

The first section of this literature review covers the relevant areas of leadership literature required to make sense of a production perspective. This includes a summary of leadership research completed in New Zealand (Parry, 1998) to date, which places the current research in context and makes clear that research in New Zealand has focused on the nature of leadership itself, and not on the manner in which leadership is produced and promoted by a number of individuals and organisations that can be understood as members of the leadership industries. This section also contains a focus on attribution theories of leadership (e.g. Meindl et al., 1985) and discursive leadership (Fairhurst, 2007), both of which emphasise the constructed, if not commercially-so, nature of leadership. The section concludes with a brief summary of leadership development research relevant to the particular sample groups that were studied.

The second section of this literature review will centre around the sociology of culture. This will begin by outlining Production of Culture (Peterson, 1974) perspective and placing that theory within the cultural industries (Hirsch, 1972). Following that, we will discuss various extensions and enhancements that have been made to the perspective over time. Firstly, the placement of the Production of Culture perspective within its capital context (Tuchman, 1983) and secondly, the introduction of ideas from Bourdieu via DiMaggio (1991) and Battani (1999) that re-calibrate the theory to address class interests and elite formation.

The third and final section of this literature review will outline the Production of Leadership perspective. This thesis was prepared and completed during the writing of Guthey's forthcoming (2010) piece: The Production of Leadership as well as subsequent

not yet published pieces on the same perspective. Many of the ideas expressed in this section were constructed in partnership during my supervision. As such, many of the ideas here are a representation of co-created knowledge, not solely attributable to my own intellectual contribution. The primary motivation of this literature review is to develop an understanding of how leadership, regardless of what else it may be, functions in some sense as a cultural commodity and symbolic good. If there are a set of activities that produce this good that we can describe as the leadership industries, then they are a unique set of industries organised in a very loose and emergent manner with many roles and dynamics taking place – the model we have for understanding this is the cultural industries.

2.1 LEADERSHIP

2.1.1 Leadership Research in New Zealand

In order for us to later discuss what leadership and, more specifically, leadership development, means in a New Zealand context, we must first understand where it comes from. One way of doing that is by looking at the current state of leadership research in New Zealand and the historical research precedents to this position. To that end we will draw extensively on the work of Parry (1999), who completed the most recent meta-analysis on leadership research in New Zealand, as well as a summary provided by Kennedy (2007) as part of the GLOBE project. The remainder of this section will seek to bring this understanding up to date through the inclusion of published works of the last decade that are based on research completed in New Zealand. This serves a three-fold purpose: further establishing New Zealand as a suitable context for exploratory research into the leadership industries; illustrating past and present understanding of what kind of leadership exists, and is favoured in, New Zealand; and finally, the nature of the research that has been produced in New Zealand.

Some of the earliest research into the characteristics of managers in New Zealand was undertaken by George Hines whose survey of 2400 managers (1973) illustrated significantly the higher importance placed on interpersonal skills by the New Zealand workforce than either North America or Europe. This finding has endured through much research to date (Inving & Inkson, 1998; Kennedy, 2007) and is suggested to reflect the small size of New Zealand companies, lack of class differences and high levels of

interaction between all levels of the hierarchy. In saying that, national reform and changing global economic conditions led to additional demands being placed upon leaders which subsequently led to the placement of more transformational leaders at the helm of New Zealand organisations (Inkson, Henshall, Marsh & Ellis, 1986) and greater levels of positive attribution between followers and transformational leadership behaviours (Singer, 1985). A decade later, the egalitarian leader continued to be held in high esteem (Cammock, Nilakant, & Dakin, 1995). In a doctoral study (Rippin, 1995) of 185 senior managers, interpersonal skills accounted for the largest portion variance with inclusive, egalitarian and participative attributes held in high regard. Key descriptors of leadership included:

Takes a genuine interest in people, makes people feel at ease, is consultative, sensitive, empathetic, accessible, treats all people as their equal, is compassionate, can laugh at themselves, is a team player, has a harmonizing effect, and has a basic respect for all staff in the organisation.

(Rippin, 1995, p.152 as cited in Kennedy, 2007, p.412)

In The New Zealand Leadership Survey 1999 (Parry & Proctor, 2000), implemented the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) across 1300 respondents. Transformational leadership scores were in line with norms for other western countries, however managers scored significantly higher on ‘contingent reward’ behaviours; those that focus on exchanges between leaders and followers rather than cultivation of shared vision and values. Parry and Proctor (2000) noted this overemphasis on transactional behaviour as a call for concern, citing the previous 15 years of economic reform as a potential instigator of a transaction and contractually oriented generation – a sentiment consistent with Peel and Inkson’s (2000) observation of a historical shift from relational to transactional employment contracts over the same period (Kennedy, 2007).

In Parry’s (1999) review of leadership research completed in Australasia, used as a proxy for New Zealand, he summarises dominant leadership research, both here and abroad as having been:

...dominated by the positivist characteristic of the qualitative analysis of quantitative data or the quantitative analysis of qualitative data. However, the subjectivist notion of purely qualitative data on leadership, particularly using grounded theory method, is supportable and even commendable. (Parry, 1999)

This is reflected best by the central appearance of Transformational Leadership theory (Bass, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1994) in research completed in New Zealand and in particular the use of the aforementioned MLQ which is an inherently positivistic quantitative approach and was then the most widely cited leadership construct. Bass originally described a transformational leadership as:

Transformational leaders attempt and succeed in raising colleagues, subordinates, followers, clients, or constituencies to a greater awareness about the issues of consequence. This heightening of awareness requires a leader with vision, self confidence, and inner strength to argue successfully for what he sees is right or good, not for what is popular or is acceptable according to the established wisdom of the time.

(Bass, 1985, p.16)

Transformational leadership went on to be clarified in later work by Bass and Avolio (1997) to be comprised of four key factors: idealised influence; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; and individualised consideration.

From Parry's (1999) analysis of the Australasian leadership research to date; he identifies three general themes emergent from the research, these are summarised in the following table:

Table 2.1

Theme	Description	Citations
Leader self development	The idea that better leadership is attainable by people taking responsibility for their own development experience and entails many ideas, practices and values. Self-efficacy (Carless, Mann & Wearing, 1996), the tendency to believe the leader can make a difference to the group. Analysis and expansion of the leader's value system, emphasising the congruence between leaders and followers is also critical (Ashkanasy & Weirter, 1996) and reflects trends towards an emphasis on transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994) which is often an axiom for moral and ethical leadership.	Parry and Sarros, 1996; Carless et al, 1996; Carlopio, Andrewartha & Armstrong, 1997; Parry, 1998b; Lewis, 1996; Sarros et al, 1996; Clegg and Gray, 1996; Karpin, 1995;

		Dickenson, 1996
Importance of learning	In parallel to the above, many of the studies emphasised the importance of continuous learning for the leader. This can be couched in terms of strategic learning (Clegg & Gray, 1996), organisational learning (Avolio, 1996; Clegg & Gray, 1996), self-learning (Dickenson, 1996), continuous learning (Dickenson, 1996; Sarros, Gmelch & Tanewski et al., 1996), self-awareness (Ashkanasy & Weierter, 1996), or leader role clarity (Parry, 1998a). Parry (1999) also highlights under this theme the differences between training, skills-based learning; and development, learning that is more conceptual. The importance of learning was also couched in terms of alternative methodological approaches that should be employed with leadership research such as biographical (Hede & Wear, 1995) or grounded theory (Irurita, 1996; Parry, 1998a).	Clegg and Gray, 1996; Dickenson, 1996; Sarros et al., 1996; Parry, 1998a; Adamson, 1996; Singer, 1996; Avolio, 1996; Irurita, 1996; Ashkanasy & Weierter, 1996
Paradigm shifts	Many of the studies also raise the importance of paradigm shifts in both thought and practice. Most significant are the issues raised around the paradigmatic shifts required to forge new methodological directions in leadership research. Noted in particular was the use of triangulation of mixed-method approaches (e.g. Hede & Wear, 1996) and the use of qualitative analysis of qualitative data (Irurita, 1996; Parry, 1998a)	Lewis, 1996; Clegg & Gray, 1996; Singer, 1996; Irutia, 1992, 1994, 1996; Parry, 1998a; Hede & Wear, 1996
Leaders must be transformational and	The prolific use of transformational leadership in the used studies is itself a significant feature with seven of the 13 studies using the construct. Many of the studies also reflected the significant need for	Irutia, 1996; Parry, 1998a; Hede & Wear, 1995, 1996;

transactional	<p>competency in transactional leadership processes to form an underlying base for transformational leadership to occur (Adamson, 1994; Parry & Sarros, 1994; Irurita, 1992, 1996).</p>	<p>Lewis, 1996; Adamson, 1994</p>
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Parry suggested that an overarching theme of self-assessment is present. Identified by the presence of change, self-directed focus and all themes being developmental (Parry, 1999, p.96). Of significance to this study's approach, the majority of the above studies maintain a quantitative and positivistic approach to their research. Several of the mentioned studies did, however, use a mixed-method approach combining quantitative data with qualitative analysis (Irurita, 1992, 1994; Parry, 1998a) but is noted as an uncommon approach among the leadership research to date.²

Since the publication of Parry's (1999) meta-analysis of leadership research in Australasia, leadership research in New Zealand has slowly been taking a turn to more mixed methods and qualitative approaches. This breaks global trends which still tend to be dominated by positivistic approaches with the exception of various microcosms of interpretive-focused research out of Scandinavia, Melbourne, Sydney and the United Kingdom (i.e. Lancaster, Leeds, Exeter). In an attempt to explain the long-lasting appeal of the positivistic approach to management and leadership research, Carroll, Levy and Richmond explain that:

It is not difficult at all to understand the appeal of competency models to management and, by extension, leadership. Both, albeit leadership to a much stronger degree, have a quality of vagueness and complexity that invite discomfort and unease in an organizational world which has long privileged rationality, control, clarity and simplicity (Carrol et al., 2008, p.364).

Parry's (1998) conclusion that a "leadership researcher should make greater use of qualitative data and rigorous qualitative analysis to investigate leadership processes", seems to be reflected in the literature produced in New Zealand since. However, his specific call for grounded theory work on leadership has not yet been realised except for isolated examples (e.g. Parry & Kempster, forthcoming). Qualitative research and interpretive ontologies more generally have become the dominant leadership research

² Several pieces of leadership research in New Zealand were not present in this meta-analysis. However, these all exhibit similar trends and were intrinsically positivistic in their approach (e.g. Chong & Thomas, 1997).

paradigm in New Zealand, particularly over the last five years. Much of this trend can be coalesced with a delayed response to the ‘postmodernist turn’ in organisational research originally highlighted by Alvesson (1987).

Following the publication of Parry’s (1999) review of leadership research in Australasia, scholarly publication significantly slowed down in New Zealand. The majority of published work from the New Zealand academic community was in the form of relatively mainstream books (Levy, 1998; Jackson & Parry, 2001; Cammock, 2001, 2008; Prentice & Hunter, 2006), which played a role in bringing a New Zealand voice to the rapidly expanding popular leadership that was occurring internationally at the time. Much of what scholarly publishing that did occur reflected a sort of ‘Maori renaissance’ and the emergence of cross-cultural themes examining leadership differences between Maori, Pacific Islanders and Pakeha (Ah Chong & Thomas, 1997; Pfeifer & Love, 2004; Pfeifer, 2005) as well as between Australia and New Zealand in general (Trevor-Roberts, Ashkanasy & Kennedy, 2003). Following this slow period of leadership publishing, there was a switch to rapid growth in publishing activity from around 2005. This roughly coincided with the foundation of New Zealand’s first research-based leadership institutes in 2004: Excelerator at the University of Auckland and the Centre for the Study of Leadership at Victoria University of Wellington, and later, the appointment of the first chair of leadership, Professor Brad Jackson at the University of Auckland in 2006.

Effectively illustrating an early departure from traditional analysis processes, Guthey and Jackson (2005; 2007) examine how the lofty state of leadership has been exacerbated by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) celebrity phenomenon and how their portraiture influences stakeholder perceptions. Further perception-based research was also undertaken by Excelerator (Levy, Carroll, Francoeur & Logue, 2005) with a qualitative exploration of the surprisingly limited differences in leadership perception between Generation X and Generation Y. Much of the work over the last five years has also been characterised by an emphasis on identity (e.g. Sinha & Jackson, 2006; Carrol & Levy, 2009; Carrol & Levy, 2008) which, as an interpretive construct, has lead to the use of qualitative methods around rhetoric, discourse and thematic analysis. Similarly, approaches emphasising discourse, talk and communication are becoming increasingly prominent (e.g. Vine, Holmes, Marra, Pfeifer & Jackson, 2008; Tourish & Jackson, 2008; Carrol & Levy, 2009).

Contrastingly, the influence of transformational leadership theory and its research approach is still present in more recent research as well. In particular, the BDO Spicers Authentic Leadership Survey (Levy, 2007) sought to apply the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), a derivative of the original MLQ. Other isolated work is also being done using positivist ontologies and quantitative methods such as Kolb, Prussia and Francoeur's (2009) examination of connectivity and leadership where the online interactions of members of a long-term leadership development programme were examined. Published work from New Zealand has also played a role in clarifying the leadership literature as it rapidly grows and changes (e.g. Jackson, 2005; Jackson & Parry, 2007). Identified forthcoming work both on and from New Zealand continues with the current methodological and ontological trend, focusing on socially constructed paradigms and qualitative methodologies. (e.g. Kennedy, Carroll, Framcoeur & Jackson, forthcoming; Grint & Jackson, forthcoming; Carrol & Parker, forthcoming).

Despite a diversity of approaches, leadership in research in New Zealand still seems to elevate a fairly unanimous set of characteristics. In summary of these; the most valued kind of leadership by New Zealand managers in the New Zealand chapter of the GLOBE studies put it as follows:

High levels of performance must be balanced by a somewhat modest, self-deprecating attitude. Involvement of team members using an egalitarian participative style is expected, together with flexibility in the application of rules and processes. The leader must enthuse and inspire followers, but this is best done through personal commitment, perseverance, and example, rather than by exhortation or flummery. (Kennedy, 2007, p.422)

In summary, research in New Zealand has followed general trends of management and leadership research globally by the continued inclusion and reliance on more quantitative and competency-driven models. However, the New Zealand leadership research environment has also produced a disproportionately larger representation of critical approaches to leadership and follower-centric approaches, particularly over the last five years. The significance of this summary of research to date is based on the link between the type of research we do and its implications on the development practices we adopt and the type of leadership we, as a nation, produce. As made explicit by leadership development institutes, one of their primary goals is to “enhance the understanding of

leadership and leadership development through [their] research” (Excellerator, 2010). This link between research and practice makes the history of leadership research in New Zealand significant in any discussion surrounding the leadership industries and the practice of leadership development. In the following section we will expand on a popular attribution theory known as the Romance of Leadership (Meindl et al., 1985).

2.1.2 The Romance of Leadership

Calder (1977), among others, reminded us that leadership as a concept was not invented by social scientists but borrowed by them from the cultural, linguistic vernacular of commonly employed concepts social actors use to make sense of the world around them and to communicate it to others.

(Meindl, 1995, p.339)

This section will cover an idea known as The Romance of Leadership. This will be achieved by outlining its position within the larger body of leadership literature, a description of the theory and its central implications for leaders and followers, and finally, a discussion around our understanding of the phenomenon through a social constructionist lens and finally, a discussion around social construction of leadership images as products of an industry.

Leadership theory can be broadly split into two categories: leader-centric theories and follower-centric theories (Jackson & Parry, 2008). The more traditional leader-centric theories focus on the leader as the active agent; these theories range from trait or identity-based approaches to behavioural approaches such as the aforementioned transformational and authentic leadership measures (Bass, 1985; Avolio, 1999). Though there is much credence in the use of leader-centric theories in understanding leadership at the individual level, they tend not to recognise the importance of the follower. On the other hand, follower-centric theories on leadership elevate the dyadic nature of leadership, bringing to the fore the influence of followers as well as the socially constructed nature of leadership itself. In this section we will be focusing on the most dominant follower-centric paradigm that places followers as co-constructors of leadership. Under this taxonomy, Jackson and Parry further define the three common approaches: the romance of leadership (Meindl et al., 1985; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987; Chen & Meindl, 1991; Meindl, 1995); psychoanalytic theories (e.g. Shamir, 2004; Goethals, 2005); and social identity

theory (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003; Hogg, 2005). This thesis will only be addressing the romance of leadership as the most salient of the follower-centric theories to a production perspective. The positioning of this theory in the larger body of leadership literature can be identified in the following figure:

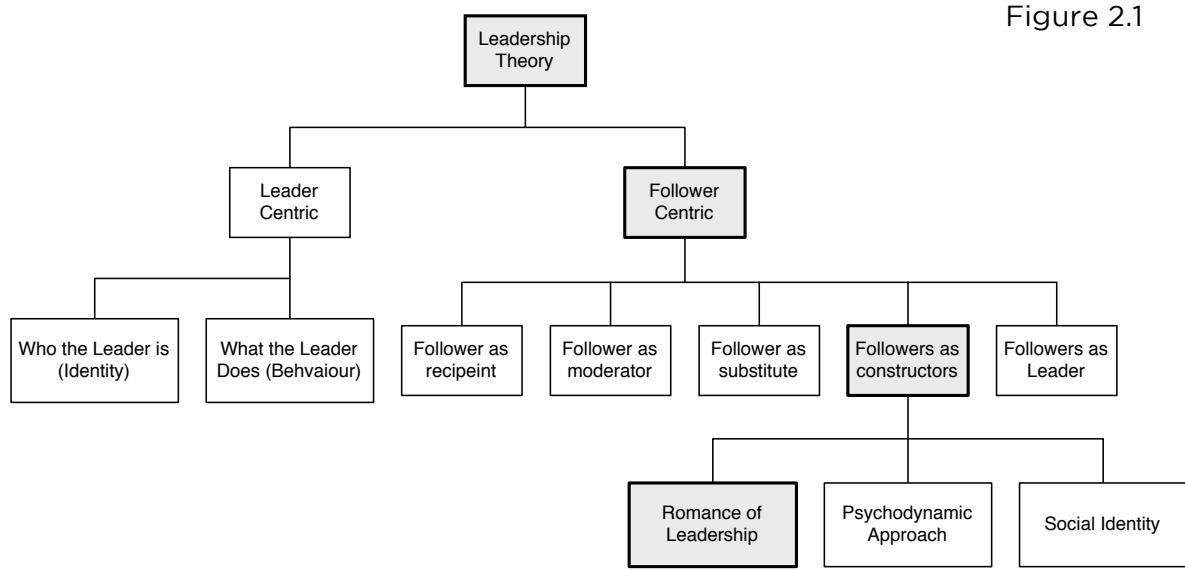


Figure 2.1

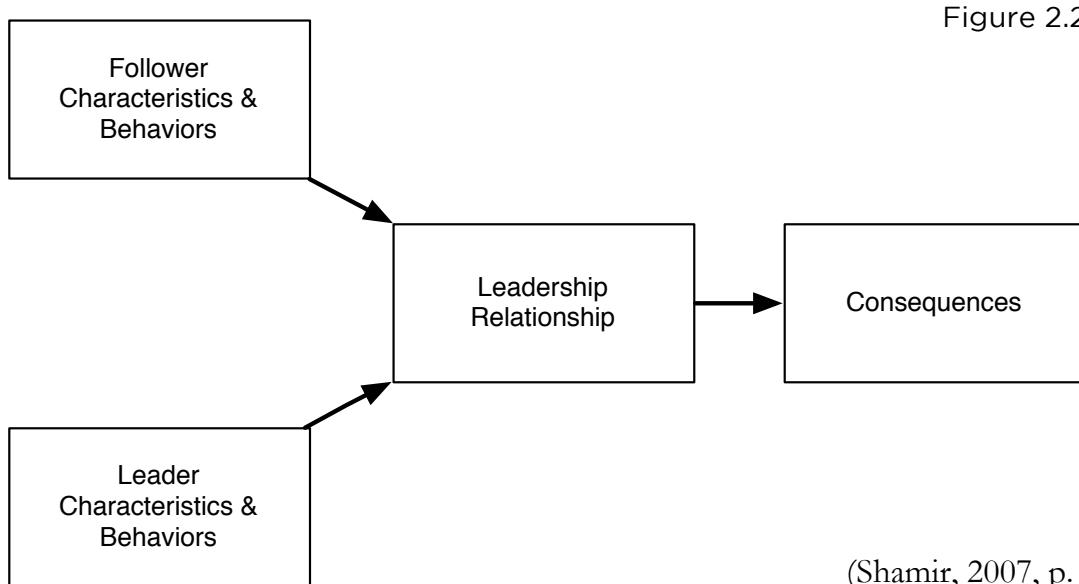
Adapted from Bass, 2007; Jackson & Parry, 2007

The most general suggestion of this approach is that we have an over-romanticised view of leadership that leads to an over-attribution bias. However, it is neither new nor unique to the romance of leadership that the organisational performance is significantly over-attributed to organisational leadership (Calder, 1977; Pfeffer, 1977; Khurana, 2002; Hayward, Rindova & Pollock, 2004; Guthey & Jackson, 2005). This attribution error “denotes a strong belief - a faith - in the importance of leadership factors to the functioning and dysfunctioning of organised systems” (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987, p.91). Meindl et al. (1985) suggest that the effect is essentially that in view of ambiguous information, as is the case in most complex situations, followers or observers ascribe leadership to any outcome with which they can be plausibly linked. Essentially, the romance of leadership explains that the attribution for leadership is an inherent bias used to simplify and make sense of complex organisational events. This effect is observed to hold true during particularly extreme cases as well; when the organisation is doing exceptionally well, and when the organisation is doing exceptionally poorly (Chen & Meindl, 1991). A central theoretical outcome of these observations is that leadership emerges out of social relationships where “both sides contribute to its formation, nature, and consequences” (Shamir, 2007, xix). This is echoed through the works of many

writers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Grint, 2000; Klein & House, 1995; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992) who agree that leadership is a jointly produced relationship between leaders and followers. More general models typically also seek to include context within their definition; this was succinctly summarised by Antonakis, Cianciolo, and Stemberg (2004), who state that:

Most leadership scholars would agree, in principle, that leadership can be defined as the nature of the influencing process – and its resultant outcomes – that occurs between a leader and followers and how this influencing process is explained by the leader's dispositional characteristics and behaviours, follower perceptions and attributions of the leader, and the context in which the influencing process occurs. (Antonakis et al, 2004, p.5).

