

**Stakeholder Perspectives of Leadership in Organisations**  
**Within the New Zealand Sport Sector**

Katie Vulinovich

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## ABSTRACT

To date, mainstream 'traditional' leadership research has concentrated on a leader-centred approach, assuming leader behaviour and abilities as the focal point, and, as a result overlooking the idea that everyone can enact and contribute to leadership. Typically these studies are situated within the business sector and have employed quantitative research methods focussing on the overt 'leader' with little recognition of stakeholder perspectives and the importance of context (Kihl, Leberman & Schull, 2010; Jackson & Parry, 2011). It is in more recent years that some scholars have begun to embrace a more all-encompassing view of leadership centring instead on the 'informal' '*leadership*' view as opposed to the 'formal' '*leader*' outlook (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Welty Peachey, Zhou, Damon & Burton, 2015).

To contribute to this evolving body of leadership literature, predominantly that within the context of sport, this study sought to explore stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector. More specifically, this overall aim was explored through the use of two guiding sub-questions: 1) what are selected individual stakeholder perspectives of leadership; and 2) what themes emerge from these perspectives that advance knowledge and understanding of leadership in the New Zealand sport sector? The social constructionist lens, viewing leadership as a relational, shared experience was adopted, also recognising the significant role context plays in leadership interactions (Foldy, Goldman & Ospina, 2008; Grint, 2005; Ospina & Schall, 2001). This social approach to understanding leadership coupled with the collaborative nature of sport itself and the lack of research in this area, validates the need to consider stakeholder perspectives of leadership within the sector.

In order to gather this industry knowledge, a qualitative study was conducted incorporating a case study approach. Data were gathered from three individual stakeholders through semi-structured in-depth interviews resulting in rich, insightful sharing's. These interviews revealed that among other leadership learnings such as the importance of developing people, understanding followers and building teams, the key emergent ideas are the importance of; self-awareness and emotional intelligence, developing and managing relationships, and the social, relational viewpoint of leadership. Overall this knowledge helps us to better understand the notion of

leadership as a social, shared experience and contributes to enhancing our understanding of stakeholder perspectives of leadership within the New Zealand sport industry. In turn, these insights can be used to inform curriculum development of the leadership teachings in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at Auckland University of Technology, and help to enhance the development of students/graduates and their capabilities.

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### ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Student's signature: 

Date: **28<sup>th</sup> January 2016**



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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a popular topic that has seen a global increase in interest in recent years as it moves increasingly from being a concept associated with assigned 'leaders' to the more inclusive idea that everyone can enact leadership (O'Boyle, Murray, & Cummins, 2015). Traditionally, leadership research has concentrated on individual leaders (typically within the business environment) and their traits, attributes or styles of leadership (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009; Bresnen, 1995; Kihl, Leberman & Shull, 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2015). For decades, these leader-centred perspectives and ideas have taken prominence in the literature, often based around a common theme that the leader influences followers to meet organisational objectives. It is only in more recent years, however, that a more holistic, all-encompassing view of leadership has started to be adopted and explored, emphasising the idea of the 'follower' being a critical part of leadership and that everyone can enact or contribute to leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2015).

Drawing on the social constructionist perspective, this study views leadership as a social, collaborative, relational experience based on the idea that leadership arises from the constructions and interactions of people (Foldy, Goldman & Ospina, 2008; Grint, 2005; Ospina & Schall, 2001). The social constructionist view of leadership also recognises the significance of context and its influence on leadership (Grint, 2005; Kihl et al., 2010). In this case, the broad context in which leadership is being explored is within the sport and recreation setting, specifically the New Zealand sport industry.

The sport sector in New Zealand is extremely diverse with a range of stakeholder organisations (e.g., not for profit, government entities, charities) and contributors (e.g., volunteers, paid staff, community groups, parents). Furthermore, its mixture of ethnic and culturally diverse participants makes for a unique sport system, one that stands out on the world stage (Holland, 2012; Laidlaw, 2010; Spoonley & Taiapa, 2009). In New Zealand, sport plays a major role in society, making a significant economic, cultural and social impact (Collins & Jackson, 2007). The government agency, Sport New Zealand, claim that sport is embedded in the New Zealand culture and is a way of life for many New Zealanders, aiding in social cohesion; binding communities, families, individuals, regions and the nation together (Sport New Zealand, 2012). In 2008/2009, for example,

the sport and recreation sector contributed approximately \$5.2 billion dollars or 2.8 % to gross domestic product (GDP). That is a similar contribution to that of the dairy industry, which in itself highlights the significant economic impact. The typical New Zealand household spends as much on sporting goods and equipment as they do on dining out, a total of \$1.3 billion across the country. From a nationwide vocational perspective, approximately 60,000 people are employed in sport and recreation and an additional 750,000 volunteers give 50 million hours of their time annually (Dalziel, 2011). These volunteers are the powerhouse of the sport and recreation industry and make up the largest group of contributors to the sector. Moreover, not only do New Zealanders work and spend money in this area but they also participate in it. In New Zealand, participation numbers are among the highest in the world, with nine in ten young people and eight in ten adults participating in sport and recreation (Dalziel, 2011).

Leadership is also a critically important component of the sport sector, and is embedded in all aspects of sport both formally and informally (O'Boyle et al., 2015). If New Zealand is to continue to develop as a world-leading sporting nation it seems necessary to build on our understanding of the significance of leadership to the sustainability and development of the sector, and continue to challenge and develop our leadership knowledge, capacity and capabilities.

Following this logic from an educational point of view, it is therefore arguably important that sport and recreation graduates who will be embarking on work in the sector have a strong appreciation and understanding of leadership and a deep understanding of why this leadership needs to be contextualised to meet the needs of the sport sector as it grows, develops and changes. Recognition of the key elements that influence the sport sector, such as the volunteer-professional nexus (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015) and the competitive-collaborative environment is also potentially vital for graduate understanding of leadership. To make a greater contribution and move forward from leader-centred perspectives, it may also be important that graduates have the confidence and ability to challenge more traditional leadership thinking as understanding, appreciation, and recognition of leadership changes and evolves.

The overall aim of this research is to investigate individual stakeholder perspectives of leadership from organisations within the New Zealand sport sector. It is important to emphasise that this study is an exploration of stakeholder perspectives of

*leadership* and therefore the intention was not to focus on the characteristics and effectiveness of the individual *leader*. Although *leader* is often considered synonymous with *leadership*, for this study the idea was to gain an understanding of leadership in a broader sense, embracing a more informal leadership focus.

An ultimate outcome of this study (as distinct from aim), is to guide development of leadership capabilities within students so that they are well positioned to contribute toward the ongoing development of the sport sector. Specifically in this study of *leadership*, the knowledge and insight can in turn inform curriculum and student capability development and contribute to embedding the concept of leadership into the teachings of the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand. An optimum result would be that graduates will go forth into the industry with a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of leadership (identified and recognised as being significant to the advancement of leadership knowledge and necessary for the future of the sport industry) to be future change agents.

In order to gain this industry insight, the concept of the stakeholder approach was embraced, whereby stakeholder perspectives were considered essential to understanding the topic. Therefore consultation with individual stakeholders was vital to understanding their view and, in turn, embedding this knowledge. The complexity of the sport sector, with its diversity of organisations and groups, such as, for profit, not for profit, commercial, public, government agencies, and charities, generates an extensive range of stakeholders worthy of consideration. Although the majority of the literature on stakeholder concepts/theory draws on the organisational level, stakeholder's can be considered as individual or organisational. For the purpose of this study, the investigation is based on individual stakeholder perspectives, therefore their insights are based on their individual viewpoint as opposed to a representation of the organisation they are employed by. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) recommend that applying stakeholder theory to leadership research could benefit the advancement in knowledge and literature in the area. This is taken further in this study by adopting a less 'leader' focus and more 'relational' or 'shared' view of leadership, embedded in a stakeholder approach, within the context of sport. Although the stakeholder approach or theory has been gaining interest since the early 1960s (Freeman, 2010), in the sport

management literature it is a more recent idea with majority of the research (encompassing the stakeholder concept) focussing in the public (governmental) domain including events (Byers, Parent, & Slack, 2012; Leopkey & Parent, 2009), and on professional sport (Heffernan & O'Brien, 2010; Senaux, 2008). The need to apply this approach for educational outcomes within the sport industry was evident and therefore facilitated in justifying the initial rationale for this research.

Furthermore, AUT's position of valuing stakeholder perspectives is evident in the University's strategic plan which recognises and articulates the position of students as the focal point and the importance of those stakeholders it influences or is influenced by (Auckland University of Technology, 2012). One of AUT's five strategic themes is 'engagement with communities'. Prioritising this strategy highlights the University's desire and commitment to ongoing engagement with businesses, industry professionals and communities, and incorporating this into all of the University's actions (Auckland University of Technology, 2012). This underpinning philosophy creates a deeper layer of support for this research into understanding stakeholder perspectives, as it articulates the 'why' stakeholder consultation matters "in the creation and exchange of knowledge and in the application of learning and research" (Auckland University of Technology, 2012, p. 14).

## **Research Aim and Design**

The aim of this research is to investigate stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector.

In order to achieve this purpose the following questions were posed:

1. What are selected individual stakeholder perspectives of leadership?
2. What themes emerge from these perspectives that advance knowledge and understanding of leadership in the New Zealand sport sector?

In terms of research framework, the constructivist-interpretative research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) provided the platform for this study, underpinned by a qualitative research approach using a multiple case study design (Stake, 2006). Three individual stakeholders were identified using purposive sampling in order to ensure that,

considering the small size of the study, those selected had extensive experience to draw from and would be able to provide rich, insightful responses and teachings. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. An interview guide was used with a total of seven questions based on the three key dimensions of leadership; leadership of/in self, others and the sector. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted based on an inductive approach whereby themes emerged intrinsically from the data.