Unfortunately, these views often seem to include only a certain amount of lip service to the role of the follower. A more general and balanced model would correct this imbalance whilst still paying due credit to the value of leader characteristics and followers. Shamir (2007), while citing a more balanced model (see figure:2.2), reminds of the importance of recognising the thousands of studies completed to date that demonstrate the salience of leadership characteristics and behaviours in determining organisational outcomes (Bass, 1990).



(Shamir, 2007, p. xx)

Another key outcome of this perspective is that it elevates the nature of leadership as an inherently socially constructed phenomenon, as well as its permanent and powerful position in contemporary organisation discourse. “It appears that the concept of

leadership is a permanently entrenched part of the socially constructed reality that we bring to bear in our analysis of organization” (Meindl et al., 1985, p.78). Meindl further emphasises how this occurs on an individual level: “The Romance of Leadership is about the thoughts of followers: how leaders are constructed and represented in their thought systems” (Meindl 1995, p.330). Critical to the phenomenon of social construction was the idea of the social contagion; that emerged from Meindl’s interest in charismatic leadership, a phenomenon he likened to “catching a cold” (Meindl, 1990, p.101). Mayo and Pastor (2007) summarised this observed affect as follows:

The core idea is that rather than being dependent on their interactions with the leader, followers’ charismatic experiences are affected, to a great extent, by the experiences of other followers. Thus, attributions of charisma to a leader are not solely grounded in the individual interactions between followers and leaders, but, rather, they are, to a great degree, the results of followers’ lateral interactions with their peers.

(Mayo & Pastor, 2007, p.99)

Through the social contagion lens, the focus of research changes from the study of charismatic expressions of leaders to the contagious expressions displayed by their followers. In this way, charismatic appeal in a leader becomes a totally socially constructed phenomenon; “a matter of intersubjectively shared sense making among a group of followers” (Mayo & Pastor, 2007, p.99)

Another significant contribution from the romance of leadership lens that is particularly pertinent to a production of leadership perspective is the notion that constructions of leadership are widely produced phenomena for consumption. As summarised by Chen and Meindl:

In this regard, constructions of leadership are regularly and widely produced for our consumption (e.g., Klapp, 1964; Goode, 1978), with transmissions often taking the form of portraits and images of great leadership figures (e.g., Boorstin, 1961), both in the public (e.g., Merrill, 1965; Maddox and Robins, 1981) and private (e.g., Christ and Johnson, 1985) sectors. These images feed and expand our appetites for leadership products, appealing not only to our collective commitments to the concept but fixating us in particular on the personas and characteristics of leaders themselves.

(Chen & Meindl, 1991, p.522)

Chen and Meindl here are the first to suggest that leadership itself can be produced and packaged for consumption. In doing so, they illustrate the constructed nature of leadership as a phenomenon, but crucially they implicate the role of organisations in this construction. In this case, the central role of news organisations in constructing leadership images.

To conclude, the romance of leadership is a follower-centric theory that provides a theoretical basis for explaining leadership as a co-produced phenomenon between leaders and followers. It takes steps towards explaining the attribution bias of ascribing a greater level of influence to the leader than is plausibly possible. Furthermore it explains that this romanticisation of leadership is spread, not just by interactions between leaders and followers, but through a social contagion transmitted between followers in a form of collective sense-making. But what is centrally significant in bringing up Meindl and colleagues work is that he was the first to talk about leadership products and services, and about leadership as an industry. This is why the Romance of leadership provides an important scholarly foundation to the production of leadership perspective outlined in the third section of this literature review.

2.1.3 Leadership Development

This section will provide only a brief overview of leadership development theories and will instead seek to elevate some of the criticisms of leadership development and the work of those theorists who looked at leadership development from an elevated context, placing it inside greater business and industrial practices. However, this section does not provide a theoretical building block to the production of leadership perspective as it does not explicitly consider the manner in which the delivery of leadership development is organised; the leadership development literature currently only catalogues and analyses best practices. This section will however provide some conceptual context for the interview data that was completed by people who work in the leadership development industry in New Zealand. This will be done through a summary of the state of leadership development research, current research and thought and finally, criticism of leadership development as a practice.

With the rapid rise of leadership as a cultural commodity, it is only natural that there has also been a paralleled growth and legitimisation of leadership development as a desirable

practice and activity. Though it would seem that interest and involvement in leadership development is at its peak (Day, 2000), scholarship around the field is, by comparison, significantly underdeveloped. To date, some conceptual and definitional work has proven fruitful (e.g. Iles & Preece, 2006; Day, 2000; Barker & Christensen, 1998), as has the considerable progress towards understanding the many ways in which leadership development can be approached (e.g. Parks, 2005; McCauley, Moxley & Van Velsor, 1998; Avolio, 1999; Avolio & Gibbons, 1988). Many of these studies attempt to clarify the concept of leadership development by first turning to citations of what leadership is not, namely; leader development and management development (Day, 2000).

Management training places an emphasis on the development of knowledge, skills and abilities that enhance task performance within management roles (Baldwin & Padgett, 1993). Most scholars also differentiate 'leader' development which they suggest implies a focus on individuals and their interpersonal interactions in their work and development (Iles & Preece, 2006). This contrasts with most common definitions of leadership development which stress collective processes, meaningful work, non-position-restricted roles and complex problems. Leadership development is defined concisely by Day (2000) as:

Expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes. (2000, p.582)

Iles and Preece (2006) expand on this, stating that:

Leadership development therefore involves helping people to understand, in an integrative way, how to build relationships, to access resources, coordinate activities, develop commitments and build social networks. (2006, p.323)

One conceptualisation of leadership development programmes that is currently proving particularly poignant is of being in the "business of self-construction" (Fairhurst, 2007, p.102). This reference to the construction of identity is seen as critical to many leadership development scholars (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Ford, 2006). Of particular interest has also been the use of anti-identity as a starting point for leadership development (Carroll & Levy, 2008).

Despite leadership development being a multi-billion dollar industry, with estimates ranging from US\$15-50 billion (Rockwood, 2006; Grint, 2007), it has so far repelled

critical scrutiny or challenge (Sinclair, 2007; Carroll & Levy, 2008). This blind faith in leadership development is not the sole property of business but instead is mirrored within both academic scholarship and popular literature (Jackson & Parry, 2008).

The next section of the literature review will leave leadership behind in an attempt to look at culture and the way it is understood via the production of culture lens.

2.2 THE SOCIOLOGY OF CULTURE

Cultural studies is so hard to pin down, consisting as it does of a loosely structured blend of sociology and social theory, political economy and Marxist theory, history, semiotics and literary theory, film and media studies, and cultural anthropology. (Guthey et al., 2009)

As stated in the introduction, this thesis seeks to understand better what leadership is in a New Zealand context and why we have it here. One powerful approach to doing that is to look at the way it is produced commercially within an industry. In order to understand this we need to have a model. As Guthey et al. (2009) has proposed, the most appropriate model for understanding the leadership industry is as a cultural one. The most common way to study the cultural industries is from a sociology of culture perspective, of which the Production of Culture (Peterson, 1974; Peterson & Anand, 2004) is a subset; this will form the basis of the first section of this chapter.

One of the limitations of Peterson and Anand's approach is that they take a very narrow organisational sociology perspective. In order to correct this we will first introduce the work of Tuchman (1983) in order to elevate the importance of the capitalist context in which cultural reproduction occurs. The second introduction and the third section in this chapter will bring the contributions of Bourdieu to the fore through the work DiMaggio and Batanni who perform the favour of bringing to light the importance of class interests, elite formation and the formation of cultural fields. This broadening the Production of Culture perspective provides it with a critical edge that it doesn't otherwise have.

Finally this chapter will conclude with a discussion around the role of cultural intermediaries in a capitalist context using personal trainers (Maguire, 2008) as an example to demonstrate the phenomenon in a way that is relevant to the leadership industries.

2.2.1 The Production of Culture

The Production of Culture perspective focuses on how the content of culture is influenced by the milieu in which it is created, distributed, evaluated, taught and preserved.

(Peterson, 1994, p.165)

In this section we will be covering The Production of Culture perspective of cultural industries as originally proposed by Peterson (1974) and Hirsch (1972) respectively. A Production of Culture perspective essentially suggests that the way in which we produce cultural products, like art, music or leadership, has consequences for the nature of the products themselves. So paying attention to this process is essential to understanding why cultural commodities are the way they are. This chapter will provide an overview of the seminal work in this area and its relative strengths and contributions to the proposed production of leadership perspective.

As more and more elements of culture are produced and delivered via commercial processes, it makes sense to explore the manner in which the production of culture is organised, and the effects such organisation has on the nature of the cultural products that result. The importance of the Production of Culture, then, is that it stands to integrate strongly structuralist and hermeneutical ‘cultural sociology’ with the more humanistic, literary, textualist and postmodernist strands present in cultural analysis (Alexander, 2003), thus providing a crucial resource for the multidimensional understanding of the social science of cultural processes. Santoro (2008), in his piece based on a series of interviews with Peterson, described the central characteristics of a Production of Culture perspective as follows:

- a) a focus on formally produced symbols, that is, symbols explicitly produced and used in organizations specifically devoted to them; and
- b) a priority accorded to structural, organizational, institutional and economic factors, which are external to the creative acts of symbol production.

(Santoro, 2008, p.9)

Peterson and Anand summarise the perspective as describing “how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved” (2004, p.311). This means that the processes through which we generate culture are themselves implicated in the outcomes of that production. This

suggests that studies incorporating a production of culture perspective present the following elements:

- (a) they focus on the expressive aspects of culture rather than values
- (b) they explore the processes of symbol production
- (c) they use the tools of analysis developed in the study of organizations, occupations, networks, and communities; and
- (d) they make possible comparisons across the diverse sites of culture creation.

(Peterson & Anand, 2004, p.312)

Following the first 25 years of this theory's practice in the field of cultural sociology, Peterson and Anand (2004) go on to suggest that there are six primary facets that contribute to the field of symbolic and cultural production. These are: market; occupational careers; organisational structure; law and regulation; industry structure; and technology. A summary of each of these has been included below as they describe what specific mechanisms through which the production process itself, are implicated in the goods that it produces. During the analysis of empirical data, these facets will be used to identify production behaviours that are implicated in the production of leadership products.

Technology

One of the key facets that poses key implications to the production of culture is the nature of technology and of technological change in particular. As asserted by Peterson and Anand:

Technology provides the tools with which people and institutions augment their abilities to communicate, and changes in communication technology profoundly destabilize and create new opportunities in art and culture.

(Peterson & Anand, 2004, p.314)

One oft-cited example of this was the development of the pianoforte and its implication for composers such as Beethoven in the development of a new genre of music (DeNora, 1995). Goodall notes that “the structure of a vast amount of orchestral music owes its shape to the mindset of the piano” (2000, p.175). Contemporarily, advances in communication technology have played a large role in the dissemination of culture,

commodification of information products and the changing of societal norms around information and privacy.

Law and regulation

Also implicit in production of culture is the nature of the regulations surrounding the production process. As summarised by Peterson and Anand; “law and regulation create the ground rules that shape how creative fields develop” (2004, p.315). As an example of this, the regulation and subsequent deregulation of industry can have profound cultural implications. As demonstrated by Lee (2004), the deregulation of the media industry and in particular laws surrounding radio, has lead to half as many songs being aired on the radio in 1989 as in 2002. This was the result of massive consolidation of radio stations meaning that far fewer people were involved in the selection of the music that went to air; subsequently impacting on the diversity and competition within the industry.

Industry structure

Institutionalisation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) is the process by which industrial fields (Bourdieu, 1993) form around new technologies, changing regulations and newly conceptualised markets. Industry structure can impact on the diversity of products, the level of innovation, the standardisation of products, the emergence of niche and speciality products as demonstrated in many cultural fields such as photography (Battani, 1999), country music (Peterson, 1997) and fine arts (DiMaggio, 1992). The role of industry in sculpting culture was recognised by Gottdiener as follows:

The best way to analyze cultural processes is to focus on how mass media industries function as complex organizations. The production perspective asserts that corporate/bureaucratic decision processes, along with marketing and distribution arrangements, so interpose themselves between the creators and the consumers of mass culture that organizational logic has come progressively to characterize the very nature of mass culture itself. (Gottdiener, 1985, p.980)

Organisational structure

The production of symbolic good is also influenced by the structure of the organisations involved in producing them. For example, “Small and simple structures tend to foster

entrepreneurial leadership and informal interactions that allow for the rapid decision making and rich communication required to facilitate innovative production” (Peterson & Berger, 1971, p.316). Whereas larger firms are better at exploiting the commercial potential of predictable routines and large-scale distribution channels (Coser, Kadushin & Powell, 1982). To demonstrate this effect, Thornton (2002) shows how the publishing industry’s adoption of multi-divisional form reflects the dictated logic of standardisation and marketing on large organisations. This effect also plays out with music label executives who attempt to mould the sound of new bands into already-accepted genres (Negus, 1999).

Occupational careers

As culture is produced through collective activity, each cultural field tend to develop its own ‘culture of product’ (Du Gay, 1997), often represented in the form of a career system (Becker, 1982) or occupational career. As summarised by Peterson and Anand (2004): “The distribution of creative, craft, functionary, and entrepreneurial occupations in a field is determined largely by its structuration.” Therefore the nature of these careers and subsequent influence on the symbols produced is affected by a wide range of factors such as reward systems (Crane, 1976), distinctive work demands (Resenblum, 1978), and the existence of specialised gatekeepers (Hirsch, 1972). Peterson and Anand (2004) summarise two general ways in which careers can be shaped:

In competitive environments, careers tend to be chaotic and foster cultural innovation, and career-building market-sensing entrepreneurs enact careers from the ‘bottom up’ by starting from the margins of existing professions and conventions.

(Peterson & Anand, 2004, p.317)

Markets

The idea of consumer markets is a construct rendered by producers in order to make sense of complex consumer behaviour and tastes (Peterson, 1990) often through observations and interactions with other producers seeking to satisfy those tastes (White, 1981). As well as the construction of new markets, the construction of a market can also be quite transformative such as Peterson’s example (1997) of the change of a market from ‘hillbilly music’ to ‘country music’.

Once identified as a market, leading consumer tastes become a self-fulfilling prophecy of production, as producers attempt to create cultural goods most similar to those popular in the market. This was most evident in Anand and Peterson's (2000) assessment of the effect of popular music charts, and how they are calculated on the allocation of resources to specific genres of music.

Though the six facets listed above summarise the mechanisms of the Production of Culture perspective, Peterson and Anand (2004) are the first to admit that the production system is not the sole influence on culture:

Although the production system profoundly influences culture, the conditions of production do not alone shape culture because other factors, including individual creativity (DeNora, 1995), social conditions (Liebes & Katz, 1990) and, as Lieberson (2000) has shown, regular endogenous variations in taste, are vitally important. Kaufman (2004) also suggests a number of ways in which culture changes and reproduces itself independent of the effects of the production system or society. (Peterson & Anand, 2004, p.318)

In summary, the Production of Culture perspective is a well-founded and exceptionally well-established perspective (DiMaggio, 2000) providing a means for understanding how the production process influences culture. In the following two sections we will enhance and extend this theory by introducing a greater understanding of the capitalist culture in which the process takes place and later, the role of the production perspective in the pursuit of class interests and the formation of social elites.

2.2.2 The Production of Culture and Ideology

One of the most promising directions to emerge for the study of ideology and consciousness is what has been call the 'Production of Culture' perspective.

(Tuchman, 1983, p.331)

In this section we will be applying some of the earlier critiques to a Production of Culture perspective and, in particular, its limited linear and sequential model and the elevation of the importance of the capitalist system in which the production occurs. All theorists working through a Production of Culture adhere to the concept that the processes of production influence the content of the products themselves. This in turn "influences

behaviour and structure” (Peterson, 1982, p.3). As covered in the previous section; Peterson (1982) proposes the linear and sequential formula that production influences content, this influences behaviour and structure which again influences production processes. However, Tuchman (1983) remains unconvinced about the purely sequential influence suggested by Peterson (1982); “for they presuppose reified distinctions between base and superstructure” (p.332). Tuchman summarises her key critique as follows:

It is not, as Peterson might have it, that the system of production influences content, but rather that the content is implicit in the processes of its production. Or, to put this juncture of process, content, and effect somewhat differently, the frame offers an encoded preferred reading. (Tuchman, 1983, p.335)

The second primary critique brought about by Tuchman is the negligence of the theory in emphasising the implications of the production of culture in the formation of ideology and particularly that of capitalism. She states that “by emphasizing the contemporary and industrial, those adhering to the Production of Culture perspective so take for granted the capitalist context that they do not notice how art in all of its forms is implicated in the creation of ideology” (Tuchman, 1983, p.332). Also elevated by Tuchman (1983) is the importance of the producers’ position within social classes and how this impacts on the nature of the products produced. These contributions are what Bourdieu (1979) refers to as the ‘cultural capital’ of class fractions, as consumer tastes act as an expression of this cultural capital, this further implicates the production of culture in the shaping of capitalist ideology (Tuchman, 1983).

As will be expanded upon in the next section, Tuchman also identifies how the production of culture can become a site for “ideological skirmishes” (1983, p.339) that often emerge through emergent class stratification as individuals mobilise and attempt to secure cultural capital. This was made evident through DiMaggio’s (1982) analysis of altercations between the emerging upper middle class and the incumbent aristocracy to control certain ‘high culture’ features of society.

Tuchman summarises that she does not wish to defend the Production of Culture perspective nor to replace it with an entirely materialist view. Instead he states that:

So-called subjectivist phenomenological theories can be used to make comments about social structure; that the production of culture entails (among other things)

the social construction of patterned way of looking at the world and necessarily entails in contemporary societies questions of class and capital; and that patterned ways of looking at the world also necessarily entail ideology and consciousness.

(Tuchman, 1983, p.340)

2.2.3 The Production of Culture and the Influence of Bourdieu

In this section we look to bring to the Production of Culture perspective a more critical edge that is missing in the earlier versions of the theory. To do this we turn to the work of DiMaggio and Battani, both of whom do us the favour of introducing key ideas from the work of Bourdieu to the Production of Culture perspective. Through the introduction of ideas relating class structure and elite formation, we can better observe the full impact that a production perspective can have on our understanding of the nature of leadership. The first way to accomplish this is to briefly outline the relevant ideas from Bourdieu that are later mobilised to make further sense of the production of culture. This limited exposé will include social capital, fields, habitus and cultural intermediaries. Each of these critical ideas are brought through in the following section where their implication in the production and distribution of leadership products is discussed and later demonstrated by the findings.