This introduction has given an overview of the dissertation, its content, context, framework, and desired outcomes. Chapter two reviews the literature in relation to the main topics of this research project, firstly exploring the stakeholder concept and approach and its place in the sport management literature and then contextualising the theory for the purposes of this study. This is followed by a review of the evolution of leadership research (specifically in the sport setting), insight into the social constructionist perspective, and the importance of context. Chapter three details the research design including an explanation and justification of the constructivist-interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach underpinning the study. This is supported by a description and rationale of the multiple case study framework and the methods used to collect, analyse and review the data. Following this, in chapter four, the main findings are identified and discussed as three individual cases allowing for each stakeholder's key messages to be highlighted and explored. To conclude, the findings are reviewed as a whole allowing for cross case comparisons, and emerging concepts and conclusions to be drawn. Chapter five also details the implications and limitations of the research, and highlights the contribution to curriculum development along with the opportunities for future research in sport leadership.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Leadership is a profoundly significant human experience and has a critically important impact on many aspects of everyday life. The interest and expansion in the field of leadership is flourishing; from the growing multi-billion dollar international industry of leadership development to the increase in leadership centres, university qualifications and leadership research across the globe (Jackson & Parry, 2011). In North America, leadership research has traditionally been funded by private and philanthropic sources however leadership research centres, institutions and more commonly universities, are beginning to see the value in this growing phenomenon and are investing accordingly. To date, leadership research has largely focused on a 'traditional' leader-centred approach, emphasising the importance of the abilities, characteristics and behaviour of the leader. Typically this research has employed quantitative research methods, concentrating on the corporate sector and as a result somewhat neglecting the importance and role of context and stakeholders perspectives (Kihl et al., 2010; Jackson & Parry, 2011). The abundance of research in this area highlights the lack of leadership research from a stakeholder's perspective in the sport management literature, and draws attention to the need for further insight into implementing a stakeholder approach to understanding leadership within the sport context (Kihl et al., 2010).

The main objective of this literature review is to explore research pertaining to leadership, the significance of perspective and context, and the application of a stakeholder approach to better understand leadership in the sporting context. To do so, the stakeholder concept is examined, including its position in the sport management literature, and the relevance of this approach for the purpose of this study. The evolution of leadership research is elaborated on, leading into the importance of perspective and context in leadership. Leadership is then explored through a social constructionist lens, allowing for the ideas of leadership as a social and shared experience to be highlighted. The leadership literature in the sport management arena is then reviewed, underlining the significance of implementing a stakeholder approach to this field of research. This theoretical understanding establishes a foundation for



research into perspectives of leadership of selected individual stakeholders of the New Zealand sport industry.

### **The Concept of ‘Stakeholder’**

The stakeholder approach has been generating momentum for the past fifty years and can be traced back in the literature as far as the early 1960’s (Freeman, 2010). It was with the release of Freeman’s first book in 1984, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* that seemingly brought stakeholder theory into the limelight. This advancement in the literature was somewhat overdue, as earlier theories of the firm did not always consider all of the wider influencers that affect organisational activities and therefore fell short in their contributions by having a narrow focus (Polonsky, 1995).

Although the definition of stakeholder differs, depending on who is defining the term, Freeman’s (2010, p. 25) explanation as “any group or *individual* who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” is perhaps the most well-known though not necessarily the most agreed upon description. Clarkson (1994), takes the definition further stating that stakeholders are groups/individuals who, voluntarily or not, have put something at risk in their partnership with the organisation. Authors, including Waxenburger and Spence (2003) express concerns around the lack of clarity and consistency in the definition of a ‘stake’ and stakeholder and the vagueness surrounding the concept (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Fassin, 2009; Senaux, 2008). This ambiguity is to some extent due to the range of possible interpretations and in order to move forward the two views can be seen as dimensions of the same reality, although with differing objectives – theoretical and applied (Fassin, 2009).

To visually depict the stakeholder concept, Freeman (2010) originally developed an oversimplified ‘stakeholder view’ model whereby the firm is at the centre, and the stakeholders branch out separately from this focal point. Each of these groups contribute in some way to the success of the organisation and, as the name suggests, have a stake in the organisation. Over the years Freeman has acknowledged the simplicity of the model and the complications that are associated with it and has since amended and attempted to refine his model several times (Freeman, 2010). In hindsight, Freeman suggests that a new conceptual approach is needed and it is with his updated

release of his original book that the focus shifts to a practical exploration of the stakeholder approach. It is the significance of embracing a stakeholder approach to the study of leadership that holds the most relevance for the present study.

Key (1999) critiques Freeman's stakeholder theory implying it provides an insufficient explanation of the organisation's behaviour within its own environment. Key (1999) outlines three additional significant flaws; inadequate linkage of external and internal variables and their complexities, insufficient explanation of process and weak consideration of the environment or system in which business operates and can be analysed, in other words lack of consideration of the context. She summarises that Freeman's 'model' overlooks the idea of change and how to manage change, and views the firm as fixed (Key, 1999). Key (1999) suggests that what 'stakeholder theory' as a whole does appear to offer is some clarity as to who the organisation is responsible to, and has brought greater acceptance and credibility to the notion that business is embedded within a system of social relationships that it both is affected by and affects.

In other literature, Wolfe and Putler (2002) argue there is insufficient rigour in the application of the model to strategic, organisational and managerial issues. Some scholars view it as a weak theory (Lépineux, 2005), while others claim it has no solid basis or foundation (Key, 1999). In some cases the term 'theory' is avoided being used altogether, instead, for example, it is referred to it as a science tradition (Weaver & Trevino, 1994). This supports the idea of many that Freeman's stakeholder model does not actually meet the requirements of a theory (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Key, 1999; Mitchell, Agel & Wood, 1997).

Fassin (2009) attempted to redefine the 'stakeholder model' and make sense of the ambiguity of the concept. He acknowledged the familiarity of Freeman's original and adapted models, recognising the evolution in stakeholder research, and created a model that retained the visual power of Freeman's framework, but with a new and insightful extension. His frustration stemmed from the way in which the models or representations, in an attempt to provide clarity, resulted in creating a more oversimplified and unrealistic social construction of reality (Fassin, 2009). By developing an improved more refined version of the model, Fassin (2009) has been able to clarify some of the confusion through introducing new terminology (stakeholders, stakewatchers, stakekeepers), and directing the focus back to the strategic origin of the

model. In summary, Fassin (2009) describes it simply as “the stakeholder who holds a stake, the stakewatcher who watches the stake and the stakekeeper who keeps the stake” (p. 128). In order to re-centre the discussion and bring the concept back to its original purpose, Fassin (2009) concentrated on three key areas; stakeholder definition, identification, and categorisation. His ‘stake model’, provides a more comprehensive and adaptable framework to better understand a surprisingly perplexing concept. Fassin (2009) is not alone in attempting to further develop stakeholder theory. Other scholars have also sought to challenge the ideas, however often creating more uncertainty and confusion (Andriof & Waddock, 2002; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Venkataraman, 2002). In reviewing the literature, Fassin’s (2009) model stands out as the most comprehensive and cohesive attempt at repositioning the framework. Overall, it is clear that the intrinsic flexibility of the stakeholder theory itself seems to be the underlying reason as to why there is so much ambiguity and confusion associated with it (Fassin, 2009).

Despite the detailed attempts at understanding and explaining stakeholder theory, the majority of the literature overlooks the underlining reason why a stakeholder approach, model or theory is being applied in the first place. Generally, the researcher applying the theory acknowledges it is important to identify and consider stakeholders, however the question of ‘why’ this is a key consideration seems not to have been fully explored and instead left up to the audience to determine. The need to consider stakeholders can in fact be simply understood; each of these groups or individuals play a vital role in some way in the success of the sector, business or in this case student/graduate. Overall, in order to develop and enhance a sector more effectively, stakeholders too, need to be considered and consulted.

### **‘Stakeholder’ in the Sport Management Literature**

Traditionally, stakeholder theory has been considered in business contexts, with organisations using the theory to analyse and strategise corporate direction (Roberts, 1992). When it comes to exploring the stakeholder approach within other contexts, such as sport, the literature is more limited. However, there are a number of key studies that

contribute to the development of research in this area, and demonstrate how the approach can be applied to a different context.

The sport event management field is one of the key areas within the sport context where the stakeholder approach has been used as a theoretical concept to explore issues and understand stakeholder's perspectives. Friedman, Parent and Mason (2004) used the concept of a stakeholder approach and theory to develop a framework for sport-related issue analysis. Their research demonstrated the prescriptive and descriptive value of stakeholder theory to sport management and showcased how the framework can be used in a practical sense to identify, prioritise, understand and compare those who influence and are influenced by an organisation. In a similar study, Parent (2008), using the 1999 Pan America Games as a case study, applied stakeholder theory along with issues management as a theoretical basis to develop a framework to understand the development and issue patterns for organising committees of major sport events and their stakeholders. Due to the nature of an organising committee - a temporary group/organisation with a short lifespan - it is vital to be effective and efficient and by doing so the awareness of what stakeholders want is heightened. Parent's (2008) research makes a significant contribution to the literature in that it employs an innovative approach and responds to the call by stakeholder theorists to implement more practical, experiential based stakeholder research, and as a result provides data that can strengthen and build on existing concepts in the literature. The findings of the study highlight the need for strategies to manage the organising committee-stakeholder relationship and indeed any stakeholder relationship.

Also within the sport management realm, Leopkey and Parent (2009) sought the organising committee and stakeholder's perspectives with respect to risk management issues in large scale sporting events. Their research acknowledges that stakeholders have different concerns and viewpoints which therefore makes understanding their perspective critical, although all the more difficult to manage (Leopkey & Parent, 2009). Similar to the Parent (2008) study, issues were categorised based on the stakeholder group, highlighting the range of issues and the large number of overlapping and similar concerns between differing stakeholders. There are also a number of other studies, specifically within the sport event management arena, that have used the stakeholder concept or theory to explore and understand issues and contribute to the literature in

this area (Merrilees, Getz & O'Brien, 2005; Parent & Deephouse, 2007; Parent & Séguin, 2007).