Social capital

One of the central ideas underlying much of Bourdieu's work was that of social capital. This was the idea that the capital possessed by an individual extended from economic capital to include social and cultural capital as well. This was brought about in part from the transition of remuneration from profit to salaries, which though it continued to reinforce existing class relations, did so not through inheritance of wealth but instead to the possession of cultural and social capital, often falsely attributed to talent or accomplishment (Bourdieu, Boltanski, & Saint Martin 1973). In this way they saw a person's position defined in the social space, not by class *per se*, but instead by the amounts of capital possessed across all dimensions; economic, social and cultural.

This phenomenon was demonstrated through an exposition of consumer tastes in France whereby he demonstrated that an individual's artistic preferences, such as for specific

genres correlated with their position in social space. Furthermore the work demonstrated that subtleties in language such as accent, grammar and style, manifestations of cultural capital, are implicit as to whether a person obtains social mobility (Bourdieu, 1977).

This is why the educational systems played such a significant role in Bourdieu's work. Historically, the development of the education system as a system for certification effectively created a market for cultural capital within which certificates acted as currency by providing a socially guaranteed medium exchange (Bourdieu, 1977). A medium that could be used to trade in the labour market, and this provides access to economic capital (Garnham & Williams, 1980)

Habitus

Bourdieu describes his concept of habitus as:

The strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever changing situations ... a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to the analogical transfer of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems.

(Bourdieu, 1977 as cited by Garnham & Williams, 1980, p.97)

DiMaggio (1979) makes sense of habitus as “a kind of theoretical deus ex machina by means of which Bourdieu relates objective structure and individual activity” (p.1464). Habitus is the link that Bourdieu uses to mediate between structure and individual practice, and superficially seems similar to class subculture. DiMaggio (1979) cites that based on unconscious socialisation through childhood experience, each sub-culture develops its own characteristic habitus with individual's variations. Habitus is therefore tightly connected with class stratification and is embedded empirically through, for example, the use of language and linguistic strategies that are adapted to a particular set of chances for the achievement of social, cultural and economic capital.

A critical implication of habitus is its role mediating between objectivism and subjectivism, or structure and agency. By denying either determination by social factors

or claiming complete individual autonomy, the habitus mediates between objective structures embedded in social relations and the subjective behaviour of individual actors.

Fields

DiMaggio (1991) defines Bourdieu's concept of 'field' as a collective of organisations forming an industry, of the formal and informal networks linking such organisations, and of organisations committed to policing, supporting, or setting policy toward the industry. For Bourdieu all societies were characterised by the struggle of groups, classes and class fractions in the pursuit of self-preservation and their own reproduction. He observed this social action hierarchically organised as a series of fields within which people struggle over the all forms of capital specific to the control of that specific field; the economic field, the intellectual field, the educational field etc. (Garnham & Williams, 1980).

Cultural intermediaries

Bourdieu (1984) describes to us a segment of the service class known as the 'petit bourgeoisie' or, more commonly, 'cultural intermediaries':

Occupations involving presentation and representation (sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, fashion, decoration and so forth) and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services. These include the various jobs in medical and social assistance and in cultural production and organization.

(Bourdieu, 1984, p.359)

These are a group of professions responsible for the production and legitimisation of "various images, experiences and lifestyles" (Maguire, 2008, p.212). They play a central role in the promotion of consumption, acting not simply as producers of goods and services, but crucially involved in the mobilisation and motivation of consumers; connecting their fears and desires to particular product qualities (du Gay, 2004). Giddens (1991) suggests that the second role of the cultural intermediary is in connecting the consumer with a more fundamental consumption mentality, which more than reproducing consumer economics, spurs an attitude of reflexive self-production. This phenomenon is manifest in late modern capitalist culture where the process of modernity places increased emphasis on identity and the pursuit of becoming oneself (Featherston,

1991). Capturing this emergent dual role, Maguire (2008) describes the role of personal trainers as cultural intermediaries as follows:

Contemporary exercise culture is not about enforced, collective callisthenics at set times during the day, but about enticing people to work out through promises of improved health and appearance (and the chance to look like one's personal trainer!). This is an indirect mode of authority, which involves the expectation that authority figures must be able to lead themselves in order to lead others (Foucault, 1986); hence, the interest in the personal lives of authority figures. In a sense, the roles of all professionals are becoming more like that of the pedagogical professions: to influence, instruct and motivate, rather than intervene, dictate and punish. (Maguire, 2008, p.220)

2.3 THE PRODUCTION OF LEADERSHIP

It is important to understand leadership as a product of the many organizational, promotional, and discursive practices that characterize the leadership industries.

(Guthey et al., 2009, p.153)

The concepts and theories reviewed in the previous section help build a solid foundation for the development of a production perspective on leadership. The central thrust of that perspective is that leadership, whatever else it is constructed as, functions in a certain sense as a cultural commodity and symbolic good. It follows that if we can describe a set of activities as the leadership industries, then they are a unique set of industries – organised in a very loose and emergent manner, with all sorts of interchangeable roles and dynamics present. The best model for understanding such a phenomenon, being produced in such a manner, is the cultural industries.

The preceding literature prompts us to question why the Production of Culture perspective provides the most appropriate way of understanding the leadership industries. The primary reasoning is that leadership can be seen as a cultural commodity and a symbolic good, and because the industry itself is organised in a manner that resembles the cultural industries in several key respects. The remainder of this section will explore these ideas more fully by examiningg the ideas from the two previous chapters and how they might apply to leadership.

The production of leadership perspective situates leadership as a cultural commodity that is not suited to a centralised, factory mode of production. Instead, “the design, manufacture, and promotion of leadership products resemble more closely the production of cultural and symbolic goods and services” (Guthey et al., 2009, p.153). This removes leadership from any singular domain of understanding; it is neither an empirical object to be studied nor a set of behaviours or characteristics to be cultivated or disseminated by coaches, scholars and consultants. In fact, the activities of these and other actors and institutions all contribute substantially to the production of leadership itself, both as an idea and as a cultural commodity and symbolic good. As summarised by Guthey et al.:

The participation of so many different industries, actors, and end-users means that leadership actually consists of a range of different cultural and symbolic products and services which are difficult to categorize under any unitary definition or theoretical paradigm. Again, this means that it is important for scholars and practitioners to recognize the existence of different ‘leaderships’ – if only the word weren’t so awkward – different forms, theories and practices of leadership which are context-specific and which can either complement or contradict each other.

(Guthey et al., 2009,p. 155)

An argument can also be made for the extent to which leadership operates as a form of social capital. As we have transitioned from a model where individuals occupy social space through their possession of capital across social, cultural and economic dimensions; actors mobilise cultural commodities like leadership products in order to gain access to other forms of capital. In this way the consumption of leadership products can be seen as the acquisition of social and cultural capital used to both signify status and secure upward mobility and the long-term access to economic capital. In much the same way, a function that the application of the Production of Culture brings is that it places leadership in its capitalist context. So just as Tuchman (1983) suggested that early Production of Culture scholars disregarded the capitalist context, Guthey (forthcoming) extends this criticism to leadership scholars who, “by also emphasising the contemporary and the corporate, take for granted the capitalist context of the production of leadership and how leadership in all its forms is implicated in the creation of ideology”.

The production of leadership perspective also plays a role in elevating the endless discussions in the leadership literature that not only make the assumption of leadership existing prior to the discussion, but also disregard the shaping influence that the discussions themselves have upon leadership. Whether it is leadership scholars or development practitioners, the excess attention to the ‘true’ nature of leadership creates a misdirection from their own crucial role in the practice, conceptualisation and ideology of leadership. These debates for leadership ‘truths’ are situated by a production perspective as forms of competition, product differentiation and the result of innovation within the industry (Guthey et al., 2009); the result of which appears to be many different forms of leadership. A production perspective also places the academic field of leadership studies as an integral part of the leadership industries; Guthey (forthcoming) reminds us that this does not invalidate the field of leadership studies, but rather makes crucial the imperative of developing a self-reflexive perspective to account for the field’s own contribution to the production of leadership.

It’s been suggested that professional service firms share similar dynamics to the cultural industries (Jones & Thornton, 2005). As a similar and, in some cases, overlapping industry, the leadership industries likewise depend on the cultivation of “symbolic, creative and knowledge-based assets” (p. xi) in order to “create products that serve important symbolic functions such as capturing, refracting, and legitimating societal knowledge and values” (p. xi). Professional service firms also behave similarly in that they often deploy a discourse of authenticity designed to legitimise products by disassociating them from the commercial dynamics from which they arise (Guthey & Jackson, 2005). In their recent book, Guthey et al. (2009) outline several consequences and potential characteristics as viewing the production of leadership as organised as a form of cultural production:

- As with the production of other cultural commodities, the production of leadership takes place via a number of distinct yet interrelated sub-industries and institutions.
- Likewise, the production of leadership in these different contexts, as well as the interaction that occurs across these contexts, involves the active participation of a host of content providers, promotional entrepreneurs, boundary-spanners and gatekeepers.
- The consumption of leadership contributes to the production of leadership.

- The participation of so many different industries, actors, and end-users means that leadership actually consists of a range of different cultural and symbolic products and services which are difficult to categorize under any unitary definition or theoretical paradigm. (Guthey et al., 2009, pp. 155-156)

The four consequences above can provide a starting point for discussing what a set of leadership industries might look and function like in a New Zealand context, and serve to inform the discussion around the empirical results of this study.

The production of leadership perspective also invokes questions about the roles of cultural intermediaries, those who promote and mediate consumers' consumption patterns through representation and translation. For example, one thing offered by a production of leadership perspective is a sharper and more contextualised definition of business coaching itself; placing their role squarely into that of a cultural intermediary; mediating between corporate culture and, more specifically, leadership culture and the consumer.

To close this summary of this new approach to leadership, it is important to acknowledge the key underlying theoretical perspectives that inform the approach, namely the romance of leadership and the production of culture.

"The social construction of organizational realities has elevated the concept of leadership to a lofty status and level of significance. Such realities emphasize leadership, and the concept has thereby gained a brilliance that exceeds the limits of normal scientific inquiry." (Meindl et al., 1985, p.78)

The notion that the popular conception of leadership is overly laden with a brilliance that exceeds reality and emerged from the romance of leadership literature is deeply entrenched in the motivations behind understanding the production processes that allow this to occur. These highly romanticised and heroic views of leaders are, according to Meindl et al (1985), a natural attribution bias. The romance of leadership perspective effectively describes this consequence of the production of leadership but ironically misattribution the cause of the phenomenon to a basic psychological process of constructed attribution, rather than to the industrial practices of the leadership industries that work to produce them. The production of culture perspective on the other hand provides an alternative to the common tendency of understanding works of art, literature

and culture as products of genius or creativity through bringing a sociological approach to understanding the influence of social institutions and industrial practices. Because of this, it is anticipated to counteract similar notions that characterise leadership and its “brilliance that exceeds the limits of normal scientific inquiry” (Meindl, 1985, p.78).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Although social phenomena cannot exist independently of actors or subjects, they usually exist independently of the particular individual who is studying them.

(Sayer, 1992, p.49)

In this chapter we will be outlining the research paradigm under which research design decisions were produced. The methodologies and methods used in this research will then be explained and justified. This will be done by first outlining the critical realist paradigm followed by the specific design of the research. Each method will then be outlined individually and justified. The final two sections will then cover the data collection process and finally, an outline of the data analysis process.

Given our requirement to answer socially determined (constructed) questions in an area that exists above the level of individual interpretation there is an ontological demand to move above and away from the traditional research dichotomy of positivistic versus post-modernist perspectives. Critical realism (Bhasker, 1989) is a perspective on leadership that has been suggested by Rowland and Parry (2009) and Fleetwood (2004) that offers a solution to this ontological demand. As such, the opening section of this chapter will be a recount of the critical realist perspective and its application to a more meta-level approach to leadership.

Our first research question proposes to find what the industrial and social processes are that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity, the theoretical premise of which was discussed in the third section of the literature review. As such, this chapter will primarily seek to devise a methodological approach to answering the other question, namely: How do the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices in the production of leadership?

To understand this question and contribute to our understanding of the first question, this thesis will use a case study design produced through qualitative semi-structured interviewing and focus groups with key consumers and producers in the leadership industries.

3.1 CRITICAL REALIST PARADIGM

Any definition of leadership ultimately rests on one's ontological commitments
(Fairhurst, 2008, p.4)

Organisational studies, both epistemologically and ontologically, have for some time lacked any form of unification other than vaguely similar subject matter (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000). Much of the research in management (e.g. business economics, management accounting, strategy) has taken the position that their practice is little different from natural sciences and is inherently positivistic in nature. Conversely, there are other areas (e.g. organisational behaviour) that very rarely espouse positivistic tendencies, with many in fact being characterised by rejecting positivism as a starting point (e.g. Morgan, 1986; Alvesson, 1987). Similarly, the field of leadership research is also dichotomised, with some researchers approaching leadership as a quantifiable phenomenon (e.g. Avolio, 1992) and others taking a post-modernist turn towards more interpretive (e.g. Meindl et al., 1985; Grint, 2000) or discursive approaches (e.g. Fairhurst, 2007). Given this, it is common to arrive at the assumption that there are two basic perspectives for understanding the world, organisations and leadership: either reality is objectively available and knowable through empirical methods; or it is not accessible objectively and only available for interpretation as a product of discourse (Parker, 1992).

However, historically there have been many social scientists that have rejected both the tenants of positivism as well as postmodernist interpretations, particularly as identified with relativism. Included would be Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Bourdieu. One such tradition, and the perspective I wish to elaborate on and adhere to, is that of critical realism (Bhasker, 1989). This has been outlined as the third possibility outside of positivist and interpretivist perspectives (Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p.5) and articulated as applicable in the social sciences (Sayer, 2000). Though the explicit adoption of realism as a research paradigm has been rare in organisational studies, its character is present in much of the work associated with institutional theory (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and is present in more recent work as well (e.g. Kempster & Parry, forthcoming).

A critical realist perspective essentially asserts that social entities such as class relations, gender or social rules, exist independently of our investigation of them, and though they may not be directly observable, does not rule them out from consideration (Ackroyd &

Fleetwood, 2000). The inability to quantify or directly observe these inherently real phenomena is what separates realist from positivist-oriented perspectives. In addition, that these entities exist independently from our interpretations, separates realism from postmodernist interpretive paradigms. Within the critical realist paradigm are vested ontological and epistemological assumptions. Ontology, questions into the nature of being and existence, is brought to the forefront of our attention by a realist perspective. Critical realism presumes the capacity to illustrate and make claims about the social world, and thereby encompassing both the natural world and social world. This form of social ontology can be understood as follows:

Whilst the social world is a product of human action, it is not necessarily the product of human design, conceptualisation or discourse. That is, whilst phenomena such as class relations exist only in and through human (practical and discursive) activity, there is no necessity that the human beings involved are conscious of the part they play in reproducing these relations.

(Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p.11)

Therefore, critical realism stipulates that social phenomena can exist independently of our identification of them. This separates realism from many post-modernist ontologies, such as the view that social world is constructed entirely of discursive entities, revoking a capacity to investigate the existence of non-discursive practices. Furthermore, it rejects the notion of causality as mere regularity, as inherent in positivistic approaches. This then leaves the critical realist open to pursue underlying causal mechanisms. Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000) suggest a structured ontological approach as follows:

Table 3.1

Domain	Entity
Empirical	Experiences
Actual	Events and actions
Deep	Structures, mechanisms, powers, relations

(Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p.13)

This sort of stratified approach is useful for illuminating and explaining the structures and generative mechanisms that govern human behaviour and perception and hence provide the soundest ontological position for understanding the production of leadership. Strong

epistemic implications are also brought to the fore with a critical realist approach, as summarised by Sayer:

Critical realism accepts ‘epistemic relativism’, that is the view that the world can only be known in terms of available descriptions or discourses, but it rejects ‘judgmental relativism’ — the view that one cannot judge between different discourses and decide that some accounts are better than others.

(Sayer, 2000, p.47)

An essential assumption of critical realism is that people might not be conscious of the notion of underlying power structures, yet they still influence the production of social reality. These deep causal powers may not be capable of being observed through events, but are instead interpreted and explored through an understanding of the interplay between agency and structure. (Archer, 1995, 2000; Reed, 1997).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Mintzberg (1982) urged his colleagues to get rid of their constructs before they collected data, throw away their questionnaires and 7-point scales, stop pretending the world was divided into dependent and independent variables, and do away with ‘artificial rigor, rigor not for insight, but for its own sake’.

(Fairhurst, 2008, p,2)

As illustrated in the previous section, this research is being undertaken from a critical realist perspective and the research design is heavily implicated in that decision. The design and approach used in this thesis has drawn heavy inspiration from Kempster and Parry (forthcoming) and their work on critical realism, grounded theory and leadership. Though this thesis isn’t able to adopt a pure grounded theory approach due to time and space constraints, the influence of the approach was central to the development of the methodological, collection and analysis techniques that are used. As a further premise to the research design, this chapter will first discuss the type of methodologies adopted, namely the choice of qualitative over quantitative methods.

Conger (1998) has argued that qualitative research methods are the most appropriate for leadership studies as they allow for the emergence of nuanced and contextualised richness of organisational structures, relationships and practices (Kempster & Parry, forthcoming).

Conger (1998) criticises quantitative techniques for the imposition of limitations upon the examination of the nature of leadership such as the variation in contexts, its changeable character (Nadler & Tushman, 1990) and, most importantly, the affect of the symbolic and socially constructed nature of leadership (Barker, 2001). As such, the methods used in the research will be qualitative in nature. Namely semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In choosing a research design, our research questions should be kept at the centre of our approach:

- What are the industrial and social processes that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity and how do these present themselves in New Zealand?
- How do the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices in the production of leadership?

In order to answer the questions and objectives of this research, a case study design will be employed. A case study approach has been suggested as particularly suited to a critical realist paradigm, as outlined by Easton:

Critical realism is particularly well suited as a companion to case research. It justifies the study of any situation, regardless of the numbers of research units involved, but only if the process involves thoughtful in-depth research with the objective of understanding why things are as they are.

(Easton, 2009, p.19)

A case study design allows for the examination of the contextual conditions by examining the dynamics of people and situations, focusing on the meaning of situations and events rather than quantifying the occurrences (Yin, 2002). Yin (1989) suggests that all research questions can be categorised into the who, what, where, how and why (p.18). Case studies perform best in how and why categories that are far more explanatory in nature, “this is because such questions deal with operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequency or incidence” (Yin, 1989, p.18). A case design is also employed here as it allows the researcher the opportunity to disentangle complex factors and relationships, despite only a limited sample size being used. This flexibility is one of its major advantages not shared by more quantitative approaches.

Aside from being suited in terms of the nature of the data we wish to collect, it is also relevant to the nature of the context; in this case the leadership industries where we hope to elevate the interrelatedness of the involved actors and organisations.

A critical realist case approach is particularly well suited to relatively clearly bounded, but complex, phenomena such as organisations, interorganisational relationships or nets of connected organisations

(Easton, 2010, p.123)

More specific than a single case design, the research will be looking to examine the interpretations and behaviours of multiple organisations and actors within a segment of the New Zealand leadership industries, namely leadership development. However, the data will not be strictly segmented by respondent organisations due to ethical considerations where case studies would be easily identified as specific organisations. This can therefore not be considered a multiple comparative case study but can instead be conceived of as either a single case study or multiple case study, depending on the unit of analysis under discussion; whereby a single case represents the market segment and the multiple cases the actors and institutions within it.

This design is intended to add some depth to a broader analysis of the leadership industries through means of qualitative, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The objective of these is to provide insight into the way that actors within this industry make sense of themselves, their activities and their social relationships within the context of leadership development (Geertz, 1973; Van Maanen, 1979). As the leadership industries are predominantly concerned with the promotion of a cultural commodity that consists of symbolic identities and influencing relationships, it makes sense to draw from methods from the anthropological tradition. Though an ethnographic approach is not suited due to timeframe, in-depth qualitative interviews serve as an appropriate complementary method to elevate social interactions (Van Maanen, 1979). In the next section we will be outlining the methods used in gathering data for the chosen case study design.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Given the case study design we are using, as outlined in the previous research design section, it is important to consider what methods we will adopt to form the case. Mutch Delbridge and Ventresca (2006) remind us that critical realists begin by clarifying their ontological assumptions about the world and then proceed to select methods. That means that there can be a place for quantitative approaches although, as Sayer cautions, “they are primitive tools as far as explanation is concerned” (1992, p.198). As such, qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus groups have been selected as the most suitable methods.

A critical methodological decision of this research was the perusal of two methods for two different constituencies, namely: semi-structured interviews for producers; and focus groups for the consumers. The reasoning behind this derives from two practical requirements: timing and information density. Due to the time constraints of the Masters, it was not practical to interview the number of consumers required individually. Furthermore, since there are considerably more consumers in the market than was required to interview, I was able to set a time and work with those who could be present as opposed to having to cater to a specific few. With the producers the opposite was the case, they are a very specific sample and, as such, to ensure I could interview enough, it was essential that I cater to their timing requirements, making a focus group an unsuitable option. More important, however, was the type of information that was being gathered. Each interview participant was expected to have significantly more information about leadership development due to the nature of their work; as such it was important that the full amount of time could be spent collecting data from them. Participants in the focus groups possess significantly less pertinent information and thus, less time per person was required to reach data saturation and furthermore, the benefits of idea building from focus groups were more relevant to the participants. Precedents for these methods in leadership at a societal level include the New Zealand chapter from the GLOBE project (Kennedy, 2007) as well as New Zealand intergenerational leadership perception work completed by the New Zealand Leadership Institute (Levy, Carroll, Francoeur & Logue, 2005).

A key point of value that underpins the critical realist philosophy is that it seeks to provide confidence to qualitative researchers to remove the shackles of ‘doing things

right'. To gain the freedom of creative experimentation, "and be unafraid to draw on their own experiences having rejected more traditional ideas of objectivity and the dangers of using personal experience" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.13). This notion of experimentation will be maintained, through the following discussion of methods. The following two sub-sections will include a description of these methods and justification for their use.

3.3.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups allow the research to explore the meaning and interpretation behind stories by leveraging the interactive nature of the process whereby participants build on each other's experiences through conversation to help make collective sense of their experiences (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Patton, 2002). The focus group also provides a context where spontaneity of opinions can offer insight into underlying assumptions made by the participants (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Based on the aforementioned research design, focus groups can provide rich data as to how consumers perceive the leadership development industry. The focus group allows the different participants to use one another's accounts of leadership development to better understand how they build their own perception of leadership development.

Focus groups are, however, not without their limitations. Firstly, as the researcher has less control over the discussion than they would in an interview, action must be continually taken to ensure the group stays on topic. Secondly, the researcher can play an undue role in influencing the group. Due to the nature of focus groups the researcher is much more of an active participant than neutral observer. This needs to be taken into account during data analysis. Finally, the size of focus groups can have an impact on the range of opinions produced. The ideal size suggested is five to seven participants which ensure a diverse range of opinions without becoming so large that voices get lost (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Throughout the focus group I acted as a moderator in order to manage the group interaction by encouraging all participants to respond to questions. This better facilitated the phenomenon of participants building on each other's responses and helped contribute to the group's negotiation over group meaning in the discussion (Patton, 2002).

To avoid sculpting the opinions of the focus group more than necessary, there was description of my thesis given prior to the focus group session, aside from the information available on the participant information sheets (Appendix A & B). The questioning process took the form of statements for discussion — I would read a statement and ask for the group’s opinion on it. These became increasingly provocative and specific to my research as time went on. Some of these comments were reversed so as to minimize leading the conversation.

Before we began, focus group members had to sign a form granting permission to be recorded under the understanding that they could refuse to answer any question and leave the group without giving a reason. Unlike the interview sessions however, they did not receive the option of removing themselves from the data after the fact as their data would be intermingled with the others.

3.3.2 Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews

This subsection will deal with our method choice of qualitative semi-structured interviews through a discussion around the nature of qualitative interviewing, the questioning process, ethical considerations and finally some limitations of the method and how they were mitigated.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews enabled me to explore information in line with the research objectives, yet allowed me to probe for further information from the participants regarding significant topics that were either not included on the question list, or required further detail. Questioning was tailored to be responsive and open-ended, focusing on participants’ experiences and opinions of their organisations, other organisations, and the industry as a whole. This extended to questioning about historical context, future trends and strategic implications. I began each interview, after confirming ethical considerations, by asking about the person’s background with leadership and leadership development.

Hussey and Hussey (1997) note that all interviews occur on a continuum from completely unstructured to structured. The placement on the continuum reflects the degree of structure imposed on the participant by the researcher. As we are dealing with socially constructed phenomena, it is crucial to deviate from typical closed questioning in favour of open questions where we can highlight “the interpretation and meaning of the

described phenomena” (Bryant, 2006, p.248). As such it was deemed appropriate to use qualitative, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews.

As suggested by Patton (2002), questions flowed from more general or descriptive questions than those that more specifically targeted our proposed research area. Furthermore, the language selected also moved from a broader language to a more production-specific discourse. This invoked responses that were in kind, but with several participants demonstrating discomfort with the language used. This discomfort was used as a talking point for further discussion around leadership and language.

Between interviews, the order of the questions varied as often participants answered more than one question with their responses, so in order to manage the flow of the interview some questions were omitted or returned to. Furthermore, those which a participant struggled to answer were returned to at later stages in the interview when the participant had greater levels of comfort and more time to reflect on their other answers. Participants were also probed on many answers to ensure there was clarity of thought and that their interpretations had been captured in close to their entirety (Patton, 2002).

The interview attempted to cover a wide range of topics surrounding the business of leadership development. The data collected reflects the different contexts and interpretations that come from the unique set of experiences of each of the participants. Each participant’s observation of the leadership phenomenon was treated as uniquely developed and based on personal experiences and interpretations.

Before the interview commenced, participants were invited to review a participant information sheet (Appendix A) and then to read and sign the participant consent form (Appendix C), before granting permission to continue with the interview. This consent enabled me to record the interview while granting the participant the ability to ignore any question or terminate the interview without giving a reason. I also outlined to each participant:

- a. That they and their organisation would remain anonymous to the extent that they were an executive from an organisation engaged in leadership development in New Zealand.
- b. That the transcripts would only be looked at by me and my two supervisors.

- c. That the transcripts would be kept in a location separate to, and anonymised from, their consent forms.

All the above factors are present not only to protect the privacy of the individuals and the protection of commercially sensitive data, but also to create an environment where the respondent is more able to be honest in their responses. A common problem with interviewing can be the phenomenon of *inter alia* — the production of socially acceptable behaviours by participants in order to satisfy the interviewer (Burns, 2000). In this situation, the significant age, experience and status difference, to the participants' advantage, meant that the respondents were presumably less inclined to moderate their answers for my satisfaction. Further to this advantage, I also encouraged disagreement with further probing, and placed an emphasis on my own uncertainty with regards to the phenomena.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

From our stated research design and subsequent choices in method, it is now crucial that the data collection process for these methods is executed in a way that maximizes the relevance and usefulness of the data while mitigating biases and limitations. As such this section will discuss three elements of the data-collection process: the participant selection; data capture; and transcription.

3.4.1 Participant Selection

The sampling for this study was a form of convenience sampling, both for the interviews and the focus groups. For the interview, as there is a very small population of organisational actors who possess the necessary knowledge for a discussion around only a segment of the leadership industries, it was possible to pursue an interview with the majority who were identified as having a significant amount of experience in the management of organisations that deliver leadership development in New Zealand. The original list was identified via archival analysis of documents from leadership development organisations and snowballing recommendations from high-profile members involved in the industry. The criteria for selection was:

- Ten years or more involvement in leadership development-related activities.

And/Or

- Executive-level involvement in an institution that delivers leadership development services and has existed for five years or more.

From there, approaches were made via Professor Brad Jackson from which we received five willing respondents. They were then given the option to determine the time and location of their interviews.

As executives in leadership development are a relatively small population, it was deemed that one-on-one interviews would afford the greatest flexibility for the participant. This is contrasted with the respondents used for the focus group who are from a relatively large population and can afford me the flexibility of getting many of them in a single group simultaneously. More specifically though, it was anticipated that the producers would afford more insight into the inter-organisational dynamics and motivations behind organisational action, this is why interviews with producers were completed individually, as opposed to with consumers.

The sampling for the focus group was also a form of convenience sampling and was done through a PhD student at the University of Auckland, through her network in the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ). From that list we identified individuals who were either human resources (HR) directors or heads of learning and development in large organisations (200+ full-time employees). We went on to contact 15 people and received six responses, all of whom were from the professional services industries — across law, finance and engineering. All members of the focus group were present in person. This took place at the offices of one of the respondents. None of the participating members were direct competitors.

3.4.2 Data Capture

When engaging in qualitative interviews, one of the key considerations is how the data will be captured; there are a variety of options including video recording, written notes and audio recording (Kirk & Miller, 1986). For the purpose of this study where the ‘natural talk’ plays a significant role, audio recordings have been chosen as the most suitable medium. Recording allows for accurate records to be kept and also allows me to focus on the interviews - in this way I can listen more intently, rather than taking notes,

allowing me to probe more specifically, follow up on earlier-mentioned points of interest and, in general, make better use of the interview by observing interpersonal dynamics (Silverman, 2001).

All interviews, as well as the focus group, had the audio recorded digitally, following written permission from the participants. Each interview lasted between 35 and 97 minutes with the average time being just under an hour. The focus group lasted for 80 minutes.

Three of the interviews were completed in person with the other two taking place over the phone. Those done in person took place at a location outside the university, somewhere private chosen by the participant, at a time convenient to them. Those interviewed over the phone were called at their offices at a time they specified. All interviews were completed during normal business hours.

3.4.3 Transcription

After completing each interview and the focus group, the audio file was used for transcription. Transcription was shared by me and one other volunteer. Each transcription, once completed, was listened through and read by myself to ensure equal representation of the data between myself and the volunteer.

Transcripts provide an accurate record of conversation that can be returned to throughout the research process, granting the researcher a more robust understanding of the interaction when compared to other qualitative methods such as field notes (Silverman, 2001). In determining the level of detail required it is important to look to the type of analysis that will be completed. Though a critical discourse analysis approach was considered, it was not selected due to time constraints and hence it was deemed unnecessary to capture any but the most major intonational features such as long pause, laughter and inflection. The level of details captured is often understood through the dichotomy of naturalism versus denaturalism. Naturalism refers to transcripts where all intonation and utterances are captured in as much detail as possible. Contrastingly, denaturalised language removes the idiosyncratic elements of the speech such as stutters and pauses (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason., 2005). Though naturalised transcription has its place in conversation analysis studies, they are not necessary in work where the interest is in the informational content of the interview and can, in fact, impair the readability and

consequent usability of the data. As such, a denaturalised approach was used in our transcription. It should be noted that this is still a full and faithful record of the interview where our accuracy is reliant on the substance of the interview, this is driven predominantly by how that data will be used in the analysis process – this will be the topic of the next section.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

From the five interviews and the single six-person focus group; over six hours of interaction was captured, resulting in over 60,000 words of transcription. The purpose of this section is to outline what was done with the data to produce our stated findings in the next chapter. In doing so I will draw heavily on the forthcoming article by Kempster and Parry on grounded theory approaches to leadership. Though there was not the scope to include a full grounded theory approach in this research, due to time constraints, many of the grounded theory practices have been used to shape the thematic analysis process we adopt in this section.

This section will proceed by giving an outline of the reasons for adopting a thematic analysis approach, followed by a brief discussion on the coding practices used with the data and how themes emerged from this process.

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis and Grounded Theory

In the analysis of the interviews and the focus group, this thesis utilises thematic analysis. As the criteria for theme determination is often unclear and ambiguous (Bryman & Burgess, 1994), this thesis has drawn influence from both grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Chamaz, 2006) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1993). Due to both a deficit in expertise and time, neither of these approaches could be used, though critical discourse analysis (CDA) will remain an option for the data in future research (see Chapter 6). The concepts of CDA do, however, remain relevant to the coding phases of the gathered material and play a large role in the shaping of the analysis. Fairclough (1993) summarises CDA as follows:

Analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts, and

b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony

(Fairclough, 1993, p.135)

Furthermore, grounded theory plays a role in influencing how we work with the data, as opposed to shaping what we look for. Perhaps most important though, is that both of these approaches are compatible with the ontological and epistemological claims presented by critical realism. The understanding of discourse can be understood from a critical realist perspective as follows:

For critical realists, material practices are not reducible to discourse, or without meaning unless interpreted discursively; rather, material practices are given an ontological status that is independent of, but in relation with, discursive practices.

(Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig. 2007, p.102)

With regards to grounded theory, Charmaz (2000) argues from a sociological perspective there is a case for it to take a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism because the emergent theories focus on generating meaning that is ‘local’ and that “we can adopt grounded theory strategies without embracing positivist leanings” (Charmaz, 2000, p.510). This idea of ‘local’ places an emphasis on constructivism with findings anchored in a specific context. This, however, is also where constructivists and critical realists depart; where constructivists accept the ideas of multiple realities and critical realists assert only one reality in consort with positivists, but qualified with the fact that this one reality is generally interpreted differently (Kempster & Parry, forthcoming).

With regards to the interpretation of the gathered data, critical realists accept that differences exist between the empirical, the actual and the real. Furthermore, that data is collected from people as well as from, and about, material things. This also means that they accept that explanations are fundamentally interpretivist in character. The researcher must also acknowledge the problem of the double hermeneutic, that is, the issue of including the researcher’s understanding of the participant’s understanding (Woodside, Pattinson, & Miller, 2005). In mitigating this limitation it is relevant to think about the validity claims of critical realist researchers; as described by Kempster and Parry:

Critical realism allows researchers flexibility in the interpretation of the data and comfort in validity terms from not being constrained within the data. Researchers can accept that respondents might not consciously be aware of or be able to describe or appreciate social processes shaping leadership manifestation. For example, respondents may learn from experiences but not be aware consciously that they are learning. Therefore, we might not be able to immediately access such learning explicitly through empirical data.

(Kempster & Parry, forthcoming, p.27)

The purpose of grounded theory is to produce credible descriptions and sense-making of individuals' actions and words that are observably applicable. Corbin and Strauss describe this applicability as that "a theory should fit the area from where it has been derived and in which it will be used" (2008, p.300). However, does a grounded theory approach reconcile with leadership? Leadership as a phenomenon is considered socially real in the sense that if humans did not exist, it would not either (Fleetwood, 2002). This reflects the critical realist perspective that phenomena exist at the level of events and experiences but also at a deeper, sometimes unobservable, level. Leadership in this way cannot be readily seen, only its effects can be observed and perhaps felt. This goes against traditional notions of grounded theory which is implicitly applied only to the research of observable phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Contrary to this, Parry (1998) argues that grounded theory can be used as a method for researching non-observable phenomena like leadership.

Researchers adopting a grounded theory approach have typically been able to mitigate the criticisms generally levelled at qualitative research methods. For example, the need for generalisability of findings across a broad population has been substituted in favour of substantiveness of the findings for a more specific population. Because of this, the plausibility of the findings for an individual lay reader becomes a key component of the external validity of the findings.

Our process of thematic analysis that we apply, as outlined below, will seek to adhere to these aforementioned principles of grounded theory, only in slight modification to allow for the time constraints of a Masters thesis.

3.5.2 Data Coding and Theme Emergence

In this subsection we will discuss the approach that was used to code the interview and focus group transcripts into a usable data set. The analysis began using a phased coding process. Firstly, key phrases and exchanges were grouped into first level themes, where possible the language used by the participants was used to describe the theme, otherwise a simple descriptive sentence was used. From these first order themes I used the grounded theory process axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) whereby I determined relationships among the first order themes to group them into second order categories. These categories form the listed subsections within the following findings chapter. Lastly, these categories were used to infer the four overarching dimensions (Van Maanen, 1979) that are covered in the discussion. Unfortunately, due to the short term over which the data was gathered, it was not possible to restructure the interviewing process to reflect the emergent first or second order codes as would be suggested in a traditional grounded theory approach (Chamaz, 2006).

The following is an example of the organisation of quotations into first order themes. Then the group of these themes into higher order explanatory categories.

Table 3.2

Level of Analysis	Action	Data
Interview Transcript	Identified from transcript as significant and correlated or contradictory to other participants	IX3: without being immodest, I think we... because we're early adopters of new stuff, I think we create demand. Because we've been at the forefront of some of the big things that have come in to New Zealand.
First Order Theme	Grouped with other thematically similar responses in first order theme	Leadership development industry driving demand
Higher Order Category	First order themes grouped into higher explanatory category	Leadership Industry Affirmation

In the above example, the first order theme 'Leadership development industry driving demand' is supported by six other quotes expressing the same idea from multiple other participants. The theme was later grouped with five other themes, as shown in the table below, that were all deemed to fit into the explanatory higher order category: 'Leadership

industry affirmation". Where each of the themes in some way describes the participants 'trying on' a production perspective to make sense of their own and other organisations behaviour and thus affirming the production of leadership perspective.

Table 3.3

Leadership Industry Affirmation
Leadership development Industry driving demand
Leadership development organisations "setting the agenda"
Human resources "setting the agenda"
Leadership development as commercially viable
Leadership development costs money
Leadership development products

One major issue with any coding process, and analysis in general, is whether the themes, categories and relationships are a 'good' or at least 'acceptable' interpretation of reality. From a critical realist perspective, the answer lies in a concept known as 'judgmental rationality'. As explained by Archer, Collier and Porpora:

Judgmental rationality means that we can publicly discuss our claims about reality as we think it is, and marshal better or worse arguments on behalf of those claims. By comparatively evaluating existing arguments, we can arrive at reasoned, though provisional, judgements about what reality is objectively like; about what belongs to that reality and what does not.

(Archer et al., 2004, p.2).

The next section will demonstrate the findings of this methodology. It will show from a critical realist perspective how our case study design was enacted through interviews and focus groups and the transcribed data analysed for emergent themes.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter will demonstrate the outcome of the previously described focus group and interviews and illustrate the findings of the data coding and theme emergence process. This will be done by first outlining all of the findings that were garnered from the data followed by more specifically addressing the themes relevant to my research questions.

The first section will outline the findings of the focus group, a description of the data and finally, an outline of the themes that emerged through the coding process. The second section will do the same for the interview data, outlining its primary characteristics and the entirety of the first level themes that emerged.

The third section will present findings from the combined data sets with illustrative quotes separated by the four higher order themes that were identified as significant to this research. These are:

- Leadership Industry Affirmation
- From Ambivalence to Rejection of the Commercialisation of Leadership
- Criticism of 'International Leadership' and 'Cookie Cutter' Approaches
- The Development of the New Zealand Leadership Development Industry

The fourth and final section will broadly outline the differences between the two sets of data. In the chapter that follows, these themes will be reintroduced to the literature from chapter two.

4.1 FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

The focus group was completed with a group of six participants who are all human resources (HR) directors or learning and development directors within large professional services firms in Auckland. Originally they were approached as consumers of leadership development products; however, as has emerged from the data, the role they play is more complex, spanning from consumer, to intermediary, to producer. Their relationship with the interview group is therefore characterised as customer, collaborator and competition.

The purpose of this section is to outline all of the themes that emerged through the analysis process for this data set.

The data can be characterised by consensus which was captured by both specific words and the annotations included in the transcription (e.g. murmurs of assent, laughter, agreement etc) therefore there will be little contrasting that can be done between member responses and so the data serves to illustrate the perceptions of the leadership development industry that emerged from the group as a whole during the 90-minute interaction.

An analysis of the focus group transcript resulted in the emergence of 18 first order themes which are group into four basic categories in the table below for ease of interpretation, and do not represent higher order.

Table 4.1

Focus Group First Level Themes	
Nature of Leadership Development	
Leadership development as quick fix	
Leadership development as repetitive	
Leadership development for status	
Leadership development skepticism	
Internal leadership development not as a product	
Leadership Development Industry	
Business models and competitive advantage in leadership development	
Leadership development historically	
Leadership development products	
Leadership development overseas	
Trends in Leadership Development	
Management to leadership development	
More educated market	
Shift from groups to individual	
Leadership development trends	
Leadership development reflexivity	
Impact of Leadership Development as an Industry	
Commercial viability of leadership development's impact on leadership	
Dislike of product metaphor implications	
Leadership development ideas come from overseas	
Leadership development industry driving demand	

4.2 INTERVIEW RESULTS

The interviews were completed individually with five participants who are all executives in organisations that deliver leadership development services. An analysis of the five interview transcripts resulted in the emergence of 29 themes. These themes have been grouped into eight separate categories as presented below.