Few scholars have, however, applied stakeholder theory to explore and understand sport governance issues (Senaux, 2008) and even fewer to those organisations within the not for profit sector (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015). Ferkins and Shilbury's (2015) empirical study explored the development of governance capability in a non-profit sport organisation, Squash Vic. This study introduced Fassin's (2012) more recent idea of 'stakeowner' reciprocity to the non-profit sport organisation governance setting. The research discovered that confusion about stakeholder-governing responsibility and a lack of stakeholder engagement were the central issues in developing governance capability. The study highlights the need to embed the concept of a stakeholder approach and emphasises its importance in explaining the issue of multiple stakeholders and the absence of stakeholder engagement in the governing process (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015). Governance can be viewed as the process of providing strategic leadership, and although the two terms are not often explored in unison, governance and leadership are closely related (Chait, Ryan & Taylor, 2011). Further contributions to the body of knowledge in this area would not only advance governance research and understanding, but also that of leadership.

Leadership is another area within the sport management literature that is in need of further research focussing on or utilising a stakeholder approach. Stakeholders play both a formal (e.g., governance) and informal (e.g. volunteers) role in leadership interactions. However, mainstream literature tends to focus instead on a leader-centric approach which, in turn, does not always recognise the importance of the stakeholder perspective (Kihl et al., 2010). Kihl et al. (2010), investigated stakeholders perceptions of leadership in relation to organisational change, within the context of an intercollegiate sporting organisation. This research allowed stakeholders (both internal and external) who play both follower and leader roles, an opportunity to describe and share their own perceptions of leadership. In turn, this enabled the researchers to gain a better understanding of the stakeholder's views on what leadership behaviours and characteristics they value and believe contribute to effective leadership.

As noted above, there are a small number of key studies that have focussed on the stakeholder approach within the sport context, with a concentration on event

management (Leopkey & Parent, 2009), and professional sport (Heffernan & O'Brien, 2010; Senaux, 2008). Nonetheless, the intrinsic flexibility of the approach and the dynamic and evolving environment of the sport industry provides vast scope for continued research in this area. Foremost, when applying the stakeholder approach to any context or sector the key questions that need to be asked are *'why should we consider consulting/involving stakeholders?'* and *'who are the stakeholders that need to be considered and consulted/involved?'*

### **Application to Identifying Key Stakeholders**

The first critical phase of the stakeholder approach involves identifying the stakeholders (Fassin, 2009). It is important during this stage to consider that although some stakeholders are obvious, not all stakeholders may be aware of their impact and influence or that they are indeed a stakeholder at all. Mitchell et al. (1997) recognised the need for a model focusing on stakeholder identification that can differentiate non-stakeholders from stakeholders. This typology offers practical ways of identifying key stakeholders through emphasising the need to determine those who have a claim on the firm (legitimate or not) and those who are influencers or have the power to influence the organisation. They recognise both power and legitimacy as two key stakeholder attributes along with urgency, defined as the level of immediate attention required by the stakeholders. Combined, this trio of attributes allows for early identification of key stakeholders. In theory, the more attributes the stakeholders possesses, the more attention they should receive. Bearing in mind this evaluation is subjective to those who are determining the important stakeholders to pay attention to, such as the researcher and supervisors of this study.

The typology proposed by Mitchell et al. (1997) can be used as a practical tool to identify those stakeholders who count the most. For example, Senaux (2008), applies Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology to identify and analyse the salience and attributes of stakeholders relevant to French professional football clubs. Through a descriptive analysis, the article highlights how adaptable the model is and in this case reveals how one stakeholder, at times at the expense of other stakeholders, receives the most amount of attention. Friedman and Mason (2004) also employ this typology to better

understand and assess the range of groups affected by policy decisions when exploring the contentious subject of public subsidy for the development of major league sports facilities. Their findings suggest that focus should be on stakeholders who possess all three attributes; power, legitimacy and urgency (Friedman & Mason, 2004).

Furthermore, Fassin's (2009) 'stake model' uses the basis of the attributes of Mitchel et al.'s (1997) typology to facilitate the identification stage. As mentioned, the model clearly differentiates between external and internal stakeholders, underlining the notion of a triangular divide of stakeholders; constituency (stakeholder), pressure group (stakewatcher) and regulator (stakekeeper). Similar to Mitchell et al.'s (1997) model, this categorisation aids in determining the 'legitimate' stakeholders from the others. By converging these two key frameworks, using Fassin's (2009) 'stake model' to initially identify and categorise the stakeholders, and Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typology to analyse the significance of those who count the most, then adapting where necessary, a strong foundation for stakeholder identification and analysis is formed.

In this case, when applying Fassin's (2009) and Mitchell et al.'s (1997) typologies to identify the industry stakeholders whom would be considered most vital to consult, a little more creativity is needed in the adaptation. As the focal point is not a typical entity or organisation, but instead is the 'student' (actively studying) or 'graduate' (completed the qualification) (and their position in the sport industry), some of the key stakeholders are not as obvious and therefore could easily be overlooked.

### **Evolution of Leadership Research**

Traditional leadership studies have focussed on the traits and characteristics of individual leaders and the behaviours and leadership styles that contribute to their effectiveness, more often than not within the business environment (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009; Bresnen, 1995; Kihl et al., 2010). This earlier mainstream research concentrated on the attributes or qualities, such as those that differentiated leaders from non-leaders or leaders from followers, often applying what is commonly known as the 'trait approach' to leadership (Grint, 2005; Jackson & Parry, 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2015). Although we have since moved away from this approach, in modern research there still tends to be an assumption that the manager or person in charge is the leader,

and should therefore be the subject of leadership research. The presumption that managers act as leaders, regardless of whether or not they indeed exhibit leadership 'qualities', has created definition problems making it challenging to differentiate managerial performance from actual leadership (Mintzberg, 1973). Engrained in this understanding is the notion that power and authority is synonymous with leader or leadership, encouraging the leader-follower relationship. Therefore, leadership research was mostly confined to investigating the behaviours and qualities of 'formal' 'leaders' and overlooking the emergence of 'informal' 'leadership' as a phenomenon worthy of as much attention and exploration (Bresnen, 1995).

Due to this foundational bias towards the 'leader', leader-centred perspectives on leadership, namely transformational, transactional, and charismatic, have taken prominence in the literature for decades (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Welty Peachey et al., 2015). Bryman (1992) considers these approaches to be part of the 'new-genre leadership' theories, based on a common theme of leaders influencing followers in reaching organisational objectives. Emanating from the concern that the majority of research has become preoccupied with the leader-centric focus and therefore blatantly overlooking the role of 'follower', came the follower-centred perspectives on leadership. Although research is still somewhat limited in this area, this relatively new phenomenon provides a more holistic view of leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011). There are a number of other emerging leadership approaches that are becoming more apparent in the literature that highlight the 'follower' and emphasise the shared concept of leadership, and have sought to counter the shortcomings of mainstream leadership research and practice (Jackson & Parry, 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2015). An example is authentic leadership, said to stem from the transformational leadership style and can be defined as "a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behaviours that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting followers' inputs" (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 423). Another example is servant leadership, originating from Greenleaf's (1977) seminal idea that great leadership comes from serving others. Servant leadership promotes a holistic approach, encouraging a sense of community, and the shared decision making (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012; Spears & Lawrence, 2004).



An additional evolving idea in the leadership literature is the recognition of the significance of emotional intelligence in leadership. Goleman (2000; 2004), has been promoting this notion for the past 25 years emphasising the five core competencies of emotional intelligence; self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness (empathy), and social skills. This literature has created a platform for further research in this area. However, it is only in more recent years that scholars have paid closer attention to its meaning and the critical role emotional intelligence plays in leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Schneider, 2013). Petrovici (2014) states that “promoting and developing emotionally intelligent leader(ship) is essential for cultivating a comfortable mental climate and team spirit, as well as for building interpersonal relationships” (p. 230). She suggests that emotional intelligence must be incorporated into the self-development of leadership skills and style in order to be an effective and successful leader. Similarly, Schneider (2013), as elaborated on below, recognises the importance of emotional intelligence and its inclusive competencies such as relationship building as key leadership capabilities essential for sport managers. Despite these advancements, this research still mainly focuses on the upskilling and development of the individual leader.

In short, Grint (2005) argues there has been too much emphasis on individual leaders, when we should have been instead focusing more on ‘leadership’. Jackson and Parry (2011) also believe that “while the importance of the role of leaders tends to be overestimated, the significance of leadership itself should never be underestimated” (p. 14). It is also apparent in the literature that there has been a lack of qualitative methodologies applied to leadership research, although this has improved in recent years, and a neglect of the importance of both context and stakeholder perspectives (Kihl et al., 2010). Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) recommend that applying a modern stakeholder approach to leadership research could benefit the advancement in knowledge and literature in the area. Take this further by considering a less ‘leader’ focus and more ‘relational’ or ‘shared’ view of leadership embedded in a stakeholder approach, within the context of sport, and the scope for contribution to the literature is vast.

## **Leadership Lens/Perspective**

'Leadership' has a myriad of definitions and it seems there is no one explanation that will suffice regardless of the many attempts by scholars at defining it (Bresnen, 1995; Kihl et al., 2010; Pfeffer, 1977). Nevertheless, there is a common trend among definitions that leadership occurs when there is a shared need to accomplish something of purpose (O'Boyle et al., 2015; Ospina & Schall, 2001). As mentioned it is still most common, however, to explore leadership with the view of the leader as the most important contributor, with a leader-centric perspective focusing on the individual leader (Grint, 2005; Jackson & Parry, 2011; Kihl et al., 2010; Ospina & Schall, 2001). By having such a narrow focus, it is argued that much of the true essence of leadership is missed. Leadership is more than just the work of individuals and their ability to assert power or influence over others. It is not something embodied or possessed by individuals, but instead is created through language, conversation and interactions between groups of people, within a particular context (Foldy et al., 2008; Ospina & Schall, 2001; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). In Grint's (2005) words it is time to "put the ship back into leader-ship" (p. 33). Shying away from the traditional individual model, there are a number of types of leadership, such as shared leadership, co-leadership and collaborative leadership, that have been explored in the literature and all contribute to the understanding of leadership being relational and social (Ospina & Schall, 2001). As in this study, by embracing the view of leadership as a 'social construct', a greater understanding of the relational, collective and social nature of leadership can be developed (Ospina & Schall, 2001).

The 'social constructionist' perspective is not entirely new to leadership research although it has gained momentum in the leadership literature in more recent years (Foldy et al., 2008; Grint, 2005; Ospina & Schall, 2001). As a whole, this lens focuses on the notion that leadership emerges from the interactions and constructions of people. Grint (2005) identifies that the critical elements of social constructivism are that what counts as 'true', 'objective' and 'fact' are the outcome of contending versions of 'reality'. This suggests that reality is constructed through the views and interpretations of a collective group as opposed to the ideologies of an individual. As a result of this type of approach, knowledge is considered the property of the particular group and therefore cannot be considered neutral. Although a somewhat complex way of explaining it, this

contributes to the idea that leadership is a collective achievement and does not belong to an individual (Foldy et al., 2008; Ospina & Schall, 2001). Pastor (1998) takes this further suggesting that as the process of social construction continues, leadership takes on a life of its own and is continually enacted over time. In essence, rather than leadership just remaining as a shared idea in people's minds, as it emerges it becomes rooted in the social system. Sensemaking is an example of a process of social construction and interaction that occurs as people make sense of situations and experiences and has been recognised as a way of establishing collective and shared purpose amidst continuously changing experiences such as leadership (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005). Pye (2005) added that leadership has a dual role; to shape and extract key sensemaking reference points for others, and to provide a crucial referent point for others to extract and make sense from.

The way in which to understand how leadership happens "is by entering into the community and inquiring into the shared meaning-making languages and processes of the community" (Drath, 2001 p. 49). This social approach to understanding leadership highlights the importance of considering the stakeholders or community's view of leadership. As Kihl et al. (2010) states "organisations and their stakeholders are owners and co-creators of what counts as leadership" (p. 246). Emphasising stakeholder perspectives signifies differing views to understanding leadership, that is, the multiple meanings and frames of reference, and how it evolves, and that each of these views are important (Bresnen, 1995; Kihl et al., 2010). On the whole, social constructivism adopts the concept that reality is constructed through language and is a collective and dynamic phenomenon. Furthermore, how leadership is positioned within a specific context recognises the intertwining nature of leadership with a situation, as opposed to leadership being independent of the context (Kihl et al., 2010).

### **The Importance of Context in Leadership**

The social constructionist view of leadership not only highlights the importance of stakeholders or community groups but also acknowledges the importance of context and the role context plays in influencing leadership and leadership patterns and effectiveness (Grint, 2005; Kihl et al., 2010). Whether the research focus is on leader

behaviour, is follower-centred, or as in this case explores a social constructionist view, context is extremely important and needs to be considered and explored.

Some of the new-genre leadership approaches such as transformational leadership explore the idea that leaders are able to change or manipulate the context (Avolio & Bass, 1987). This is an example of a perspective that does not view leadership as being dependent on context. In earlier research the idea that context is important in the study of leadership was implied in the contingency model developed by Fielder (1967) which depicted that different contexts or situations required different leadership approaches. Contingency theories of leadership, however, assume that the correct analysis of a situation determines good leadership, viewing leadership as independent of the environment (Grint, 2005). Grint (2005) suggests that it is commonplace to assume that successful or effective leaders are those who react most suitably to the demands and expectations of the particular situation. However, he argues that to better understand the role of *leadership* in the construction of context “we might begin to consider not what is the *situation*, but how it is *situated*” (p. 1471). Osborn, Hunt and Jauch (2002) clearly state that if you change the context, leadership changes. In other words leadership (and its effectiveness) is dependent upon the context. They argue that “leadership is embedded in the context” (Osborn et al., 2002, p. 798). A trend in the literature highlights that leadership theories in favour of the more socially constructed concept tend to place greater significance on the importance of context and how it influences leadership (Grint, 2005).

The majority of the ‘leadership’ literature is rooted within the broader organisational setting, exploring leader effectiveness and attributes, through the world of business processes, structures and environments (Grint 2005; Kihl et al., 2010). Typically, scholars have looked for leadership in the obvious and expected places, often focusing on formal leaders at the top of the hierarchy (Ospina & Schall, 2001). As mentioned previously, traditionally this research adopts a quantitative approach. Quantitative research is not always indifferent towards contextual variables, however through qualitative studies the context and influence of such settings can be explored more thoroughly (Bryman, Stephens & Campo, 1996). Qualitative research continues to make a contribution to the leadership literature through exploring the significance of context in relation to leadership (Bryman et al., 1996). It was therefore appropriate that,

in order to best explore the topic of leadership in the sport context, a qualitative approach would be adopted for this study.

Ospina and Schall (2001) argue the need to explore leadership outside the typical management domains, and instead, learn from examining leadership in other contexts such as community based groups and those committed to social change. For the present study, the broad context in which leadership is being explored is within the sport setting, specifically the New Zealand sport industry and with the ultimate outcome of informing higher education approaches to leadership development for students and graduates. Sport plays a major role in New Zealand society, making an important social, economic and cultural impact (Collins & Jackson, 2007). It is argued that sport is embedded in the New Zealand culture and is a part of everyday life for many New Zealanders. Sport has the potential to bring together individuals, communities, families, regions and the nation (Sport New Zealand, 2012). The New Zealand sport sector is made up of a diverse range of organisations, groups and individuals from varying social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Holland, 2012; Laidlaw, 2010; Spoonley & Taiapa, 2009). In more recent years, due to the ongoing development of the industry, sport has been accepted as a legitimate course of tertiary study and worthy of serious academic development and research (Collins & Jackson, 2007).

Overall, sport is a social, relational, community experience and an avenue for bringing people together for a higher purpose (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012). Link this view of sport with the social construct perspective of leadership and it becomes apparent that through sport, leadership, as a collective, community achievement (Ospina & Schall, 2001) can be explored, developed, encouraged and embraced.

### **‘Leadership’ in the Sport Management Literature**

Historically, leadership research, particularly in the limited area of sport management, adopts quantitative methodologies with an intrinsic, ‘formal’ leader focus, somewhat overlooking the idea of ‘informal’ leadership, the role of context and voice of stakeholders (Kihl et al., 2010). Though qualitative research of leadership in sport management does exist, and is becoming more popular in recent years, it seems the

research often still focuses on 'leaders' and their impact on success, effectiveness and performance.

Frontiera (2010), for example, explores organisational culture change through interviewing six owners or general managers of professional sporting organisations who successfully led their agency through change. This is a prime example of leadership research focusing on assigned leaders, albeit in the sporting context. The study explores the perceptions of the individual leader, neglecting the stakeholders or other employee's perspective, and therefore somewhat contradicting the idea of leadership as a collective process. In their research on the development of a selection of leader-athletes, Wright and Côté (2003) also focussed on the overt 'leader', specifically selecting male participants based on their demonstration of outstanding leadership. This study did, nonetheless, attempt to examine the influence of contextual and social variables, however, considering other party's views (e.g., team members, coaches, and parents) would have added more depth to the findings. Parris and Welty Peachey (2012), use a cause-relating sporting event as a platform to investigate leadership, specifically the leadership style of the event founder or 'leader'. Findings revealed that the founder is a 'servant leader', highlighting the three main components of servant leadership; creating a shared vision committed to helping others, building a loving and caring community, and creating an environment whereby followers can become servants.

The emphasis on coaches has been a popular topic in the sport leadership literature, with research dating back to Chelladurai's seminal work in the late 1970s and gaining momentum over the decades (Chelladurai, 1980; Jowett & Chaundy, 2004; Sullivan, Paquette, Holt, & Bloom, 2012). In order to explain coaching behaviour and the importance of the coaches' leadership style Chelladurai (1980) developed a Multidimensional Model of Leadership applicable specifically to sport. Furthermore, Chelladurai and Saleh's (1980) Leadership Scale for Sports contributed to understanding the dimensions of leader behaviour in sports focusing on six key leadership styles. In a key study in the coaching arena, Kellett (1999) explores the relationship between leadership and management through the views and opinions of Australian Football League professional head coaches. This research is a typical example of a study within the body of literature that classifies coaches as leaders and as a result, and possibly

unintentionally, overlooks the bigger picture of leadership by focusing on a leader-centred perspective. Interestingly, the study does reveal that the coaches do not view themselves as leaders and believe it is not their role to be a leader. They imply that the role of the coach is to instead facilitate leadership amongst athletes, that is, to train the athletes to be leaders (Kellett, 1999).

A case study on the collective leadership approach of the All Blacks highlights the key factors contributing to such a successful team within a changing socio-cultural environment (Johnson, Martin, Palmer, Watson, & Ramsey, 2012). The study highlights how critical building a team culture and developing people is to creating a successful team. It also identifies how values influence behaviour and decision making. Although the research is again limited to the opinions of captains and coaches, the findings reveal an increasing appreciation by key personnel for a collective approach to leadership and the importance of both formal and informal leadership within the team entity. Through exploring past and present leaders' perspectives, it is evident there has been an evolution of leadership within the All Blacks, shifting from emphasis on traits and task orientated leaders, to a formalised approach to embedding collective leadership within the team (Johnson et al., 2012).

Another area that has attracted attention within the sport management leadership literature is the topic of women and leadership (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). For example Sartore and Cunningham (2007) sought to gain insight into why females are considerably under-represented in sporting organisations, specifically in leadership positions. This research is unique in that it looked to social ideology and sport ideology to better understand why this trend is occurring. Leberman and Shaw (2012) also contributed to this area of inquiry through their research into the educational experiences of female physical education and sport management graduates, their career pathways and the career pathways of female CEO's in the New Zealand sport industry. It is evident through the participant's responses that social skills such as communication, interpersonal and relationship building skills, and self-awareness are considered important in order to be successful in the industry. These are all factors that contribute significantly to leadership. On the contrary, the key skills learnt at university included time management, planning and organisational skills. Evidently, results of this study suggest a disconnection between educational preparation for the industry and the

actual requirements of the sector, highlighting the need for further leadership teachings in undergraduate education (Leberman & Shaw, 2012).