Table 4.2

Interview First Level Themes	
Market for Leadership Development in New Zealand	
Leadership development market in New Zealand	
Market demand for leadership products	
Human resources setting leadership development direction	
New Zealand Leadership Development Industry	
Leadership development industry historically	
Leadership development as a cottage industry	
Leadership development industry in New Zealand	
Leadership Development Business Strategy	
Educating the market	
Leadership development business models	
Leadership development competitive advantage	
Developing targeted individuals and their managers	
Leadership development market collaboration	
Reverence to leadership and management gurus	
Trends in Leadership Development	
Leadership development trends	
Shift from lessons to development	
Shift to long term leadership development	
Management transition to leadership development	
Impact of Leadership Development as an Industry	
Leadership development as legitimate and commercially viable	
Leadership development costs money	
Leadership development driving demand	
Leadership development organisations 'setting the agenda'	
Leadership development impacted by commercial nature	
Backlash from Leadership Industry Approach	
Inability to answer question	
Redirection from business question to what leadership does or is	
Redirection from supply focus to demand focus	
Leadership development as not a product	

Leadership Development Overseas

Leadership development industry overseas

Leadership development market overseas

Leadership In New Zealand Comes From

Leadership from culture and individuals

Leadership from overseas

4.3 OVERARCHING THEMES

As is evident in the above sections, the content of the interviews and focus covers a wide variety of topics that span all aspects of the leadership development industry. However, in the interest of exploring the production of leadership perspective, four themes that emerged across all of the participants have been identified to be covered with reference to specific quotations from both sets of data.

The first overarching theme this section will address is the way in which the participants affirm, accept and use a production and industrial perspective to understand their and others' behaviour. In this way the theme illustrates the various ways participants 'try on' the idea of the leadership industries and affirm the central premise of the thesis.

The second overarching theme this section will address is the way in which the participants are ambivalent and critical of an industrial or commercial understanding of leadership development and criticise the crass commercialisation of leadership development in general. As an extension of this, the third overarching theme discusses the distrust of many international approaches to leadership and the general disdain for 'cookie cutter' approaches to leadership.

The fourth and final theme addresses the formation of the leadership development industry in New Zealand. The data provide a description of the historical progression of the many organisations involved and emphasise that, as it stands, it remains a cottage industry in New Zealand.

All quotes in **bold**, are myself, the researcher (RS1), all other variations in typeface are to help distinguish between the various participants in the focus group (FG1, FG2 etc). Many of the quotes used in the findings have been sanitised to protect the anonymity of the participants; this has been achieved through the use of pseudonyms or by placing a sanitised description of the quote within square editor's brackets. If it was thought the

participant may be identified by someone familiar with the industry, the interview participant code (IX1, IX2 etc) was replaced an anonymised prefix: IX#. A similar practise has been used with dates that may identify the participant.

The four overarching themes are illustrated in the below table with their corresponding first level themes drawn from both the focus group and interview data. Some of these themes that overlapped between the two have been combined and re-labelled where necessary.

Table 4.3

Interview & Focus Group Overarching Themes
Leadership Industry Affirmation
Leadership development industry driving demand
Leadership development organisations 'setting the agenda'
Human resources 'setting the agenda'
Leadership development as commercially viable
Leadership development costs money
Leadership development products
From Ambivalence to Rejection of the Commercialisation of Leadership
Implications of leadership being delivered as a commercial activity
Leadership development for status
Inability or refusal to address questions
Dislike of product metaphor implications
Leadership development as not a product
Internal leadership development not as a product
Criticism of 'International Leadership' and 'Cookie Cutter' Approaches
Leadership from overseas
Leadership development as quick fix
Leadership development as repetitive
The Development of the New Zealand Leadership Development Industry
Leadership development industry historically
Leadership development as a cottage industry
The leadership development industry in New Zealand
Collaboration in the New Zealand leadership development industry

4.4.1 Leadership Industry Affirmation

Table 4.4

First Level Themes
Leadership development industry driving demand
Leadership development organisations 'setting the agenda'
Human resources 'setting the agenda'
Leadership development as commercially viable
Leadership development costs money
Leadership development products

The following themes that emerged from both the focus group and interviews that all in some way illustrate and affirm the idea that leadership development is organised as an industry that delivers a cultural commodity in the form of leadership products.

Leadership development industry driving demand

An emergent theme from the discussion is that the leadership developers themselves play a role in growing and shaping the market demand for leadership products as opposed to simply following and meeting market needs as many arguments would suggest. Here the participant suggests that through marketing efforts that have raised the visibility of leadership development options, demand has increased. Further to this, the actions of other institutions, primarily media outlets, have contributed to elevating leadership and increasing demand for leadership development products:

FG1: I think it's more visible. That there is, that people can, or rather there are products that supposedly can grow a person's leadership. So I think with the visibility has come the demand. Well if you think about the media and that sort of highlights leaders and business, leaders in sports and all that so it's very much, much more visible than it's been in the past.

In many industries, such as professional services, it is considered implicit that the providers grow demand through marketing and communication efforts. However, as it is often the stated case that demand for leadership products is a naturally occurring phenomenon, this perception of the participant's is challenged in these quotes about whether they, as developers, shape the nature and volume of demand for leadership products.

IX3: without being immodest, I think we... because we're early adopters of new stuff, I think we create demand. Because we've been at the forefront of some of the big things that have come in to New Zealand.

IX4: I think we play a role in creating it [demand]. I mean, I think quite a lot of people are using our model now. Our alumni take it back into their organisations. So that's where I talk about it being a bit of a movement.

IX4: How do you grow that further? Yes, I think that organisations like our own have made it our purpose, to do that. That's part of what we do. We raise awareness as much as we possibly can, although we're, you know we haven't got huge resources. I mean we're, interestingly enough, privately funded from all our supporters. We don't have government funding or anything like that.

IX5: I think the market to some extent has moved in ten years and we've sort of been partly involved with leading that. Moving from personal transformation, focused organisation transformation to which leadership is the key.

All of these responses indicate that the participants are not only aware that they are involved in driving and shaping the demand for leadership products, but also, to an extent, pursue that with intent. What is interesting about these observations is how much they contrast with the typical answer as to why there has been such a growth in demand which centres almost entirely around a changing marketplace and gives little credence to their own influence on growing that demand.

Leadership development organisations 'setting the agenda'

In a similar way to driving demand, providers potentially impact on what leadership is or does and our priorities around its development. The quotes below suggest that this agenda setting is one of the key roles the industry plays:

IX1: Oh, I think we need to drive them because I don't think, um, you know, as a mad sweeping generalisation it would be fair to say, um, you know, some organisations are doing a good job in terms of identifying and developing, you know, their high-potential future leadership talent. Others are doing it pretty randomly, and some are not really doing it at all. So we need to, um, you know, set the agenda if you like with you know leading practise, some of the research

that's around. If we were to just rely on demand, um, that wouldn't be sufficient, by and large, except for a few organisations.

IX1: Yes, we're more pushing than being pulled.

IX4: Of course. Because I think we're trying to broaden that definition. I think traditionally people have thought far more hierarchically. If you were to define... ask the man in the street to define leadership it would be a very hierarchical thing.

This was not a notion held by all participants however, with some perceiving that they play no role in this process and perceiving a more passive role in leadership organisations by providing opportunities for development, presumably without directing, what is important, this will characterise much of the next meta theme presented:

IX4: I don't think there is anyone setting the agenda. There are some of us who are trying to ensure that there are opportunities there so that we develop as many leaders as we can. But I often feel that, you know, we're a teaspoon in a lake, in terms of what, what should be happening.

Human resources 'setting the agenda'

This theme directly relates to the above, but places the role of direction -setting in the hands of the human resources directors who generally act as intermediaries between the providers and consumers of leadership products but, in this case, the participant highlighted HR directors who procure the leadership development programmes for their organisations as potential producers as well. This is done using production affirmative language, framing the various levels of leadership development providers in the market place and their roles in competition.

IX5: What role do you think these HR directors of learning and development, what role do you think they have determining sort of what the leadership agenda is in New Zealand? Not much. In the larger companies – Fonterras, Vodafone, Telecoms, those biggies. Do they in a sense define what's going to be on offer in the market as well? Ah... yeah. I think they put the brakes on a lot of companies... lot of... That's the biggest

competition for leadership... independent leadership providers... is these people here.

IX5: What I'd have more concern about is these people [HR directors]... to be honest. I'd have more concern about those people. Because, a couple of things is... to get really good leadership development requires a huge amount of introspection, and it means taking off your psychological armour, and most people aren't going to do that in front of a competitor who's competing for the next job up, and certainly don't want to do it in front of the leadership and development people, and others, where it's going to be fed up to the boss that, you know – 'Angus' might be a smart guy but is shit when it comes to leadership. So it's going to kill your reputation. So no-one's... it's got to be a psychologically safe space. So, you aren't going to get the CEO going along on a leadership programme with his top people and showing up... not... you know... he'll talk about it intellectually but... you know... he, he, he's not going to make the changes in his personal leadership style. And, you know, leadership is not about what you hear or what you read, it's what you do. And you know we say that nothing's learned until a behaviour or an attitude is changed. And to make those changes is a huge thing and it requires a very safe place, and these aren't safe places. Secondly, when you look at the culture surveys in these departments: they're more politicised and have, you know, one of the worst cultures in the whole organisation and that's ironic given that they're... **Meant to be the ones cultivating the good cultures.** That's my... so I've got more concern about that than Mickey Mouse people out there.

The observations above by one of our participants demonstrates the role HR directors in firms often take as developers themselves, citing some of the dangers this produces for participants and explanations as to why it may not work; namely, that a 'psychologically safe' place cannot be produced in the company of competing colleagues. Furthermore, he sees them as the primary competitors to small leadership developers in the market place and also a far greater concern for their impact on leadership over less legitimate small providers – presumably because of the legitimacy they gain from their position whilst sitting outside the market forces that would typically prevent a small leadership provider from growing. This notion is interesting as it also conveys that, even when a

participant can talk about leadership in a commercial context, framing it in terms of competition and providers; he is still uncomfortable handing off leadership development to other people who are perhaps less capable of ‘handling’ leadership.

Leadership development as commercially viable

One line of questioning that I actively pursued was the degree to which the participants perceived that the industry they were working in was commercially viable. To most this notion seemed palatable, whether they say the market is viable or not, and interestingly requires the participants to explicitly frame their work as production of commercial products.

IX4: What does the fact that leadership may have become a viable commercial product say about leadership, and how might it affect leadership? Well I don't know, I don't think it says much except that there's a growing awareness of the need for it and people are prepared to pay.

IX5: You know if I'd been dependent on it in the beginning, if I had to allocate myself as a cost then, you know, it wouldn't be good enough. Probably, certainly in our case, I'd say... around... 2004 I'd say.

IX5: Good coaches might have been making a living out of it back in um... probably about 2002 or 3.

IX5: People know about us, we have a reputation, um, and ah... Yeah. There's no need for a, a cold sell to, so this is why we're good and this is our credentials... People just know about us.

The above quotes convey both the normality and their lack of hesitancy in framing their work as commercial and the stages at which this became viable to run. One contrarian position adopted briefly by a participant raised the potentially incorrect assumption about the requirement that leadership be a profit-making industry:

IX2: Are you making the assumption here that leadership needs to be a profit-making industry? **Do you think it needs to be?** No.

In much the same vein of commercial viability, the notion that leadership is a legitimate activity for businesses to procure and supply was also pursued:

IX3: Do you think that leadership development as an activity is still trying to legitimise itself? Um... I don't... In some places maybe. Yesterday I had a meeting with the head of Foreign Affairs and he is totally committed to it. He said in his mind there is no doubt that it's the most important job he has in developing his people. Um... So there are enlightened people like him that absolutely get the point of investment, they really do. But there are other organisations who still see leadership development as a cost, not an investment.

IX3: them [gurus] being the best lends legitimacy to your practice? Is that the sort of goal there? Yes, definitely, definitely. And we have a history of that in our business. Of having alliances with people who do things we don't offer, and not pretending that we do.

The first quote above gives credence to the notion that the market perceives leadership development as worthwhile and even crucial, the second gives credence to the method of associating in building this perception of legitimacy. All of these quotes in this theme provide examples of participants adopting a language of production in order to explain the nature of their work in leadership development.

Leadership development costs money

To many, the notion that leadership development is costly and has value presents itself as immediately obvious, that elevating it to thematic status seems nearly redundant. It is disclosed here because I feel it is an important notion to be aware of particularly as we confront later data that discredits the notion of leadership development as a product. The following quotes are all illustrative of the costs of delivering and procuring leadership products.

IX2: To do this kind of work you have to spend money on building supportive stuff. That means you've got to be paid. And there's not that many organisations that are prepared to pay premium dollar. So I doubt there are more than five of us in New Zealand that can earn a decent daily rate out of this work.

IX3: There's always a demand for leadership. It's just that people actually have to be prepared to develop... pay to develop their leaders.

IX#: as they pay with us, you know. We charge a pretty basic amount for the programme and half the people go on it for half price so, you know, the cost for someone from a not-for-profit sort of area would be around [redacted], plus their own personal contribution of [redacted] for which they get a [multi-week] programme, and commercial outfits will pay twice that.

IX#: well you know in our case our people pay [redacted] plus other bits and pieces so... I don't know. \$17 grand for a week is a lot of money. And you might think, well, multiply that by 25 people, somebody's a multi-millionaire... but there's huge costs.

The primary focus behind these quotes is that, leadership development is expensive to produce, but what is charged is reasonable and a worthy 'investment' to be made by the organisations. This last quote suggests that though leadership costs money, when consumers are price sensitive, leadership developers can't address the market the way they want.

IX3: So the best leadership development is always where you have an ongoing relationship with the person, the team or the organisation. And if you've got people making decisions at particular price points then you're going to not be able to deliver what you're wanting to deliver.

The significant idea to take from this section is that all of the providers are uncomfortable in some contexts talking about the intrinsic reality of delivering commercial products; that you have costs and a requirement to cover those with a profit. This becomes significant when their ambivalence to leadership being discussed in this way emerges.

Leadership development products

A descriptive element that emerged from the focus group was to determine what the idea of 'leadership products' included for this group. The quotes below summarise the extensive array of products available for procurement by people involved in development at professional service firms. This is perhaps the most explicit example of participants using production-centric language to describe the leadership development industry.

FG2: I mean if you wrap up all those e-learning licenses, executive coaching. It soon stacks up.

FG2: So you've got your leadership programmes, individual coaching... See I also wonder, well I would include leadership development plans, individual development plans.

RS1: Is that something you purchase? Or you do in-house?

FG2: I would say that's an internal spend. There are sort of development plan templates out there but they wouldn't necessarily fit with, you know, they do need to be made for the organisation, I think, to work. Um, I would interpret that under activities because there would be time spent by people developing those plans for individuals, and hopefully helping individuals through those plans. Um, right, what else there? Leadership has loads of things.

FG1: What about assessments?

FG3: Assessments, 360degree, self assessments.

FG1: Self assessments. All the little products that you know.

FG4: We do a lot of one-on-one coaching, what you do with your leaders and people. So time spent and time, they have staff...

FG2: You could argue mentoring falls under that.

FG4: Yes, mentoring.

RS1: Do you think we're getting close to 50 billion globally? With coaching assessment courses.

FG2: Probably reading as well. Reading all the literature. Has there been any research done, that could be incorporated there?

FG4: We haven't talked about external seminars yet either.

FG1: Conferences

FG3: Seminars

The following quote from the focus group echoes common sentiments of leadership products being repetitive and more explicitly highlights the apparent need for leadership to continually reinvent itself. This is not held equally by all in the group, with some observing this as a more evolutionary process. However, overall the focus group demonstrates an inherent distrust of new products, citing that there are few new concepts being provided by leadership developers.

FG1: I think that it's interesting because if you think about the different fads around leadership over the years, and that it could actually come

back to being a commercial product, is that you need to repackage it every couple of years to meet the latest fad of – what do you get – you get transformational leadership, and before that there was... I can't remember what was before that...

FG3: Transactional....

FG1: Transactional

FG3: Authentic

FG1: Authentic.

FG2: Yeah, well one could look at it as just an evolving... thing.

The excerpt below suggests that for some, particularly technically-minded individuals, the production of leadership products and the ‘packaging’ this entails lends to a legitimisation of the products. For them, the structured approach provided by leadership developers increases compliance with the adoption of ideas in the organisation. The implications of commercial production in this case are perceived in a positive light through their capacity to make ideas, and presumably practise, more accessible.

FG5: If we tell them: ‘This is how you do it’ they’ll run off and do it that way. It’s great! You can use that to your advantage. I just didn’t think like that before.

FG3: No, our guys will find a reason, a mathematical reason why they shouldn’t, and they’ll beat us every time.

(laughter)

FG5: Ours just compliantly go along and do what they’ve been told to.

FG3: No, they’re not that compliant.

FG5: That’s the packaging as well isn’t it?

FG1: It is, yeah it’s how you... I suppose it’s the benefits of being able to package it, the product...

FG5: The product. Package the product...

FG1: So that you can sell it to the audience. I mean, I imagine lawyers would argue against anything so that’s... it doesn’t matter what you try to do...

FG5: I don’t imagine, I know!

(laughter)

FG5: It's good though.

All of the quotes in this section affirm the use of referring to leadership development practices as products, some of these responses treat this as positive, others are neutral about it and some are ambivalent about its outcomes. This ambivalence will be the topic of the next meta theme discussed below.

4.4.2 From Ambivalence to Rejection of the Commercialisation of Leadership

Table 4.5

First Level Themes
Implications of leadership being delivered as a commercial activity
Leadership development for status
Inability or refusal to address questions
Dislike of product metaphor implications
Leadership development as not a product
Internal leadership development not as a product

In this section we address the various ways in which the participants either denied that there existed a commercial approach to leadership or the general ambivalence and discomfort with the implications of providing leadership in a commercial context. This theme has a significant amount in common with the previous section in that, often it is by trying on and discussing leadership as a commercial product that the participants become uncomfortable and criticise the idea and implications. This section will be presented in an order that places these responses on a continuum; from those who try on the ideas of a production perspective which produces ambivalence, to those who don't discuss the idea and redirect around it, and finally those who outright object to the approach and language.

Implications of leadership delivered as a commercial activity

From the discussion it emerged that many were comfortable with acknowledging that leadership was being delivered through a legitimised commercial activity as demonstrated in the previous theme. However, participants were often uncomfortable with the implications that this has on leadership itself. This first concern surrounds the notion

that progressing through a structured learning process somehow devalues leadership in that individuals become ‘qualified’ as a leader as opposed to developing a leadership capacity.

FG3: I think it prevents people from actually developing awareness of when they can determine that they are a leader. So, if people go on a leadership course they then go: ‘Okay, I’ve been on this course, now I’m a qualified leader’.

The implication of a commercial approach to leadership often results in a scepticism in both the products and the people who deliver them. These quotes illustrate the sentiment that the promise of leadership development does generally not result in beneficial outcomes for either the organisation, which doesn’t transform; or for the individual, who sees himself as now ‘qualified’ to lead instead of actually attaining higher performance.

FG4: I think like that you know you get a lot of companies out there that just go – here’s your leadership course, this is going to transform everything and that’s kind of the emphasis because I don’t necessarily think it’s going to transform it. A lot of it seems to be quite copied and that a lot of the courses seem to be quite similar in their content so...

FG3: I think it prevents people from actually developing awareness of when they can determine that they are a leader. So, if people go on a leadership course they then go: ‘Okay, I’ve been on this course, now I’m a qualified leader’.

One participant suggests that this scepticism is driven in part by a lack of confidence in the facilitators:

FG2: Yeah, in terms of our people wanting to go on a... you see I’m pretty cynical. I’m just thinking do you think sometimes the motivator is more about marketability rather than a genuine desire. Yeah, and I get cynical when you see not only the topics covered in a lot of external products programmes, in terms of face-to-face programmes – when you see the backgrounds of the facilitators. He was in the army for 30 years. Gee, really good. Or he was a cop for 15 years and then went into cop training and now he’s a leadership expert. Um, and these are the sorts of backgrounds of most of the people running these sorts of

programmes out there, which is why I don't have a lot of faith in them. And they're not necessarily coming from educational backgrounds either. I don't know.