In another study based on the experiences of New Zealand women, who in this case are both mothers and elite sport leaders, findings suggest that constraints such as social disapproval, guilt and stress negatively impact on their ability to contribute to the sector (Leberman & Palmer, 2009). Using domain theory, the research aims to understand their role as change agents, the multiple constraints and identities they are faced with in order to stay in sport leadership positions, and how and why they entered into these roles in the first place. This research provides insight into a different perspective of leadership. Interestingly, all women in the study indicated that becoming a mother has changed their perspective on life, in turn presumably influencing the way in which they view leadership.

Furthermore, as Schneider (2013) so eloquently identified in his research titled *Emotional Intelligence: The Overlooked Component of Sport Leadership*, there is an imminent need to understand and embrace the importance of emotional intelligence in order to enhance the leadership in the sector and those contributing to the sport management industry. He draws meaning from a number of models including Goleman's (2004) five core competencies of emotional intelligence as noted earlier. Schneider (2013) concludes that emotional intelligence is an essential component to leadership within the sport management arena, an industry largely dependent on collaborating with others and building and developing relationships.

Although, as mentioned earlier, some research in sport management has adopted a stakeholder approach (such as Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015; Leopkey & Parent, 2009; Friedman et al., 2004, Parent, 2008) specific literature exploring leadership and stakeholder perceptions is relatively limited. Additional to Kihl et al.'s (2010) research, as referred to previously, Parent, Olver and Séguin (2009b) seek to understand leadership in relation to the management of major sporting events, using the framework of stakeholder theory to integrate stakeholder views with leadership theories. A number of leadership competencies were identified by participants of this study including the importance of team building, relationship building, communication skills and interpersonal skills. The authors recognise that stakeholders have different needs and



therefore differing views on leadership requirements. In summary, stakeholder perceptions were analysed in relation to a number of different leadership theories with those most relevant including the traditional charismatic and transformational leadership. However, the most comprehensive understanding was offered through the complex, unstudied theory of multiple-linkage leadership. Using the same case of the World Aquatics Championships, Parent, Beaupre and Séguin (2009a) took this stakeholder approach further by examining stakeholder identified leadership qualities and the evolution of these qualities in major sporting events. Interestingly, networking skills, a component of relationship skills, were found to be most vital as a quality for successful and effective leadership. Interpersonal skills were also recognised as being of importance. This highlights the social and collaborative aspect of leadership as alluded to previously.

In the sport governance domain, the research typically focuses on leadership at the top of the hierarchy. Shilbury and Ferkins (2015), in one of the first studies to examine collaborative governance in a national sporting body, recognised the significance of collective board leadership and its importance in governance decision-making. In brief, collaborative governance involves including identified stakeholders in a collective process of decision making (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In other words, a stakeholder approach to governance decision making.

In summary, there are a number of key studies in a range of areas of sport management that have a leadership focus and contribute to the body of literature in this area. Those also adopting a stakeholder approach, however, are sparse. This review of the literature emphasises the scope for more research in the sport management literature within the leadership domain, particularly with regards to considering the views and perspectives of stakeholders. It is clear that the sport sector could also benefit from studies centred on the social constructivist view of leadership, encouraging community engagement in research and focusing on more 'informal' leadership and with a less 'formal' leader focus.

## **Conclusion**

Leadership and the stakeholder approach are both ambiguous and complex topics, often difficult to define and can take on different meanings depending on the context or lens. These two subjects of interest have seen an evolution of ideas, research and theories over the years and will continue to evolve along with the literature in these areas (Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Although stakeholder research sits mainly within the business context (Fassin, 2009), the examples within the sport sector portray the adaptability of the approach and highlight how it can be applied and made relevant to the sport context. Moreover, viewing leadership from a social constructionist perspective is a worthwhile alternative in that it highlights the importance of stakeholders and the role context plays in leadership. Couple this social construct outlook with the view of sport as a social, community experience, and the idea of leadership as a collective process is enhanced. It is evident that the relationship between stakeholder perspectives and leadership is of major significance, specifically within the context of sport. Link leadership with the stakeholder approach, acknowledging the importance of stakeholders, their varying viewpoints and the collective, relational nature of the two subjects, and embed it within the sport sector and the opportunities for influence and advancement of knowledge is limitless. With the development of leadership literature continuing to move away from the leader-centred focus and towards a more social, relational and shared perspective, it is a critical time to contribute to the research in this space and help embed the 'ship' back into 'leadership' (Grint, 2005).

Furthermore, this knowledge and insight of leadership from a stakeholder perspective can build on previous research (e.g., Kihl et al., 2010; Parent et al., 2009a) and be used to inform curriculum and leadership development approaches and improve the quality of sport and recreation students and graduates going out into industry. As a result, this will potentially enable our future workforce in sport to become change agents and meaningful contributors to leadership in the sector and beyond.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND FRAMEWORK**

### **Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to investigate stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector.

In order to achieve this purpose the following questions were posed:

1. What are selected individual stakeholder perspectives of leadership?
2. What themes emerge from these perspectives that advance knowledge and understanding of leadership in the New Zealand sport sector?

### **Research Paradigm**

Research can be simply explained as a systematic inquiry or investigation involving data collection, analysis and interpretation in order to "understand, describe, predict or control an educational or psychological phenomenon or to empower individuals in such contexts" (Mertens, 2005, p. 2). However, the precise nature of the definition or meaning of research is significantly influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework (Mertens, 2005) which is in turn influenced by their own individual understanding and worldview. The theoretical framework, otherwise known as the paradigm, is distinctly different from a theory in that it influences the way information is studied and understood (Mertens, 2005).

The term 'paradigm' can be explained as the philosophical motivation or intent for undertaking a study (Cohen & Manion, 1994), or the "set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality" (Maykut & Morehouse, 2000, p. 4). To align with the social constructionist view of leadership and the stakeholder perspective approach to understanding the leadership phenomenon, this study is situated in a constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This is the most appropriate framework for this research considering the focus on the perspectives of individual stakeholders and the meanings and teachings derived from their insight and experiences. Mertens (2005) suggests that "knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view

of those who live within it “(p. 13). This paradigm allows for an interactive research process, acknowledging that the participants and researcher influence each other and it is through this interaction that the social construction of reality can be understood (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Mertens, 2005).

### Qualitative Approach

In consideration of the aim and objectives of this specific study; the review of the literature pertaining to leadership and stakeholder theory; and the researcher’s personal viewpoints, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate process of inquiry.

Bryman and Bell (2011) summarise the main guidelines in qualitative research in six steps as set out in Figure 1 below.

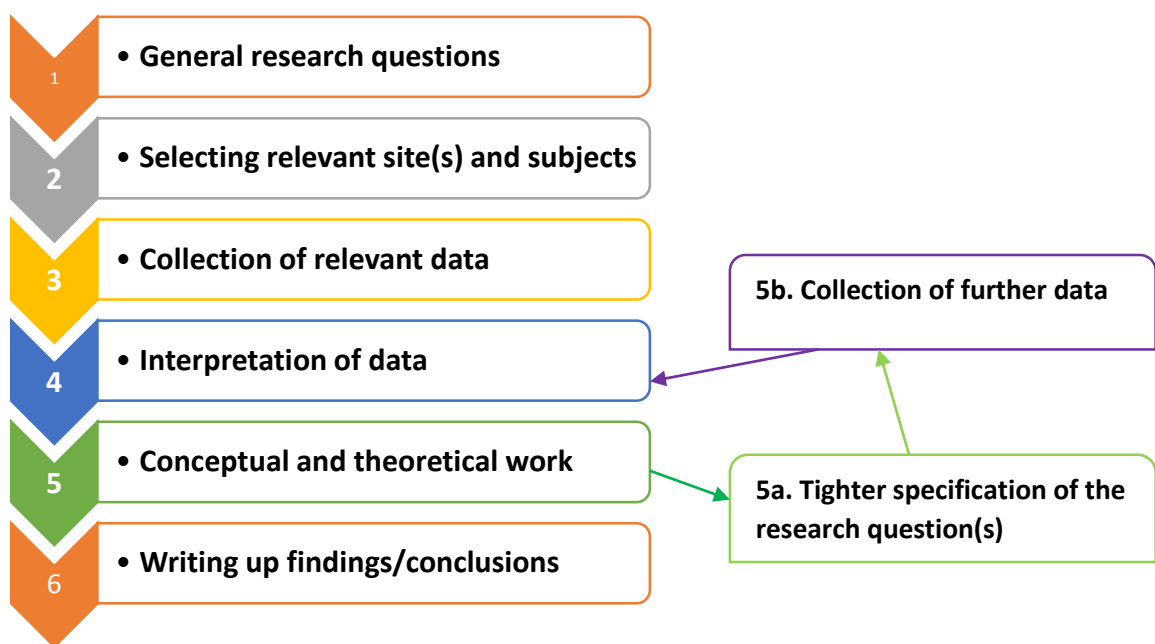


Figure 1: An outline of the main steps of qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 390).

These steps provide an overview of the general stages of a qualitative study. Each qualitative research study is different depending on the topic, research question(s) and the viewpoints and influences of the researcher and their environment.

Unlike quantitative research whereby the researcher is detached from the subject, in qualitative research, the researcher is fundamental to the research process, interacting directly with the object at study (Grix, 2010). This approach aims to look beyond numbers and measurable data and towards words and dialogue to explore thoughts, experiences and feelings and is understood to be more flexible and adaptable (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). As a research approach it is typically interpretivist, constructionist, and inductivist. Although qualitative researchers do not necessarily always incorporate all three methods, in this study these three features were fundamental to the research design (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Elaborating on these features, the epistemological position of *interpretivist*, concentrates on examining the interpretation of participants of the social world in order to better understand it. *Constructionist*, an ontological position opposite to objectivism, suggests that social phenomena are outcomes of the interactions and experiences between individuals. Thirdly, inductivist, encompasses the inductive viewpoint of the relationship between research and theory, arguing that the latter is generated out of the former (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this case, adopting qualitative methods of data collection and analysis allowed the researcher to interact with the participants directly (as the interviewer) and explore the stakeholder's thoughts, experiences and feelings in detail. These insights and understandings were the catalyst to developing new ideas from existing theory in relation to the overarching theme of leadership (Mertens, 2014).

The nature of the topic of leadership and the social constructionist lens through which it is viewed, coupled with the complexities involved with understanding such a multifaceted phenomenon, lends itself to a qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research design, to a far greater extent than its quantitative counterpart, is a "do it yourself" rather than an 'off the shelf' process, one that involves 'tacking' back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing their implication for one another" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 3). Although Bryman and Bell (2011) provide a broad framework (see Figure 1), this type of research analysis does not formally follow through a fixed sequence of stages, or begin from a pre-determined starting point. Likewise, constructivists typically do not begin with a fixed approach to theory but

instead inductively or organically develop a pattern of meanings or theory throughout the research process (Creswell, 2003).

### **Case Study**

Case study is a widely used research approach that enables exploration of a complex phenomenon within its specific context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Within qualitative research it compliments and lends itself to an inductive approach to the relationship between research and theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It also fits very appropriately within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm.

Bryman and Bell (2011) state that some of the best known research in management and business utilise the case study design. It is also a popular choice in the sport management literature (examples from the literature review include Johnson et al., 2012; Parent & Deephouse, 2007; Parent et al., 2009a; Parent et al., 2009b). Case study was chosen for this project as the goal was to obtain a rich, insightful understanding of leadership and “study the experiences of real cases operating in real situations” (Stake, 2006, p. 3). The case study design favours methods of data collection such as participant observation or semi-structured interviews, as in this research, as they allow for the generation of a detailed and intensive exploration of a case or multiple cases (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Stake (2006) outlines three different categories of case study; intrinsic, instrumental, and multiple or collective cases. Although the boundaries between these differing types are commonly blurred, this project sits within the multiple case study category, as it uses a number of cases “that are undertaken jointly to explore a general phenomenon” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 60). As detailed below in the selection of participants, each individual participant was considered an individual case study. Each case was bounded by the same context in that the participants were all working in the sport sector and asked the same questions, however their stories were considered significant in their own right as they were influenced by their individual experiences and insight. Instead of the topic of leadership being explored through one lens, using multiple cases ensured that the issue was investigated through a range of lenses, allowing for varying layers of the topic to be exposed and understood. In each

individual case write up (see chapter four), the contextual case information was deliberately threaded with the findings throughout each case, as the participants shared stories and experiences in answer to the varying questions. This case study approach also allowed for analysis of similarities and differences between cases and cross-case comparisons (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and encouraged theoretical reflection on the themes and findings derived from the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### **Selection of Participants**

The size of this dissertation (45 points) determined and limited the number of participants to be interviewed and the scope of the project. Typically, a dissertation of this size would only deal with secondary data sources, therefore to keep it within the limitations of the dissertation criteria it was decided that a maximum of three individual stakeholders (considered individual cases) would be interviewed.

When using the stakeholder approach as a foundation for research, the first step is to identify the key stakeholders in the industry (Fassin, 2009). As mentioned in the literature review by using both Fassin's (2009) 'stake model' and Mitchell et. al's (1997) 'stakeholder identification model', those stakeholders who 'counted the most' were able to be identified. These are the stakeholders who possess all three attributes; power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell et. al, 1997; Friedman & Mason, 2004). Once this more refined group of key stakeholders was determined, purposive sampling was then used as the selection method in order to ensure that the best possible insights and information-rich data was gathered (Coyne, 1997). Considering the small sample size, it was essential that the most ideal candidates with as much insight and experience as possible were selected. Individual case selection was based on recommendations from consultation with individuals within the sector and referrals from the researcher's supervisors who are well connected with stakeholders of the sport industry in New Zealand. Those selected were either currently working for or had previously been employed by one (or more) major sporting organisations in New Zealand including New Zealand Olympic Committee, Sport New Zealand, High Performance Sport New Zealand, Regional Sports Trusts, and National Sport Organisations.

To narrow down the possible participants the following criteria were considered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Gratton & Jones, 2004):

1. Insight: appreciation for the importance of leadership, and leading/enacting leadership without formal authority (and in relation to notions of leadership considered important for graduates).

This was to ensure that they were familiar with the notion of leadership (not just the idea of 'leader'), the importance of it and its added value to the sector, and had experienced leadership first hand (both formal/assigned and/or informal/unassigned).

2. High experience levels of the phenomenon under study: in a position of influence however not an assigned formal leadership role (i.e., were not in a CEO position).

This criteria was considered to ensure that they would have a range and number of experiences to draw from and would be able to provide rich insights due to these varying experiences. It was important to the researcher that the case participant was not the typical 'leader' of an organisation (i.e., CEO), in order to steer away from the 'assigned' leader perspective.

3. Diversity: experience across the sector in a range of different positions across a variety of sport organisations – male and female.

Diversity was included to ensure that there was as much range across the case participants as possible considering only three were being interviewed. It was important to have both a male and female perspective, knowing that gender influences one's viewpoint. It was also important that the case participants had experience within a variety of sporting organisations including not for profit, for profit, governance agencies, large and small organisations. Unfortunately diversity was not able to be extended to ethnic or significant cultural diversity.

4. Access: availability and willingness to engage in the interview process and offer insightful reflections.

Due to the limitations of the size of the project and the short timeframe for completion (one semester), access to the most suitable candidates was somewhat dependent on their availability and willingness to be involved. Originally, it was thought it may be necessary to use snowball sampling to recruit case participants, however, the first three contacted were all eager and willing to be involved and made themselves available



within the scheduled time for data collection, and therefore were selected and interviewed.

### **Data Collection**

There are a number of qualitative data collection methods commonly used and practiced within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, including interviews, observations and archival or document analysis (Grix, 2010; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In this study, interviews were deemed the most efficient collection method in that they enabled rich data to be collected in a considerably short amount of time (1 hour maximum). While case study method often involves multiple sources of data (but not required – see Stake, 2006), this project focused on the interview as the primary source of data for each individual case study. In this, the background of each participant was established within the interview and supplemented by online biographical information.

The flexibility and adaptability of the interview makes it one of the most widely used data collection methods in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). There are four broad types of interviews; structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and group interviews. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were considered to be the most ideal interview method for this research for several reasons. Firstly, although a set series of questions were included in the interview guide, this style of interviewing allows for ad lib conversation and the opportunity to ask additional questions where appropriate or in response to particular replies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Secondly, semi-structured interviews can be used as a more informal, conversational approach, allowing the participant to feel comfortable and therefore ideally more willing to engage and disclose in-depth insights. Thirdly, individual interviews were conducted in order to allow the participant to speak openly and honestly avoiding the potential for ‘false’ data which can be revealed in group sessions (Gratton & Jones, 2004). In this case the interviews took place face to face, in person and involved the researcher, participant, and one supervisor.

An interview guide (see Appendix A), with a total of seven questions, was used in order to provide some structure, but also to allow for the interviews to be treated

as a more informal conversation (Bowen, 2005). The first six questions were framed around three fundamental aspects of leadership; leadership of/in self, leadership of/in others, and leadership of/in the sector. The intention was for these questions to encourage the participant to reflect on his/her experiences that have impacted or influenced their thoughts and perceptions of leadership. The final question was directly related to the key outcome of this study; determining the participants' views on the key leadership learnings that should be embedded in the curriculum. All seven questions were asked in each interview (as well as a range of impromptu probing questions in response to the individual's answers), however the order in which they were asked varied depending on the direction of the dialogue. The semi-structured interview method allowed for this flexibility and adaptation and contributed to a straightforward, effective and successful data collection process enabling rich, insightful, and in-depth data to be gathered (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The interviews were led by the primary researcher (master's student) and also attended by one of the supervisors, who contributed to and engaged in the conversations. All three interviews were approximately one hour each and took place in October 2016, at the same location on different days. The sessions were audio recorded and then transcribed by an external party in order for the researcher to be able to refer back to the recordings and to ensure that the complete account of the interviews was accessible (Bryman, 2008). The transcripts were then sent to the participants to check that they were happy with the content recorded. Some minor amendments were made, but overall the transcripts were a true and accurate representation of the dialogue that took place during the interviews. On the consent form, which was signed prior to commencing the interview, participants were asked whether they were willing for their name and associated organisation to be disclosed in the report. For consistency and anonymity, it was later decided by the researcher and supervisors that the participants would be kept anonymous and pseudonyms were instead used.

## **Data Analysis**

The data was analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, deriving key themes and concepts both within each individual case interview and in comparison across the three cases/interviews. An inductive approach was used for data analysis whereby patterns in the data were identified by means of ideas that emerged from the data, as opposed to the exact themes being decided on before collection and analysis (Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Patton, 1990).

The questions that were asked were chosen to gain an overall understanding and insight into the individual's perspective of leadership (and in relation to the sub-sections of self, others and the sector). The intention was not to analyse the data in direct relation to each of the questions asked, as this was considered too restrictive and may have limited the themes that were to emerge to only those directly related to a question. Instead, the findings of each case were looked at as a whole and then in relation to each of the sub-sections, allowing for key themes and ideas to emerge more organically.

Interviews, although selected due to the rich data they provide, can often result in a cumbersome analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In order to "find a path through the thicket of prose" a simple analysis process was followed for each interview (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 571). As mentioned the interviews were transcribed by a third party, and then individually reviewed, coded and analysed by the researcher following the same method;

1. Transcript read through in its entirety.
2. Transcript read through for a second time and key points/statements highlighted to identify their significance.
3. A code word was created and correlated to the highlighted text.
4. Codes (including their associated key points/statements) were then categorised into the three key leadership learnings sections; self, others, and sector. (Page numbers were noted next to the codes in order for the researcher to refer back to its location within the transcript).