Leadership development for status

As well as indicating an historical peak in demand and interest in leadership development, the below interaction raised the importance of leadership development programmes being used as a signalling mechanism by individuals in professional service organisations. Leadership development, instead of being about better leadership is as much, if not more, about the pursuit of being identified as better or as a high performer in the organisation.

FG3: I don't know if you guys have noticed this as an interesting trend lately but we've had more and more people than we've ever had before in terms of our staff, coming to us and saying 'I want to go on a leadership programme'.
(All murmur assent)

FG3: And when you ask them why it's like... there's no real explanation except you know, you know you're good, or you're talented, you know. They have this perception that it means I'm kind of better than everyone else if I go on a leadership talent programme.

FG2: You know, you're seen as one of the leaders, you're seen as one with high potential, and therefore, and all that takes is to be on a programme.

(All murmur assent)

FG1: Well it is, because when I hear people say 'I want to go and do this leadership programme' and I say 'so what are you wanting to get out of it?' it's 'oh, no, I just want to go on it'.

(laughter)

FG1: What do I need to do to get on it?

The following anecdote suggests that this signalling of an interest in leadership for the pursuit of status is not something that is emergent solely from younger members of the organisations, but is exemplified within the executive of the organisations as well.

FG2: I probably shouldn't tell this story but we have a global CEO in Umbrella Corporation (pseudonym) who will remain unnamed, in terms of country and person, who tells everyone he reads a leadership book every week, and the other

CEOs joke about the fact that ‘oh that’s interesting, he reads a leadership book every week’. They don’t see it anywhere in his Nice of him to read a leadership book every week.

Though the participant does not complete one of her sentences, the sentiment seems to be that the other executives find humour in his interest in leadership mostly because he is seen as someone who practices leadership poorly. These all provide examples of the participants acknowledging that leadership development is a product to be acquired by people within their organisations, but there is an overwhelming ambivalence as to the implications they associate with this; an inherent distrust of the status signalling behaviours that this type of consumption produces.

Inability to answer or redirection from the question

Some participants, as seen above, actively ‘try on’ the production perspective only for that to lead to ambivalence and discomfort around the implications of the idea. Others meanwhile, negotiate this same discomfort by refusing to grapple with the question or, more commonly, redirecting the content of the answer to other more comfortable topics. This thematic observation, therefore, pertains not to the content of the answers provided but rather what wasn’t included in the answer. The below are three examples of the participants inability to answer a question, this provides an interesting data point in that it reflects the participants perception of leadership development as a business or industry. I suggest that this participant, from my observation and knowledge of background, comfortably answer both these questions should they be based on another industry such as professional services. It also reflects an overall ambivalence and discomfort around discussing the leadership in a commercial context:

IX#: So my first question I've got to ask you is where do you think leadership development in New Zealand comes from as a business?

Where does it come from? I'm not... **So what forces have put it into place?** I don't think I've got a really strong view, or a clear view on that. I mean, I think, you know, typically learning and development and leadership and development as a subset of that is seen as ‘a good thing to do’. So what's the question? What forces have put it into place? **So often I would get a demand site answer, organisations are in more turbulent times and so they require more and**

more different types of leadership. (Pause) **It's alright, we can move to the next question.** Yes, I just think that as a question it's so broad, it's 'how long is a piece of string' kind of thing kind of question. I mean, if you're talking about historically you know, it's like people sort of know it's a good thing to do. As a reactive, you know, in the short term to the medium to longer term aspects, um. Yes I'm not sure that's the best question in the world Angus. I hope you're eliciting what you need.

IX#: **What does the fact that leadership has become a viable commercial product say about leadership, and how could it affect leadership?** I mean... I'm just... I mean... I mean I just, yeah...

IX4: **So it's between \$15 and \$50 billion dollars a year internationally spent on leadership development programmes. But how can that be the case and we not talk about it as a service, as a business?** I find your figures difficult but... um... ah... I mean, I don't. As I think I've said to you before, I don't see that we provide a service.

Related to this is the other participant behaviour of redirecting questions about the business of leadership development to discussing the nature of leadership itself and what they think leadership really is. These citations are omitted here as are long and not pertinent to discussion. Another way this theme is expressed is through redirection from talking about supply side characteristics of the industry to talking about the market why they need leadership so much.

Dislike of product metaphor implications

This quote illustrates both some of the distaste people have of thinking about leadership being delivered through a commercial production system as well as the confusion that the product metaphor can bring about. The participant raises concern that as we allow leadership to take on product like characteristics it makes us susceptible to the same issues that other products do, namely post-purchase dissonance.

FG5: **Just, I'm just thinking that I'm just getting stuck on the word 'product'. But 'product' has quite negative connotations. We find our favourite products and then, much as we know we need to upgrade to the newer**

product, because the world has changed and the old product doesn't work as well, we're not good with that. And then, you know, if you find a particular product and you do try and champion that product. You can start championing the product rather than the content of the product.

Leadership development as not a product

Similar to the above dislike of the product metaphor due to its implications, some participants neither demonstrate discomfort nor try and avoid the discussion, but rather are directly critical of the notion that leadership development products are produced by an industry through commercial processes. Though only one of the participants in the study is featured in this section, the finding is considered significant as a behaviour observed by other industry members not available for interviews. As such, the interview quotes below should be considered as possibly applicable to a range of leadership development programmes and not opinions held about this particular leadership development offering.

IX4: the trouble with the conversation from my perspective is that I don't think of it as a commodity. I don't see it as a service. I see it as... it's a bit like ... sitting here talking about spirituality to me. Alright? So I can't think about it in that way.

IX4: I'd think of what we do as more of a movement than a product.

The two questions above summarise the cause of discomfort in the interview vernacular. That essentially the questions can't be answered due to a mis-alignment between my understanding of leadership development offerings, as products delivered by a business; and the participant's, that they are part of a movement more akin to spirituality. Both of these were in responses to questions postulated to all participants who displayed no discomfort with the language used, though often employed the aforementioned redirection techniques to shape the conversation.

IX4: because what we're doing essentially is enabling people to do things that they ideally would do in everyday circumstance. We're trying to encourage them to um... we're opening up their opportunities through exposing them to the whole community of New Zealand. We're creating networks for them that

they'll have for life, and we keep them networked together for life. And we keep them, we link them back with not-for-profits and schools and so on to develop young leaders. So we're helping them to develop their personal capacity, but they in turn are a part of us. So a product, in part, is something one usually consumes.

IX4: there's a wonderful network that sort of crosses the city, of people that respect and understand each other and can pick up the telephone and talk to each other, and who have that common bond and understanding. Is that... is that a service? Is that a commodity? I mean, you know. I don't see it as that.

The argument is essentially that non-tangible qualities such as the networking that results from the programme create a lasting durability 'for life' that can't be captured under the terms 'product' or 'service'. This notion is however extended by the participant to cover other industries typically described in these terms:

IX4: Do you conceive of, say, um, the provision of medicine as just a service? Like doctors or therapists? No, I think a doctor is more than that too. Cos you develop a relationship of trust with your doctor that... So I think you could actually say: well yes, part of what it is, is about making sure you've got skilled people and good resources and so on. And, you know, you're well priced. All the key marketing things.

Another barrier to a production perspective on leadership for the participant is that, since leadership development is pervasive throughout our lives, by people not providing it under a service model or through any accreditation it cannot fit under an industry model:

IX4: I mean, your leadership development began the day you were born, in the way you were treated by your parents and the opportunities you were exposed to. Did they need a certificate or whatever? And so on it went through your teachers, and the opportunities that they gave you, and your rugby coach and your cricket coach and whatever, and on it went. Right through. The person that mentored you and coached you and supported you through difficult times or when you went out and really wanted to achieve something. They were all your teachers. None of them is going to have a certificate.

Fundamental to this participant's perception is the understanding that leadership is a naturally occurring and necessary phenomenon for organisational success and beyond.

The role of leadership development is to be part of this naturally occurring process and to help it to take place, rather than to take advantage of it in a commercial sense.

IX4: You show me a successful organisation, a successful team, a successful nation, a successful city, and I'll show you some good leaders. You won't get it without them. You know. It's just... that's it. That's it. So hell, let's develop them, let's give them the opportunity to develop. So that's where I said before; I see us as part of a movement. We're not there. Our objective is not to make money from this... or a living.

Internal development as not a product

In the same vein as the above, some of the focus group participants also struggled with the production perspective. However, some in the group were more comfortable with using a product metaphor both for external leadership development providers and for their own actions internally. This was not held, though in good humour, by all members of the group, some of which preferred to think of their efforts as separate from the product-centric approach of external providers.

FG1: I've got to admit, all external programmes I do look at as a product. I don't look at the internal ones as a product of course.

FG2: Selling but not for money.

FG3: Why don't you look at them as product?

(laughter)

FG3: Because they're tailor-made?

FG1: Because they're mine?

(more laughter and chat)

FG3: That's interesting in terms of that it's palatable to look at everyone else's as a product, but we don't want to look at our own as one.

FG1: Well no, it is, it is, I know it is but

FG3: Because I agree with you

(laughter)

FG3: That's why I decided to put the spotlight on you rather than myself.

(laughter)

FG1: Um, yeah, I don't know... it's...

FG2: Is it because you're, when you're delivering that product, you actually see what a difference you make?

FG1: I don't deliver the product

FG3: What are you delivering then?

(laughter)

FG3: A service.

FG1: That's right

FG3: There's a difference.

FG1: I'm delivering change, no

FG3: What, from your conscious or unconscious mind what are you delivering?

FG2: Learning?

FG1: I actually see it as ideas

FG3: And development.

FG3: Well actually, that's probably a point, we have to package it internally to sell to the people who are making decisions whether I want to buy this product. So we do have to create the impression of a product. (all laughing and talking at once)

FG2: Is that my job? Bags not.

This again, as with all quotes in this theme, illustrates that though people are in most cases able to talk about and acknowledge a production perspective to their involvement in the leadership development industry, it is general accompanied by significant ambivalence and discomfort from doing so. This discomfort is extended in the following theme as we talk about the participants' perceptions of the international leadership communities' involvement in New Zealand and of the general criticism of applying 'cookie cutter' approaches to leadership development.

4.4.3 Criticism of ‘International Leadership’ and ‘Cookie Cutter’ Approaches

Table 4.6

First Level Themes
Leadership from overseas
Leadership development as quick fix
Leadership development as repetitive

This section reflects similar sentiments from the participant as the previous theme, but frames their discomfort, not around the production perspective per se, but rather the specific implications of this. Name; the globalisation of leadership products and the resulting ‘cookie cutter’ approaches that are often employed.

Leadership from overseas

One source of contention in the responses is regarding what degree the New Zealand leadership development industry is different to overseas, particularly America, and to what extent New Zealand leadership is defined by overseas thought on leadership.

IX2: I don’t think people really ask, ‘what does leadership mean in New Zealand?’ You know, we’ve imported stuff, and we’re definitely recognising the need for talent, and we’re definitely realising the difference between a good people leader and a bad people leader.

IX2: Then the third perspective on leadership is the corporate one where, mostly, we import what’s happening overseas. The global parent is doing leadership this, leadership that, they have the leadership development model. I think New Zealand is pretty good at saying: “That’s really interesting what they’re doing over there. We need to do something here, but let’s do it our way.”

Both of these first quotes recognise the role, particularly in business thought, that leadership models from overseas play in New Zealand. Two contrasting thoughts are embedded though; that we are not good at asking what leadership means in New Zealand, but we are good at saying we need to adapt overseas practice for New Zealand. This rejection of certain parts of an overseas approach was reflected in the experiences of another member citing that New Zealanders ‘didn’t like the language’ of the American approach.

IX#: I used to be an associate of a big American company that's now owned by Time Warner I think, called Forum International. It's not Landmark Forum, it's a big training company, and they had off-the-hook stuff and their requirement was, you know, to sell the off-the-hook stuff into other countries and it just didn't work in New Zealand. People didn't like the language; we don't like that 'cookie-cutter' approach.

The observation below acknowledges the hegemony of American leadership thought and frameworks and provides examples from New Zealand. The participant, however, dismisses criticism of this phenomenon as unrealistic, particularly in a global economy.

IX3: If you think about the big initiatives that have come into New Zealand in the last five years, they've been American. Like the whole Lominger competency framework, before that the DDI competency framework, the Gallup stuff. That's all American. We get very little from the UK any more, and I think we used to. So, I don't see a problem with it, though there still are people who say: 'Oh we don't want the Americans coming in telling us how to do it'. I think that's rather... you know... that doesn't work any more. Right? Organisations are global, people have got much bigger horizons we hope.

The above participant also notes the lack of leadership content proliferated in New Zealand from the UK and that perhaps this had changed over time. The example below further emphasises the US hegemony over our leadership education and suggests, though with little credence, that US leadership thought is dominant in the New Zealand university context.

IX4: And I would say if you are in a university context then it mainly comes out of the US. I mean that would be the major source. That's not to say that there isn't good work being done in other parts of the world. But most of the leadership people, most of the leadership thinking in terms of theory comes out of the US.

These final two quotes summarise two of the mechanisms that produce the aforementioned affect on leadership in New Zealand by the US. Firstly, that the proliferation is partly spread through the popularisation of American leadership literature, fuelled in part through international shipping from American e-commerce site: Amazon.

And secondly, that increased travel and emigration between nations, particularly by executives, leads to the ideas disseminating across borders with them.

IX3: Yes it does. Quite interesting. When you go to talk with a chief executive about what they want to do, you've found that they've read the latest Steven Cubby, or they've read Charles Handy or something like that or they're a Dungy fan. You know? Yes, I think it does. I think the Amazon access to leadership literature has definitely changed the way things happen.

IX4: you know, the movement of people back and forth round the world. It is a growing world awareness, it's not just a New Zealand awareness.

FG2: And we generally follow the Americans once they've... come up with something about 18 months, two years later we've got on the same... We're adopting it. We've jumped on the same bandwagon, basically, has been my kind of view of the parallelness going on.

The idea of New Zealand following leadership ideas was also present in the focus group. Both of the discussion fragments below emphasise the way in which a New Zealand conception of leadership is fuelled by ideas developed elsewhere. In this case, both indicate that the majority of leadership ideas are from North America and even explicitly exclude Europe from having a major influence of leadership ideas and practices in New Zealand. One example given above as to how these ideas come to New Zealand is the visiting of American leadership presenters; though not explicit, 'American buzz' and demand for these speakers is presumably generated through popular media and leadership book publication receiving local attention.

RS1: So we... you see the US as sort of setting the benchmark?

FG2: It's certainly driving the... the approaches and the thinking. You wouldn't really hear anyone talking about an English leadership author, or a French leadership author.

FG3: Here, here you don't, but it's very different I think in Europe.

FG2: Very different in Europe, and I think the Europeans and the British don't necessarily follow the Americans. But we, and Australia in particular... And that's why we get all the American speakers over here.

FG4: Mmm, I expect... I've got a bunch running round saying that certain leadership is the only way and, you know, which is potentially fine but so, yeah. And it's because most of the products, most of the leadership training

our people have had in our organisation have all been products brought in from external facilitators, and happens to be the latest American buzz. So I'd say yes it does, even though it might not be quite tangible to measure how. That's my views.

Leadership development as quick fix

One of the statements provided by the focus group asked them to compare the leadership development industry to the weight loss industry in the United States which exhibits similar revenues. What was unexpected was the extent to which the group continued to extend the analogy of the two industries past their size but to the, sometimes suspicious, nature of the industry itself. In this example they are drawing conclusions about the 'quick fix' qualities both offered by the industry and sought by the consumers of both products and how this urgency often covers up more significant and complex elements that underlie the process of either weight-loss or of leadership.

FG3: What you can say about what they're marketing – they're marketing for what they want. They want the weight loss – they want to be seen as a leader.

FG1: Mmm, so they want a quick fix.

FG3: They want the quick fixes

FG2: That's an interesting point. Yeah, and you use both things to try and cover up what's really going on underneath with the whole 'take this pill for that' while what's actually going on underneath to make you gain weight. The same thing maybe with your leadership product. Well, what's actually going on in your organisation? There are all these issues underneath that get covered up.

Leadership development as repetitive

Also emergent from the discussion around the weight-loss industry was the notion that both weight-loss products and leadership products are often very repetitive both across products and over time. One interpretation of this is that both of these industries attempt to reinvent themselves over time, propagating similar principles and ideas in a reconfigured way that can make the end results seem repetitive.

RS1: Pills, potions, diet programmes. It's a similar sort of size.

FG2: I think it's similar in the sense that a lot of the programmes, like leadership programmes, could be quite repetitive. And like the weight-loss stuff is the same message, quite repetitive, but just presented in different ways. Is that a similarity that there is between the two? I don't lose any weight from either so.

This notion is further reinforced by the following:

FG2: I think your question was a really interesting one in terms of external providers, how well they supply, because I'm not convinced they do. A lot of it is just repackaged. Yeah. It sounds incredibly cynical about it. When you start drawing down you see – hmm, that looks quite similar to that one.

FG4: Fancy new title.

FG1: I see it's more expensive.

FG2: It's got leadership in it, we can charge twice as much.

As well as illustrating a general disdain for repetitive and seemingly repackaged products, the participant also elevates the significance of leadership products becoming more expensive either over time or simply as they are repackaged from traditional management development offerings.

Both of these last two themes have illustrated more specifically some of the issues identified with leadership development products and especially those stemming from overseas institutions.

4.4.1 The Construction of the New Zealand Leadership Development Industry

Table 4.7

First Level Themes
Leadership development industry historically
Leadership development as a cottage industry
The leadership development industry in New Zealand
Collaboration in the New Zealand leadership development industry

The fourth and final overarching theme that has been identified as pertinent to this thesis centres around describing the industrial nature of leadership development in New Zealand. This has been done by placing it within a historical context, reflecting on its nature and describing its current structure.

Leadership development industry historically

Many of the questions in both the focus group and the interviews centred around gaining an historical understanding of how the leadership industries had changed in New Zealand over time. At what points did organisations come into existence? Who was doing it first, and critically, when did it become sustainable for different industry players? The chart below summarises some of the relevant quotes and provides a summary for each time period.

Table 4.8

Time Period	Summary and Quotes
1980s	<p>The early 1980s were the earliest citations of leadership development programmes given by our participants, one of whom was operating in some leadership development capacity by the end of the decade. The majority of work during this time is characterised as being tightly embedded into management development programmes. Outside of that, this was also the period where outdoor education rose as a popular means of developing organisational teams.</p>
	<p>IX4: Leadership was covered... I remember way back in time, in the 1980s, with places like the New Zealand Institute of Management that used to cover things like team building and some forms of personality styles.</p> <p>IX3: So in general terms I would say it has only been since the mid-80s that we've had any extensive leadership development. If you look at the way other providers have done things – organisations like OPC, Outward Bound, you know. Really you can trace it back to the mid-80s, early 90s.</p> <p>FG2: I think it might have been in the 80s, but I'm probably wrong.</p> <p>FG4: In the early 80s I was here. I don't remember there being a huge concentration on leadership, and then I wasn't here for 20 years and came back just a few years ago and it had clearly hit by then. So I would say probably mid to late 80s was when it hit. And it became quite a... well it picked up from the global thing about leadership development from global organisations I guess.</p>

	<p>FG2: I feel like in the 80s and 90s at schools it was a bit of a commercial product because you went on outdoor pursuit camps, develop your leadership skills and all that.</p> <p>FG3: I wonder if it does start kind of around the 80s then, because I remember going to OPC because 'that's when you'll develop your leadership skills', and it comes out on your school report and all that kind of thing.</p> <p>FG4: It became a bit of a buzz kind of thing.</p> <p>FG3: In Australia it was probably a bit before that.</p>
1990s	<p>The 1990s saw the rise of leadership in common New Zealand business vernacular and by the mid 90s was an expressed organisational need. By the end of this decade we have the first signs of an industry forming with the first professional leadership coaches and institutes being established.</p>
	<p>IX#: You know, I went off and did an MBA in [early 90s] and it was the first time leadership was being introduced into the MBA, in a formal sense of leadership rather than management. That's when John Kotter was writing his stuff on what is leadership versus management. So it's not an old idea and it's moving very fast and there is lots of opportunity for development. So I think the base is there.</p> <p>IX2: What I remember in the early 90s was having to spend a lot of time helping people understand the difference between management and leadership. So certainly at that time there was not, for many people, a clear understanding of what leadership was. It was just assumed to be managing organisations, or managing people.</p> <p>IX4: I guess leadership development... certainly 1990s... wasn't really on the agenda... in universities. To the best of my knowledge. It certainly wasn't at Otago or Auckland.</p> <p>IX3: When did they get excited? (pause) I would say mid-90s leadership got pretty exciting. And has that changed? I think there's a variety of feelings about it now. Some people are very excited and others are pretty scared.</p>

	<p>IX5: You probably had some operators ten years ago who were, you know, involved with leadership development. In fact, as CEO at the Public Group (pseudonym) we used to hire people to come in and help with leadership development programmes and such. Maybe 15 years ago.</p> <p>IX4: Coaching was really just starting to get underway in the late 1990s, I guess, a little bit. But, yeah, leadership wasn't really a hot number in 1999, at the time when I decided to do what I've done. It was a hot number in other places, like the UK. But it wasn't a hot number here.</p>
2000-2005	<p>The first half of the 2000s marked the tipping point for the establishment of leadership-centric organisations with four leadership institutes being founded in the period. Developers noticed a significant shift in market demand and organisations in this field become self-sustaining profitable enterprises. During this time, it became possible for individuals to sustain themselves solely of leadership development activities.</p>
	<p>Did you ever observe a shift from management or organisational development to demand for leadership development? IX5: Yes. I think that has occurred. Over the last, probably, five years I'd say.</p> <p>IX4: Good coaches might have been making a living out of it back in um... probably about 2002 or 2003.</p> <p>IX4: You know if I'd been dependent on it in the beginning, if I had to allocate myself as a cost then, you know, it wouldn't be good enough. Probably, certainly in our case, I'd say... around... 2004 I'd say.</p> <p>IX#: I think more recently it has actually ... there is a growing awareness both in the corporate scene, but now in the not-for-profit area as well, and in the public sector, that in fact, yes, leadership is needed. What I do observe though, is that we still, and, and there are quite a lot of initiatives that have occurred just in the last five or six years, including our own, and Excelerator and um, the leadership development centres that the government's got.</p>

The above time periods all serve to place our current industry in a historical context. The following two themes explore the leadership industry as it has stood over the last five

years and as it is understood by the participants today. This time period is significant as the structure of the industry has remained fairly static, though organisations within it have grown significantly over this time period.