5. The dominant codes that emerged were highlighted and noted as key themes for that individual case.

These main themes were then used as the findings and discussed in chapter four whereby each case study was analysed independently, drawing on the key points that were highlighted. Throughout the data analysis process the researcher continuously referred back to the transcript (and the highlighted statements) in order to not lose sight of the context in which statements were made. This is a common problem with coding, whereby sections of text are removed from the context within which they appeared and the social setting is lost (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It was also important to the researcher to allow the participants' voice to be heard in order to emphasise the integrity of each individual case, hence a mixture of direct quotes and paraphrasing was used in the write up. The data was then analysed further in chapter five where the cases were no longer explored independently but instead compared to each other. This highlighted the similarities and differences between the cases, the individual and collective perspectives, and allowed for further underlying concepts to emerge.

### **Ethical Considerations**

It is vital that research with humans is undertaken with the intent that it will benefit people and society and the knowledge gained is worthwhile (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). When conducting a research project of this nature, it is important to consider all relevant ethical principles and ensure that these are adhered to accordingly. Research involving human subjects, such as this, require ethics approval which was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (see Appendix B). This was a relatively low risk project, whereby there was no deception, coercion or anticipated harm in participating in this study. There was also no involvement of vulnerable participants and the study was not targeted to particular social or cultural groups.

Each participant was provided with an information sheet outlining the details of the project and expectations (see Appendix C), and consent form (see Appendix D) which they signed prior to commencing the study, agreeing to participate in the research. As mentioned, participants were also given an opportunity to validate the accuracy of the transcript and make any edits (Mertens, 2005). In qualitative research

there is a risk of the researcher interpreting the data differently to how it was intended by the participant (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To minimise this as much as possible the researcher ensured that, when analysing the interview transcripts, the data was interpreted and reviewed within the context in which it was stated and statements or quotes were not taken out of context. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher discussed key ideas that were emerging from the data with the supervisors to ensure that their interpretations were aligned.

The topic itself is not considered a contentious issue and therefore the findings derived were not of an offensive or precarious nature. In order for the privacy of the participants and the organisations they work for to remain protected and anonymous, pseudonyms were used and the potentially identifiable aspects of their work situation were kept as vague as possible.

### **Limitation of the Study**

As mentioned, the scale of this study was largely dictated by the expected size of a 45 point dissertation (approximately 10,000 - 30,000 words). As noted above, typically, a dissertation of this size would deal with secondary data sources only, however in order to make a more valuable contribution to the literature, it was considered useful to gather primary data. Therefore, to keep the study within the scope of the qualification requirements, only three participants were interviewed. A small sample size such as this makes it difficult to argue particular transferability across the sector. However, exploring the findings through individual cases allowed for an in-depth understanding of three perspectives that could then be compared to each other to discover common ideas. The size of the study and small number of participants also limited the depth of diversity among those who were interviewed. The three participants (two male and one female) were all of similar age and could be grouped into similar socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural categories. A larger study with a broader range of participants from various socio-ethnic/cultural groups, who are more representative of the greater population diversity of New Zealand would add value and depth to the research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Case Study One

John (not his real name) started his career in banking and continued working in the corporate sector for 20+ years “progressing and looking for the next promotion...the next job...an ambitious approach to leadership”. Upon reflecting on “who I am, what I was about and what was important to me...the leader I wanted to be and the context in which I wanted to apply that leadership” he realised the real connection to his work was missing and decided to make the transition into the sport sector. He is currently employed in a leader development role by a key organisation focussed on developing high performance sport in New Zealand.

### **Key Leadership Learnings – ‘Self’**

It was evident in the first few minutes of the interview with John that he had spent time reflecting on his journey and experiences throughout his life and had a very clear perspective of leadership and the importance of understanding self.

*“I define [leadership] in terms of the ability to lead self, lead others and lead change” (John, 7 October 2015).*

His clarity around this definition of leadership came down to a combination of personal experience, working in different industries with various leaders, working in partnership with other organisations and understanding customers’ needs. It was clear from the outset that he had firm values which he strongly believed in and are fundamental to his perspective of leadership. It was also apparent throughout the interview that there are certain attributes or qualities that he associates with leadership and being a ‘leader’.

### *Self-awareness*

Self-awareness, associated with effective leadership, can be defined as having an awareness and knowledge of oneself; knowing ones attributes, skills, limitations,

interests and leadership ability (Jackson & Parry, 2011). It is considered the cornerstone of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004; Schneider, 2013). As mentioned, John very obviously had a strong sense of self-awareness. This was evident in not only his words, but also the conviction with which they were said and the clarity with which they were articulated. Goleman (2004) states that “people with high self-awareness are able to speak accurately and openly” (p. 6). John drew on a life experience in his previous corporate career which was the catalyst to the change in vocational direction, highlighting the sense of realisation that he needed to take a look at where he was going and what he was about and recognising the role self-awareness played in his decision to make the move into the sport sector. He elaborated further explaining that he spent time thinking about why he wanted to work in sport, concluding that “it’s because I believe that sport contributes to New Zealand’s society both from a health and community, [and] personal wellbeing perspective”.

Using an example about a situation working with an individual who was very ‘closed’ and not receptive to development, and trying to encourage him to become more self-aware, John elaborated on, though inadvertently, the need for emotional intelligence in leadership. He described the way he had dealt with the situation by being patient and waiting for the right opportunity to intervene, engaging his manager and setting up non-threatening situations to support his learning. Goleman (2004) identified self-awareness as one of five components of emotional intelligence suggesting that those with a high degree of self-awareness recognise how their feelings affect not only themselves but others also. He continued to argue that self-awareness includes an understanding of goals and values implying that someone who has high levels of self-awareness knows where they are headed and why. John stressed the importance of communication and being prepared to have dialogue that faced some of the challenges. He suggested that a big part of leadership is the way you manage yourself with others, recognising that they want to add value and do a good job and therefore enabling them to do so.

*“As a leader you need to know when to lead but there are times when you need to know when to follow as well” (John, 7 October 2015).*

In Leberman and Shaw's (2012) study, CEO's reported self-awareness as one of the most important skills necessary, in particular for women, in order to be successful working in the sport industry. Key findings included the importance of knowing what your weaknesses are and knowing yourself. Interestingly, graduates interviewed in the same research project did not identify this as being a key skill. It is possible that understanding and valuing the importance of self-awareness could come with maturity and experience. In his work on emotionally intelligent leadership Goleman (2004) boldly states that "one thing is certain: emotional intelligence increases with age" (p. 7). Avolio et al. (2009), in their article reviewing current theories, research and future directions of leadership identify self-awareness as one of the four components of authentic leadership. Throughout the interview John highlighted other characteristics and attributes of authentic leadership which are explored in more detail below.

### *Values*

"Self-awareness extends to a person's understanding of his or her values and goals" (Goleman, 2004, p. 6). Values play a significant role in self-discovery (Petrovici, 2014). The way in which John could so clearly articulate his values correlates with this statement about the link between self-awareness and values. The interviewees were asked a question directly about the values they think underpin or influence their leadership style. John placed emphasis on the significance of people and their potential. *"It's about people ... if I take the people thing even deeper, the things that I value most is society connective-ness, health and wellbeing"*. He acknowledged that everyone has something to contribute and his role is to find out what that is and get to the why of decisions.

Delving further he highlighted the importance of relationships as a core value stating that *"I am pretty clear that relationships are critical ... a big part of leadership is the way you manage yourself with others"*. He emphasised transparency and the desire and need to be as explicit as possible.

John also shared his thoughts on how it was important for him to move away from the revenue, margins and profit focus of the corporate world and towards



something a lot more meaningful. He recognised that his values aligned with the not for profit, social contribution sport offers and situated himself in a role that enabled him to enact his leadership based on these values.

*“...my values are from a societal wellbeing perspective, and I think what I am trying to do at my stage of my career is trying to link my leadership beliefs and values with my beliefs around sport” (John, 7 October 2015).*

Although he did not explicitly state this, it was evident throughout the interview that there were several other principles that underpinned his leadership style and beliefs towards leadership. He discussed the importance of being action-orientated and solutions focussed and to have a holistic approach, considering all facets and contexts and not looking at individuals or situations in isolation.

Emerging from his description and elaboration on these values, along with the emphasis placed on self-awareness and emotional intelligence, is the notion of authentic leadership. Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004, p. 4) define authentic leaders as,

those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character.

The values which John identified and appears to demonstrate himself align with these assertions of authentic leadership.

### *Leadership Attributes/Qualities*

Although there was no direct question in relation to identifying key leadership qualities or attributes, several stood out as a common thread throughout the interview. Of the leadership qualities and attributes, both overtly and subtly identified, the one that stood out in John’s case was the assertion that being a follower is a significant part of leadership. John elaborated on the idea that as a leader you need to

know when to lead but there are times when you need to know when to follow as well. This idea aligns with the more recent research emphasising the importance of the role of the follower in leadership, moving away from the traditional research that viewed leadership as a one way dominated relationship between leader and follower (Jackson & Parry, 2011). Take this idea further and the ideas around follower-centric theories of leadership emerge whereby followers are involved in the construction of leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2011).

*"I think even as a leader you need to say hey, I believe in that vision, where it's going, I respect and appreciate there is someone leading this, but I believe in it so how can I best follow and how can I best support" (John, 7 October 2015).*

John also discussed the need for graduates to not only have strong technical expertise but also have generalist or soft skills and find the balance between the two. Goleman's (2004) analysis of 188 companies found that the higher rank of a person considered to be an outstanding performer, the more emotional intelligence competencies showed up as the reason for such effectiveness. When comparing average and star performers in senior leadership positions, almost 90% of the difference came down to emotional intelligence factors as opposed to cognitive capabilities. In this interview the need for soft skills or social/emotional intelligence (or in John's word general management skills) was mentioned on a number of occasions including reference to being a good communicator, being able to listen and being open to feedback and having empathy.

*"...it's having that blend of perhaps sports specific specialist skills but with the generalist management skills" (John, 7 October 2015).*

When interviewing female CEO's, Leberman and Shaw (2012) found similar results with the number one most imperative being relationship building. John also stressed the importance of being able to build and manage relationships, which is elaborated on below.