Leadership development as a cottage industry

One well-considered conceptualisation of leadership development organisations is as a ‘cottage industry’. Though only this participant uses this phrasing, it echoes a lot of the sentiments reflected by others in a small industry that is inherently still under construction by its participants:

IX2: Look, I think it's fair to say that what is happening in New Zealand is a cottage industry. What you have is maybe a couple of dozen if you're generous – individuals largely, who are out there doing a range of things from strategy through training, through coaching, and they talk about leadership. There is a fairly variable level of academic knowledge in the field. Some are brilliant, but a lot are clueless, you know. They've only taken one narrow view of leadership and that's what they punch out again and again.

What do you think the market for leadership in New Zealand is when compared to elsewhere? IX2: New Zealand is a great place to live, and if you're lucky enough to get some work, you know, you're very lucky. But most people will need to go overseas.

The leadership development industry in New Zealand

As stated above, the essential part of this conceptualisation is that the industry is still being constructed at this stage and is small. So much so, that many with the capability to work in this industry will often go overseas to secure work. The construct of an industry was accepted by the majority of the participants, however, usually with some qualifiers:

IX3: Well, clearly it's a service industry, but it's a coaching business as well.

IX5: So, is it an industry? I'm sure there are components of it that are an industry, that people see as an opportunity.

Regardless of whether the conceptualisation as an industry is fully accepted by its participants, the small number of organisations and the small number of willing clients to

pay for the products on offer still has significant implications. Two participants outline some of these implications as affecting the conversion rate of marketing dollars and changing the structure of the participating organisations:

IX2: You know, with size comes scale. So you know, a typical example, in a large organisation with a thousand people or more in New Zealand, you will probably engage 20 of those people in your programme, and it will often be done over one or two programmes in the space of a year. For the same marketing investment in Australia, for the same organisation, you might have three years of programmes, and you'd have three courses running concurrently – sometimes more. So here you're earning \$15-20,000, there it may be \$300,000... per year... and over three years – that's the difference.

IX2: You know they're all folk [other leadership developers in New Zealand] who have found a niche. They are a personal brand, and they do it really well. But none of them have ever been able to build leverage. If that quality of person is operating in Australia, or China, or the UK - you'd quite quickly be building a team.

IX#: I don't think that there's room for lots. I'd say there's lots of small players out there looking after small-medium-size enterprises [SME]. But to do anything significant with top people costs money.

The final example above raises the topic of the large amount of new entrants in the market who the participant describes as pursuing the SME market. Two quotes below capture the general sentiment of participants who are representative of market incumbents in the industry best summarised as disparate of their practices and credentials but optimistic of the markets capacity to make good decisions:

IX3: I think there are a whole lot of providers. In terms of a service industry I think it is a service industry, and that I suppose is one of the weaknesses of it because it's a rather one-level depersonalised process and it's often actually about running workshops on management rather than dealing with leadership or encouraging or supporting leadership. And I think there's a bit of a 'clip the ticket' mentality where there are leadership programmes that are unconnected with the organisation that the people are leading.

IX4: Well you've got people who've got sporting backgrounds, and they've been chief executives and all sorts of things. Um... they're only... Any organisation is only as good as the last job they did. So it's about reputation. And... um... yeah... I don't see a problem with that. I think the market sorts out who's good and who's not good.

However, regardless of the sentiment towards new entrants and current incumbents, participants were still wary of competition. The below four quotes express three varying sentiments about competition in the industry: firstly, incumbent resistance; secondly, the emergence of competitors diversifying from across industries such as recruitment and accounting; and thirdly, that as many new competitors enter the market due to low barriers to entry, incumbents are dependent on relationships and branding to stay ahead.

IX2: A lot of people like myself who are in this game, we are, and a I hate to say it, typical New Zealand rugged individualists – you know, we've had to battle our way through a tough 20 years and we'll be buggered if we're going to give it to anyone else. And that's unfortunately what is happening out there. You've got a bunch of one-person shows.

IX4: People in the recruitment industry... Other organisations are trying to... Other organisations are trying to diversify, given that their current... that their core businesses is been under pressure. One is the recruitment industry. You know, the word leadership flashes around all over the show. And they're getting into coaching.

IX4: Businesses that are like service businesses. Accounting firms for instance. Our accounting firm does our accounts but when I look at their paperwork they're running for their... not for the big companies, but for medium... small-to-medium-size businesses they're running leadership courses. They're accountants. You know, now, I won't say any more than that.

IX5: Well your barriers to entry are relatively low. I mean most leadership development people are basically consultants or contractors so you know: you need what's in here rather than, you don't actually need a big investment capital and so. I mean, it's really largely about relationships and... ah... um... reputation really. Brand. Yeah... I mean I think... I'd think of our...

One participant suggests in the following quote that the leadership industry itself is ironically suffering from a lack of leadership in the industry; what this sort of collaboration or competition might look like is discussed in the following section on business strategy.

IX#: There is an opportunity for leadership in the leadership industry I suppose. But I think there's a whole plethora of people touching around the leadership area. AUT, for instance, have got started recently, um, University of Auckland have been going for some time. Um. Leadership New Zealand, and we've been there, as I say, from [200#³]. And there's other training organisations out there. Lots of people doing coaching. So... yep... there's a few people in that space. And I'm mindful of the fact, too, that there's organisations too, from outside of New Zealand... providing leadership...

The final descriptive observation to make is that for those successful incumbents in the industry, growth has been such that marketing and sales channels are of almost negligible use, with sufficient work being driven by networks and word-of-mouth:

IX2: So that's been our pain, for certainly up until the last three or four years... but to be honest, the last three or four years I have not spent anything on sales... marketing... zippo!

Collaboration in the New Zealand leadership development industry

An intrinsic characteristic that came from the interview participants comments was the presence of collaboration between individuals and organisations in the leadership development industry in New Zealand. Many participants did cite the need for more collaboration, particularly involving private sector organisations working together as the Leadership Consortium does in Australia. The closest example cited in the New Zealand market is the Sir Peter Blake Trust who were the instigators of New Zealand Leadership Week and act as a point of commonality between industry members for that period. Apart from that event however, there seems to be little in the way of communication or collaboration between participant organisations.

³ Any data replaced by a hash is done so to preserve the anonymity of the participant. The fact that this occurred in the 2000s is significant enough information for the reader.

IX#: We developed Leadership Week with Sir Peter Blake Trust and Excelerator and NZIM.

IX5: We sort of operate pretty much in isolation. Um... I think... ah... There's probably a couple of threads integrated. I imagine one would be Sir Peter Blake Trust... does a job... as an umbrella. So... they're there but... and in some ways... have a role of their Leadership Week so I suppose that... No-one's ever asked me to come to a meeting around about with other people from the leadership industry.

On a smaller scale, the type of collaboration many of the participants cited as lacking, is in fact being facilitated, allowed and even encouraged by certain organisations in the market for leadership development products:

IX3: A number of government agencies are requiring in their RFP [request for proposal] process for... well, they're allowing you to do a collaborative pitch. Like three years ago, if you personally weren't big enough to do the whole job they weren't interested in you. Now they're encouraging that collaboration.

The example below of 'small player' collaboration may serve as evidence of this type of industry collaboration being facilitated by the market:

X2: I don't think there is nearly enough collaboration. You know if I look at one of our [NZ50 company] projects, it's becoming very collaborative, in touch with Jim Klein (pseudonym) and, you know, he does more in certain areas and I do more in other areas but we are now increasingly part of a resource team that is delivering some pretty stunning results.

Many of the participants stated and observed people within the industry working with and for other organisations as well in the pursuit of leadership development:

IX2: I think that work I've done with [a professional services firm] over the years, uh, that's very collaborative. So we work with the internal team, we've worked with outside players.

IX#: I've been on [a professional body] board, while I was setting up [a leadership institute], we work very close, and I do some work with them. [A professional foundation] which does a bit of leadership stuff, I'm on their board.

With the Leadership Week we try deliberately to work with Excelerator and so on. I think it's pretty good. I mean, the reality is that, that, you know, the market for leadership development is huge and we all offer something different so... yes ... I've got no problem.

However, given that, individuals performing across multiple organisations certainly does not characterise the entire industry, some organisation are explicit about the opposing the practice:

IX5: Well in our case we only have people who are exclusive to us, we don't have anyone who works for anyone else.

The final kind of collaboration cited by a participant was the use of inter-organisational collaboration between those actually being developed in these programmes as a way of producing cross-pollination of experiences and learning:

IX1: Another aspect of collaboration is giving broader experiential development opportunities. So rather than staying in your one organisation there may be some opportunities to get experiences in other organisations which, according to the researchers, is a very handy thing to do.

In addition to providing a descriptive understanding of the leadership industry in New Zealand. All of the above quotes in the previous four themes in some way affirm the idea that leadership products are distributed via a loosely coupled network of actors and institutions; namely, the leadership industries. In the following section we will be discussing the major differences in the findings between the focus group and the interview.

4.4 CONTRASTING FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The primary difference between these two data sets is the way in which both groups make sense of the market and the motivations behind individuals and organisations that demand leadership products. Focus group participants give no credence to changing issues in the nature of the way we do business in creating leadership demand, they only speak about these changes in terms of changing the type of leadership programmes that

are most suitable. Likewise, the providers of leadership development products didn't speak at all about the use of their programmes to signify status within an organisation or because there participants were looking to simply build their CVs.

The second-most evident difference between the groups was the way in which the focus groups characterised the nature of the leadership industry with themes such as repetitive, quick fix and status orientation. It is, however, unsurprising that there would be limited cynicism about the validity of products from the industry that produces them. It is interesting that those that do procure them would demonstrate this much distrust in the overall utility of the products they use. It does however validate many of the notions within the interview findings that suggest the market is more than capable of differentiating between the quality of leadership development products available.

A subtle difference between the two groups was the broadness and size of the industry as perceived by the consumers compared to the much more constrained and limited size perceived by the producers. This is likely attributable to the niche that the leadership developers saw themselves or their organisation operating in, namely those people who deem that they are doing *real* leadership development – what seems to be summarised as being specialised in leadership development only and based on experiential learning methods. The focus group participant by contrast perceived a much larger network that presumably included less specialised providers and also considerably more individuals operating alone as coaches.

There were however striking similarities in the comfort with which participants from both groups were able to describe the current array of leadership development available as being provided as products and services by an industry. The responses in this regard were so paralleled that there was only one member in both groups who demonstrated considerable unease at the use of the language with the words. Both, however, were comfortable in using the language to refer to other competitive products however.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In the first chapter of this thesis, I spoke of the extent to which leadership has permeated all spheres of modern life, being demanded of every individual, whether a politician or a store clerk. The pursuit of leadership in our organisations has been suggested to be overly romanticised and to have somehow achieved a lofty position in our society unique to this period. This thesis has sought to explain this phenomenon using the production of leadership perspective (Guthey et al., 2009) and by supporting its ideas with empirical data from those who provide and consume leadership products and thus play a role in elevating leadership's importance. This final chapter will assess how well this has been accomplished through a discussion of the overarching themes that emerged from the findings and informing these with the two research questions proposed at the beginning of this thesis:

- What are the industrial and social processes that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity and how do these present themselves in New Zealand?
- How do the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices in the production of leadership?

This will be followed by a discussion of the implications of this thesis for the scholarly community as well as the various practitioners' groups involved in the findings. Following a discussion on some of the limitations of this research approach and design, we will discuss the opportunities for future research that stem from this empirical exploratory study towards building a more complete understanding of the production of leadership and the leadership industries.

5.1 DISCUSSION

In this section, the literature review that built to the production of leadership perspective is brought to the findings presented in the previous chapter to form the central discussion of this thesis. The findings of this thesis both support the proposed production of leadership perspective and challenge existing literature around attribution theories on the study of leadership and extend both through original contributions to the production of leadership literature.

This discussion is structured around the overarching themes identified in the previous chapter but will reflect under each of these the implications for our research questions and how successful each theme is in supporting them. The section concludes with a summary that synthesises across all four of the themes.

5.1.1 Leadership Industry Affirmation

This section seeks to ascertain the degree to which the participants have affirmed the leadership perspective, not a legitimate, but as a lens through which they can identify with their work and the organisation of the other organisations that deliver leadership development. The production of leadership perspective is interested in how leadership concepts and practices are influenced by the social dynamics of their production, promotion and consumption (Peterson & Anand, 2004); the findings lend credence to all three of these elements and demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

The process of producing leadership products itself influences the nature of leadership concepts and practice; the best evidence of this in the findings was the degree to which the provider participants emphasised the cost of delivering leadership development products. The key implication that they suggest is that this means leadership itself must be reframed as an investment so that organisations are willing to pay for and therefore cover the costs of delivering the service. Through the provider interviews there was a continued emphasis placed on leadership needing to provide ‘return on investment’ for consumers and that this was an emergent trend - i.e. leadership and leadership development needed to change in order to remain viable.

The promotion of leadership products by the providers has played a significant role in elevating the importance of leadership in our society's discourses. The emergent theme 'leadership development industry driving demand' illustrated the role that the providers have played in increasing the visibility of leadership in New Zealand. This behaviour of raising commercial and consumer awareness about a range of products is a characteristic of any new industry seeking to build a market, but what is interesting about the behaviour is how little the participants attribute the massive increase in demand demonstrated over the last five years to the activities of their firms. This is touted as raising awareness of a pre-existing need for leadership that exists out within society already. This also demonstrated the participants making sense of what they provide as a commodity while they seek to promote it, what becomes evident though, is that this understanding of the product is laden with meaning and significance that illustrates their understanding of leadership as a *symbolic* commodity.

The role of the consumer in the production of leadership is also a significant factor to be considered. Guthey et al. says that "leaders do not exist without followers, and the production of leadership cannot function without its own consuming audience made up of organizations, corporations, executives, MBAs, leadership enthusiasts on the street, and aspiring leaders of all sorts" and that as the premise of leadership products is centred on discourses of agency and power, it makes little sense to characterise the consumption of the products as mere passive reception of pre-packaged goods (2009, p.156). Instead, the findings support the notion that the consumers of these products play an active role in the co-constructing the importance of leadership as a strategic and moral imperative. The consumption of these goods as highlighted by the focus group participants is observed as centering on social signalling and status-driven behaviours. This serves two functions; both of reinforcing the value of the products as something necessary for both their development as well as a characteristic of high performers, but also to undermine the romantic naturalistic conception of leadership that they are trying to preserve by associating it with a commodity that can be brought. The other evidence that suggests that consumers, and in this case intermediaries, should be considered co-constructors of the elevation of leadership, is the degree to which the focus group participants mirrored the romanticised views of the providers. The focus group members have a greater license to show cynicism towards the products that are available as they are not directly responsible for their production and distribution as the providers are; however, any

distaste for the products was held not out of distrust of leadership itself, but as a mechanism for defending *true* leadership. In this way the consumers are elevating leadership to a lofty position in the same fashion that providers do, and in doing so are further fostering the tension between a commodity and a meaningful symbol.

These findings all help us understand part of the answer to the first research question by providing an allusion to the industrial and social processes that occur in order to produce leadership in New Zealand. The social processes come through the consumption behaviour of the employees highlighted during our focus group, who see leadership products as providing status and social signalling. Meanwhile the industrial dynamics are characterised by the production and promotion of leadership products undertaken by the providers. Both of these are manifestations of the paradox of providing a commodity that is subject to differentiation strategies, and of leadership as a symbolic good where its status is abhorrent to being subjected to commodity claims like product differentiation.

5.1.2 From Ambivalence to Rejection of the Commercialisation of Leadership

The most prevalent feature present in the findings is a pervasive ambivalence among the participants regarding the notion that leadership is a product of a set of industries. The focus group is unanimous about this – they resist and criticise the notion that leadership is a commercial matter and have low regard for many packaged approaches, but they still recognise their own role in that process and the inevitability of leadership product acquisition. This is even more pronounced with the individual interviews, with one participant not even willing to admit that they provide a service.

The participants in the interview all play a large part in directing resources toward elevating leadership as a strategic and moral imperative. Ironically, this is in large part disclosed through their redirection from talking about leadership as a commercial product. By talking about leadership in a non-production language, they further the romanticisation of the idea, which in turn fosters discourses of the natural and imminent need for there to be more leaders and leadership. It is plausible that this is the underlying motivation expressed through the behaviours of either not answering questions that characterise leadership as a commercial product or their redirection of questions to a discussion around the importance of leadership. This latter behaviour, I think, is one of

the central characteristics of members within the industry who, outside of an anonymised interview environment, have demonstrated a tendency for this type of redirection from business conversations to discussing leadership and practice. Their role as producers of this type of product is in part to elevate leadership's importance as a cultural and social commodity which would be undermined by any form of commodification of leadership. This largely explains the commercial incentive for taking an ambivalent approach to understanding leadership development as an industry. Ironically, it seems that one of the possible hallmarks of a successful business model for the delivery of leadership services may be to deny that you have a business model at all.

As was demonstrated in the previous section, a majority of participants were able to adopt production-laden language, but at the same time this emergent ambivalence says something significant about how the participants view leadership. It was clear in both the focus group and in the interviews that leadership has enormous symbolic significance for the participants. Leadership really matters to them and it frames much about how they view their world as it is central to the development activities they participant in. This means that although the participants were able to talk about leadership as a commodity, they talked about it as a symbolic commodity. A commodity infused with a variety of meanings and associations that, for them, deem it worthy of significant moral, social and strategic elevation.

The discussion above plays a significant role in addressing our second research question that sought to understand how the actors and institutions involved in leadership development interpreted their industrial practices in the production of leadership. However, we can only ascertain what the participants think should be portrayed as their interpretation of their offerings. As demonstrated in the findings, it is clear that, to varying degrees, participants interpret their role as facilitating the emergence of leadership as opposed to providing it to participants. At its most extreme, this interpretation is noted as 'creating a movement' which the participant actively excluded from the idea of providing a product or service.

5.1.3 Criticism of ‘International Leadership’ and ‘Cookie Cutter’ Approaches

This overarching theme explores the criticism placed on New Zealand’s propensity to, like a majority of the world, import leadership ideas that have been established in other contexts such as the United States. The salience of this criticism is that it has much to do with what leadership and, in particular, leadership literature will look like in New Zealand in the future. The historical recount of leadership literature in New Zealand made a shift over the last decade from epistemologically and conceptually American thought such as transformational leadership (as mentioned in the scholarly historical review of New Zealand research), towards ideas and research that relate both epistemologically and conceptually to research completed in Europe.

A cursory glance at the GLOBE Study results (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007) illustrates that there are a multitude of leadership conceptions across cultures, and though this study isn’t here to make conjecture regarding the cause of these differences, the research approach and understanding present in these countries does correlate with differences in the practice and conception of leadership. This provides an explanation for the ambivalence towards American models that are perhaps less culturally aligned with the practices and conceptions that have emerged through the New Zealand literature over the past decade.

The structure of an industry also plays an integral role in shaping product diversity, standardisation and the emergence of niche and specialty products (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). This in part explains some reasons for the great variation and distrust between the products produced in well-established, mass markets like the United States, and a newly-established cottage industry like leadership development in New Zealand. This affectation is embodied in the far higher levels of standardisation in leadership products in the United States, shown through the proliferation of quantitative assessment tools and programmes that can scale to reach larger markets more effectively. Because of this, businesses in larger, more established, markets depend far more on leveraging predictable routines and large-scale distribution channels (Coser, Kadushin & Powell, 1982). This explains the prevalence of American-produced leadership instruments that make their way through channel partners such as professional services firms internationally. Peterson & Berger (1971) also explain that the opposite is often true of organisations with

smaller structures that can adopt the “rapid decision making and rich communication required to facilitate innovative production” (p.316) – a characteristic of the organisations presented in the findings. Crane (1997) expands, stating that smaller-structured organisations use these features to better exploit fads and fashions; though the capacity to do this rapidly was not reported, the findings did illustrate the propensity of leadership development offerings in New Zealand to continually reinvent the conception of leadership, a characteristic of production possibly enabled by the structure of the firms in the field.

The discussion above helps make sense of the ambivalence demonstrated by the participants of both the focus group and the interviews towards leadership approaches, that seem to be characterised by a ‘one size fits all’ approach that is often likened with approaches from the US. This ambivalence relates back to the aforementioned tension that participants hold between their need for their understanding of leadership to differentiate itself from other forms, whilst still embedding it with the symbolic uniqueness they perceive leadership to possess.

5.1.4 The Construction of the New Zealand Leadership Development Industry

The findings of the study also elevate the complex interrelatedness between actors and organisations that lend further credit to understanding the delivery of leadership development services through a cultural industries and cultural production lens. In characterising the actors and organisations within the leadership industries; Guthey et al. state that:

Each of these has its own niche, its own strategic logic, and its own set of organizational dynamics. They are connected in a loosely-coupled network characterized by cooperation, cross-fertilization, and competition.

(Guthey et al., 2009, p.155)

I think that all of these characterisations are evident in the findings of this study. Firstly, all of the provider organisations that participated in the study exhibited the occupation of their own niche and strategic logic, in a more complex way than simply product differentiation. We would expect differentiation to characterise an industry where

organisations can fall so tightly under a ‘leadership institute’ label. Instead, we observe unique strategic positioning offered by all firms: variation in funding models for participants; drastically different models for delivering the actual leadership development; unique propositions in terms of characteristics the participants can expect to develop in; and unique propositions in terms of what they determine leadership to be. Each of these has implications for the type of organisational dynamics produced within and by these organisations.

What was even more substantiated was that the organisations, and even more so the individuals within them, “are connected in a loosely-coupled network characterized by cooperation, cross-fertilization, and competition” (Guthey et al., 2009, p.155). Our findings suggest that this characterisation can be extended, at least with regards to a still-forming industry such as was exhibited in New Zealand, to include organisational and individual performance across multiple supply chain levels. As emerged in the affirmation theme mentioned earlier, the role of human resources departments and those involved in learning and development in particular, play a complex role within the leadership production process.

Within large organisations, the members of human resources departments can be thought of as direct customers of the leadership development industry, as they directly interact with the industry, make procurement decisions and are often the primary group being marketed to by the industry. Human resources directors, though, can also be characterised as intermediaries for the leadership industries – espousing the importance of leadership in organisations, championing the need for new products, and in many cases playing a role in preserving the reverence to leadership that we saw being produced by those ambivalent to a commercial approach to leadership development. Finally, human resources departments can also be thought of as producers of leadership development, as was exposed, with much cynicism, by one of the provider participants who cited these departments as the greatest threat to small leadership developers and also to the sanctity of leadership development.

The “loosely coupled network characterised by cooperation [and] cross-fertilisation” (Guthey et al., p.155) I think is enacted through the high levels of inter-organisational mobility exhibited by individuals within them. It’s ironic that the organisations themselves demonstrated very little cooperation and cross-fertilisation, apart from one

week in the year, yet the individuals who work in these organisations are known to run courses for as many as three different organisations. So, in this way, the organisations exhibit co-operation and presumably cross-fertilisation of ideas through the actors involved, but meanwhile, all this occurs almost entirely outside of traditional organisational channels.

5.1.5 Summary

This final section of the discussion will seek to integrate across all four themes and synthesise these results to distill the significant findings of this thesis. All of the interview participants indicated that a production perspective resonates to some extent, because they were all able to adopt that perspective and speak in a production-laden language to talk about leadership as an industry, albeit one that is in its infancy in New Zealand. At the same time, it was clear in the focus group and in the interviews that leadership has enormous symbolic significance for these people – it matters to them, and frames the way they look at the world since they are involved directly in developing leadership. So to the extent that they were able to talk about leadership as a commodity, they talked about it as a symbolic commodity, one that is infused with a variety of meanings and associations.

In fact, this is also why they were not completely comfortable using the production perspective to talk about leadership. Either they criticized the crass commercialization of leadership and cookie cutter approaches to developing it, or at the extreme, they rejected the appropriateness of the production perspective altogether. What this may mean is that there is an inherent paradox at the heart of a symbolic commodity like leadership, which has to do with the difference between a meaningful symbol and a commodity. At one level, this makes sense because leadership, like other cultural commodities, depends on a differentiation strategy – both in the focus group and in the interviews the participants are trying to establish the distinctiveness of particular conceptions of leadership. This paradox helps make ground on answering our two proposed research questions:

- What are the industrial and social processes that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity and how do these present themselves in New Zealand?
- How do the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices in the production of leadership?

So, the industrial and social processes that contribute to the production of leadership as a cultural commodity revolve around the tensions and ambiguities inherent in the attempt to establish, develop, and professionalise an industry predicated on a product that is supposed to be distinctive and differentiated from other products – differentiated from management, from leadership in the United States, from what other companies call leadership and leadership development, and differentiated at the level of leaders themselves, who should be ‘authentic’ and therefore not cut from the same mould. This tension is also central in explaining the way the actors and institutions involved in leadership development in New Zealand interpret their industrial practices: with a considerable amount of ambivalence – they view what they produce as a product, but they don’t want to view it as such because, for them, leadership should be distinctive and different, but cannot be in its entirety.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

As a result of the aforementioned discussion and, to some extent, the theoretical building undertaken in the literature review, this thesis provides several implications for leadership scholars as well as practitioners of leadership, leadership development and learning, and human resources managers.

To date, this thesis represents the first attempt to substantiate the production of leadership perspective empirically. It has therefore made an initial contribution to the study of leadership by providing empirical support for the existing propositions outlined by Guthey et al. (2009). In particular it suggests that the roles of producers, consumers and intermediaries of leadership development products are all, in part, dependent on their ambivalence to a production-loaded understanding of leadership in order to, ironically, preserve the value of the commodity across social, cultural and economic dimensions. In this thesis we have attributed this behaviour largely to the participants’ negotiation between the tension produced between understanding leadership as a commodity whilst preserving its symbolic value, which are often very disparate ideas.

For those individuals, namely the providers of leadership development products looking to perpetuate the growth of the industry as well as the continued elevation of leadership as a strategic and moral imperative, this thesis holds several implications. Firstly, as the market for leadership products continues to grow, the organisations that address a larger

market will have organisational structures that better suit that market, which has implications for the type of leadership they produce. If the integrity of the current mode of leadership is significant for a person involved in the industry; creating permanence around the way in which leadership is delivered, and the structure of the organisation which is delivering it, is critical. I think in order to do this, leadership development providers could be more explicit about the way in which they operate as a business addressing a market, as opposed to simply facilitating a movement. As a result they will build capacity to perpetuate the continued production of the leadership they so adamantly support. I think understanding the leadership as a symbolic commodity – one vested with a multitudes of meaning and associations – is one such way for organisations to conceptualise their relationship to production.

Likewise, for those individuals who participate in the leadership industry as intermediaries and consumers, the findings of this thesis suggest that personal interpretation of the leadership phenomenon needs to be at the forefront of the decision-making process when procuring leadership development products. As we've seen that leadership products themselves do not vary simply in quality, like traditional goods and services, but are also varied in the way the products are interpreted and delivered by those that supply them. The existence of what can be seen as a multitude of 'leaderships' (Guthey et al., 2009) presents a challenge for consumers looking to simply develop their own.

5.3 LIMITATIONS

This thesis has made helpful inroads in establishing a basis for, and, establishing the validity of, a production of leadership perspective. A majority of the findings, however, can only be viewed as exploratory due to both the seminal nature of theoretical development and a lack of comparable empirical studies. The rest of this section will address the various limitations of this research and attempts that have been made to mitigate these.

The primary limitation of the research design employed in the thesis is that it focuses on the leadership development industry as a force in elevating leadership discourses within our society without fully exploring the many other leadership industries that contribute to this effect. This effect was mitigated by leadership development being one of the largest of the industries and, more significantly, the individuals at the providers involved are

typically involved in other leadership industries such as publishing, conferences, coaching and research.

Participant selection and the outcome of our selection may lead to biased results. Specifically, the nature of the work of all members of the focus group was very similar and, as such, they find much in common in their experiences. This makes the data more relevant to one sector that the leadership development industry caters to, namely professional services, but makes their results less generalisable than other sectors addressed by the leadership developers who were researched. Among these uninterviewed consumer groups that were well represented in the producer interviews, would be individuals from the public sector. Participant selection was also skewed in the producer interview selection as Excelerator: The New Zealand Leadership Institute, was excluded from the sample due to my own participation in one of their programmes which disallowed me from gathering data from the institution.

The selected methods are also embedded with some specific limitations in this research project. Firstly, as the focus group was only completed with one sample group, it is possible that any diversity of opinion within the group was not brought forward in the pursuit of social conformity. To a lesser extent, because of their significant age and status differential with me, this is a possibility that the interview participants' responses are affected by social desirability bias as well.

Another potential limitation stems from the use of telephone interviews with two out of five participants to collect data. Both times this decision was made due to the geographic location of the participants that precluded face to face interviews. Though telephone interviews still allow for a degree of personal contact; body language cues are not observable, removing important communication signals (Collis & Hussey, 2003). However, this can also be seen as an advantage, that removing the researcher's physical presence can make the respondent more comfortable and potentially minimise the aforementioned social desirability bias.

The data analysis method, using axial coding, also has some embedded limitations. The categories that are produced in my data don't reflect any object barriers in the data, but rather my own sense-making as the interrelatedness of ideas. The higher order categories are, in fact, highly interrelated and carry many themes that could be incorporated into one or more of the other categories; this was in part mitigated by the inclusion of quotes

across multiple themes and categories. This, in itself, does not create an issue, but the very use of these categories in analysis directs and shapes the understanding of the findings as a whole, which plays a role in influencing the findings of the study. Readers are encouraged to read the presented data in chapter four so as to be aware of how the data was interpreted and subsequently categorised.

5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the limitations mentioned in the previous section, this thesis has provided an important basis for various avenues of future research. Several of these avenues and possibilities will be explored in this section including the historical production of leadership.

One of the primary research directions that this approach suggests, but only investigated superficially, is an investigation of how it has been produced historically. Where does our modern-day understanding about leadership in New Zealand come from? What are the historical antecedents required for us to talk about leadership at all? More specifically, an historical examination of leadership development in New Zealand, as elevated by this thesis, would seek to understand questions around the discursive construction of leadership in and through the media? Or when was leadership first spoken about in a political setting, an educational setting or in regards to outdoor pursuits in New Zealand?

Much of the understanding of the leadership development industry produced here is based on anecdotal and observational evidence. One important step towards theorising the production of leadership will be to engage in more quantitative, descriptive and objective analysis of the industry. How significant are they in terms of revenue, profits and personnel? What types of organisations are involved? How are they structured and segmented? How do the key players position themselves? Garnering a better understanding of the significance of the industry will further promote research into the various industries that operate within it and their implications for the idea and practice of leadership.

A concept that is mobilised by the production of leadership perspective but not analysed in this piece is the way in which leadership is mobilised by consumers as a form of social capital. Future research should include an exploratory look at the way the end-user

consumers of leadership products mobilise the social capital embedded in these products for social and economic gains.

The broadest recommendation for future research is that similar studies need to be undertaken in a broad range of leadership industries to examine and observe the roles of other actors and institutions in elevating the importance of leadership in New Zealand and globally. Suggested fields should include any where there is a significant importance placed on or rhetoric around leadership principles. This might include the recruitment, military, sporting organisations, popular media, high school education, or scouting and outdoor pursuits groups. Examining these fringe leadership providers as well as more traditional groups such as those involved in leadership research and coaching, will help to provide a fuller understanding of the ways in which leadership is produced and the implications of the production of leadership concepts and ideas.

Finally, future research should extend outside the New Zealand market to gain understanding of the leadership industry at different states of maturity. This will allow us to better compare and contrast the historical antecedents and industry structures to gain a better understanding of how the production of leadership affects leadership ideas and practices on a global scale.

5.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

With any form of exploratory research that is examining what hopes to be the new profound idea in their field, it is tempting to attribute the first empirical data set with the type of brilliance our participants often attribute to leadership itself. I will, however, try to resist the urge to do the same with this thesis. The production of leadership perspective is a new, exciting and challenging approach to the field of leadership studies and, as has been shown, this first piece of empirical research is just scratching the surface of one small market, within one small country, in which the production of leadership occurs. But already we can see the utility of understanding this field with an approach that attempts to see leadership past the romanticisation and symbolic qualities and, instead, see the extensive network of individuals who care about the phenomenon they observe so passionately, that they and their organisations have contributed to establishing leadership as central in the high performance vernacular of New Zealand.

EPilogue

Doing this work provokes a lot of questions from people about what I *really* think about leadership development, much in the same vein that most people want to know what leadership *really* is; as I've seen from doing this research, there are a lot of people who would love to tell you. As I said in my prologue, I've embarked on a leadership development journey of my own with all the bells and whistles we've discussed. Many people assumed that working on an industry I participate with in a critical way would make me cynical about the whole thing, but that's not what a critical perspective means to me.

I think being critical on a subject stems from being exceptionally passionate about that thing; from caring about something so much that you want to understand it, and then caring about it so much more that you want to make it better. That's how I feel about leadership and leadership development.

So despite engaging in this work, the world's problems will continue to look to me like they can be solved by more and better leadership, you'll still hear me debating what the *true* meaning of leadership is or what *real* leadership development is. Because I love the idea, I like the fact that it escapes comprehension so much that we have to continually reinvent our understanding of it and that there is something undeniably romantic about being given opportunities on the basis of possessing some indefinable quality, even if that notion is a little narcissistic.

This work is important to me. As you read this I've already stepped into the door of my new job where people are expecting me to do leadership everyday – apparently I now have the credentials. So I'm going to take this work, which in part is about how ideas become important, and I'm going to help other people do that with theirs. One day sometime soon, that idea will probably be leadership, or, whatever they think will save the world next. But for now, leadership will go back to being something I partake in, promote, practice, and (even if I'm afraid to admit it) believe in.

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APPENDICES

- A) Participant Information Sheet - Interview
- B) Participant Information Sheet - Focus Group
- C) Permission Sheet - Interview
- D) Permission Sheet - Focus Group

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Interview)

Leadership Development In New Zealand: A Production of Leadership Perspective (Working Title)

My name is Angus Blair and I am a MCom student at the Department of Management and International Business at the University of Auckland.

I would like to invite you to participate in research I am conducting for my MCom thesis. The research aims to explore leadership development in New Zealand. In particular, this project pays attention to actors and institutions involved in elevating leadership culturally. You have been invited to participate because of the duration and significance of your involvement in this industry.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. My research will involve an interview with you that will take between 60 to 90 minutes of your time, focusing on your perceptions of the role and practices of actors and institutions in elevating leadership.

No material that could personally identify you will be used in any report on this study. The interview data will be used for the purpose of writing of my thesis and any publications that arise from this research. You may withdraw from the study at any time and withdraw any identifiable data up to a period of two weeks following the interview.

I will also ask your permission to audio-record the interview. Again, you may decline to be audio-recorded, and you may ask for the audio-taping to be stopped at any time, without providing a reason. The audio tapes will be transcribed by me to assist in the analysis and reporting.

All transcribing will be done by me and once transcribed all tapes will be erased. The transcribed data will be electronically stored on a CD which will be secured at all times. The audio and video transcripts will be stored for a period of up to six years for the purpose of developing the research for further publication. This information will be kept securely so that only myself and my supervisors will be able to access this data. After this period of time, the data will be destroyed.

In order to maintain your anonymity in this research, all individuals' names and the name of the organisation will not be identified in the reporting.

On your request, you will receive a summary report of the research project upon its completion. Please inform the researcher if you would like this to happen.

I will also provide you with an interview consent form. I will ask you to read and sign this form before the research project begins. This consent form will be retained for a period of six years.

I would like to thank you for sharing your information and time for this research project. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor at any time. The contact details of myself, my supervisors and my Head of Department are as follows:

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For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:
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**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE ON 31ST AUGUST FOR 3 YEARS ON 9 SEPTEMBER Reference Number
2009/362**

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Focus Group)

Leadership Development In New Zealand: A Production of Leadership Perspective (Working Title)

My name is Angus Blair and I am a MCom student at the Department of Management and International Business at the University of Auckland.

I would like to invite you to participate in research I am conducting for my MCom thesis. The research aims to explore leadership development in New Zealand. In particular, this project pays attention to actors and institutions involved in elevating leadership culturally. You have been invited to participate because of the duration and significance of your involvement in this industry.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. My research will involve a focus group with you and 2-4 other individuals that will take between 60 to 90 minutes of your time, focusing on your perceptions of the role and practices of actors and institutions in elevating leadership.

The focus group will be recorded by audio cassette which will be on at all times. Participants of the focus group are allowed to leave the discussion at anytime and may refuse to answer any question, but information provided up to that point cannot be deleted. The tape will not be offered to a third party for editing or transcribing and a copy of the tape will not be offered to participants.

Data extracted from the focus group will remain anonymous as only common themes will be discussed in the thesis; no reference to information that could identify participants will be used. Focus group data will be held on audio cassette locked in a secure cabinet for six years, after which, it will be destroyed. This information will be kept securely so that only myself and my supervisors will be able to access this data. Due to the nature of focus groups, confidentiality among participants cannot be guaranteed.

On your request, you will receive a summary report of the research project upon its completion. Please inform the researcher if you would like this to happen.

I will also provide you with a focus group consent form. I will ask you to read and sign this form before the research project begins. This consent form will be retained for a period of six years.

I would like to thank you for sharing your information and time for this research project. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor at any time. The contact details of myself, my supervisors and my Head of Department are as follows:

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For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact:
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INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Leadership Development In New Zealand: A Production of Leadership Perspective (Working Title)

This consent form will be held for a period of six years

Researcher: Angus Blair

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this research.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or decline to answer any specific questions without giving a reason
- I understand that I can withdraw any identifiable data up to a period of two weeks following the interview.
- I agree / do not agree to be audiotaped.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.
- I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

Name (Please print clearly): _____

Date: _____

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 31ST AUGUST FOR 3 YEARS ON 9 SEPTEMBER
Reference Number 2009/362**

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

Leadership Development In New Zealand: A Production of Leadership Perspective (Working Title)

This consent form will be held for a period of six years

Researcher: Angus Blair

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, have understood the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this research.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or decline to answer any specific questions.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the group at any time but that data gathered up to that point cannot be removed.
- I agree to be audiotaped.
- I wish / do not wish to receive the summary of findings.
- I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

Name (Please print clearly): _____

Date: _____

**APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS
ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 31ST AUGUST FOR 3 YEARS ON 9 SEPTEMBER
Reference Number 2009/362**