### ***Key leadership learnings - 'Others'***

In his definition of leadership, John underlined “the ability to lead others” as a key component of leadership and highlighted the significance of *others* in the understanding and enactment of leadership. Two critical points that stood out were the importance of building and managing relationships and the role communication plays.

#### ***Relationships***

Embedded throughout the interview, in relation to almost all questions, was the consistent theme of relationships and the need to be able to build relationships with peers, colleagues and stakeholders (as elaborated on in the sector section). Managing relationships with others requires empathy and social skills, two of the components of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004). Goleman (2004) states that “people tend to be very effective at managing relationships when they can understand and control their own emotions and can empathise with the feelings of others” (p. 12).

*“The ability to have, lead and influence effective relationships is critical” (John, 7 October 2015).*

Drawing on the example of the ‘closed’ colleague, John described how initially the relationship was quite difficult and recalls having anxiety about calling him. However, due to patience, perseverance and “backing off a little bit” (after reading the situation and sensing his reluctance), over time the relationship developed positively. In order to develop and manage relationships one needs to have self-awareness and be able to communicate and engage with others (Goleman, 2004; Schneider, 2013). This aligns closely with the key learning mentioned in the next section about collaboration/connection with the sector and the need to create an environment where we are collaborating with others. It is through effective relationships that such collaboration can develop (Goleman, 2004). John emphasised the role communication plays in relationship building, describing the need to have open conversations, the importance of asking questions and *“being prepared to have dialogue that faced some of the challenges”*. He stressed the significance of not just verbal communication, but

also being an effective listener and hearing others out and how this approach enables and encourages effective relationships.

*“...engage, partner, get buy in, demonstrate a willingness to listen and adapt” (John, 7 October 2015).*

Relationship building was another key skill identified by CEO's of the sport sector in Leberman and Shaw's (2012) study. “The most important thing that came through over and over again from participants was the importance of relationship building” (p. 23). Interestingly, unlike with self-awareness, graduates in their study did recognise the significance of relationship building and rated it as one of the most important, along with communication and interpersonal skills.

### ***Key Leadership Learnings – ‘Sector’***

Upon entering the sport world in an employment capacity, John noted a number of significant leadership learnings highlighted from this shift, including the importance of multiple stakeholder engagement and management, and connection with and collaboration within the sector.

#### ***Importance of Stakeholders***

Having worked in various relationship development and executive roles in his corporate positions, John understood the importance of stakeholder engagement and management and how it was critical to leadership and the effectiveness and success of an organisation. As Freeman (2010) indicated, if the organisation values the role of the stakeholder, the stakeholder will play a key role in the success of the organisation. It was not, however, until John moved into his current position in the sport sector that he realised exactly how critical these relationships were.

*“The stakeholder piece became more and more and more critical. I thought it was always critical but in our sector and in our context I think it's the number 1” (John, 7 October 2015).*

The sport sector in New Zealand (as with many other comparable sport systems such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada) is characterised by a diverse pool of stakeholder organisations (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015) consisting of private, not for profit, for profit and public entities, made up of volunteer based community groups, and national and regional entities, charities, businesses, small entrepreneurial companies and the like. A further characterisation of the New Zealand sport sector, offered by a growing number of commentators, (Holland, 2012; Laidlaw, 2010; Spoonley & Taiapa, 2009) is its unique blend of cultural and ethnically diverse participants. As Holland (2012, p. 16) offers, "... it may in fact be that diversity is New Zealand's point of difference in world sport". John emphasised the importance of being able to work with these multiple organisations and people in order to bring things together, as necessary for survival of the organisation, let alone change and growth.

*"It's a tricky balance between effective stakeholder engagement and getting things done. You need both and you need to get things done through stakeholder relationships" (John, 7 October 2015).*

The sport management literature explored earlier in the review, with reference to the stakeholder approach and the importance of stakeholders, supports this idea that stakeholder relationship and management is crucial to leadership, and also to the overall success of an organisation (Parent, 2008). Leopkey and Parent's (2009) research recognises that stakeholders have different issues and perspective's which makes it vital to understand and consider their view, while all the more challenging to manage. Parent's (2008) study highlights the need for strategies to manage stakeholder relationships. In support of John's perspective, findings suggest that it is essential to be able to build and manage these relationships in order to be effective (Parent, 2008). Friedman et al. (2004) state that "sport managers are continually challenged by changing constituent environments as they work toward short-term and long-term organizational goals" (p. 1). Friedman et al.'s research provides a framework to better understand stakeholders and manage their issues and needs. They propose that having a proactive approach may enable managers to anticipate stakeholder

demands and make constructive, more favourable strategic decisions that aid the organisation in achieving its goals.

### *Collaboration/Connection*

Another key leadership learning was the need for collaboration and connection across the sector. Drawing on experiences working with groups in both the sport and business industry, John stressed the significance of sharing learnings across the system. He believes that the biggest insight is that different sectors in our industries can learn from each other. Through sharing and seeing that others in the sector are dealing with similar issues or experiences, people can feel more supported and a network of collaboration and connectivity can develop (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2015). Although his current role is narrowly focused in the high performance space, John stated that this is too narrow a focus, and argued the importance of also engaging with Sport New Zealand in this role and connecting with community sport. He emphasised the need to think more broadly, connect and leverage the system with a purpose that leads to aligned action. This approach is aligned with Sport New Zealand's vision to create a world leading sport system (Sport New Zealand, 2012; 2015).

*"Coming from a corporate world where you are often competing with others, we want to create an environment where we are collaborating with others" (John, 7 October 2015).*

This notion also aligns with the social approach to understanding leadership in that everyone can enact leadership, it is a shared, relational experience and that connecting and collaborating with others is part of it (Ospina & Schall, 2001).

### **Case One Summary**

From the researcher's point of view, it was evident that John had a very clear, reflective, articulate and well-thought out perspective and understanding of leadership. His ability to describe and explain his positioning on the topic and the instrumental role moving from the corporate to sport sector had on some of his key

leadership learnings, appeared to contribute to a thorough, in-depth understanding of leadership.

It is clear that a more social, collaborative perspective of leadership underpinned John's views, contrasting a traditional leader-centred philosophy. Such views appeared to have been developed throughout his career and heightened by his time in the sport sector. John values relationships, values people and what they can contribute, and society connective-ness. This is coupled with the fundamental belief that knowing and being aware of self, and having not just technical skills but emotional intelligence skills is crucial to leadership in the sector. Interestingly, three of the emerging fundamental themes from his interview, self-awareness, relationships, and importance of stakeholders, align directly with the three leadership key skills identified by CEO's in Leberman and Shaw's (2012) study. This suggests that although John's views are just one perspective, they may be somewhat reflective of other research and stakeholder views in the sector.

## Case Study Two

A high performance athlete in her earlier years, Jane (not her real name) was exposed to the sport and recreation sector from a young age. This was not only from an athlete perspective but from a governance position also, having been assigned a director role on the board of a national sporting organisation in her early twenties. To date, Jane has worked in both the corporate and sport sector for a number of private and public organisations in a “whole range of leadership roles”. A self-described “change manager” she currently works across two sporting groups; a national governing agency and a national sport organisation (NSO).

### **Key Leadership Learnings – ‘Self’**

In her interview Jane spoke of the significance of the ‘leader’ and the role the leader plays in leadership. She also indicated that her definition and ideas around leadership have developed over time and are influenced by her experiences, having been involved in ‘leadership positions’ from a young age stating, “I’ve been put into a lot of organisations that are broken and leadership-less ... I’ve been thrown into all sorts of ... organisations that need leadership”. She also credits her evolving understanding of leadership to learning about some of the theory on high performing teams and the role of the leader, reading about leadership, as well as enacting leadership and seeing what works.

*“To me leadership is about getting groups of individuals or organisations to believe in a future state. Being very clear about where you are trying to take an organisation, what the kind of vision is and then aligning individuals ... both individually and collectively towards that common goal” (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

### **The Role of ‘Leader’**

As explained in the literature review the traditional thinking around leadership focusses heavily on the ‘leader’ aspect of leadership, emphasising the role the leader plays and the importance of this position. Recent research, however, explores a more encompassing, social, collaborative approach to leadership which de-emphasises the



role of the individual leader literature (Foldy, et al. 2008; Grint, 2005; Jackson & Parry, 2011). As noted above, Jane initially portrayed a 'leader' focussed perspective placing emphasis on the role of the leader and their influence in creating change and a culture in an organisation. She shared her thoughts on how the leader plays a critical role in creating an environment that people enjoy and want to be a part of.

Based on her experience in the sector, Jane explained how she has witnessed many instances where people were put into lead roles when they did not appear to like leading people which in turn "creates a cycle of dysfunctional organisation". Jane suggested that a leader needs to have good emotional intelligence; understand where their blind spots are, be willing to improve and develop, and genuinely care about whether they are a good leader. She argued that "they've got to want to be leaders because they believe in leadership and making organisations and individuals better rather than go into leadership roles because they pay more".

As the interview progressed, Jane also revealed that her 'leader' perspective is founded on the belief that leadership is a collaborative process within which everyone has a role to play. In considering interview data from Jane in totality, her viewpoint could therefore be interpreted as a mix of both traditional and more contemporary thinking around leadership. That is, by being immersed in 'leadership' roles from a young age, and being exposed to the power and influence such 'leader' positions can have, Jane established a leader orientated view. Then, in later years as she experienced and witnessed the reality of leadership as a shared experience, her thinking evolved. Demonstrating this, Jane touched on an example about a sports team she was working with who enacted this shared approach by working as a team to develop their visions, accountabilities and commitments, summarising it as 'followership' and "creating some pretty inspirational leadership".

*"My philosophy on high performing teams is that everyone is a leader. Ultimately someone might have a title but the reality is that they all have to demonstrate leadership" (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

## Values

The importance of values and how these values are embedded into the way in which Jane works with individuals and organisations, was apparent throughout the interview and underpinned many of the considerations and insights she shared. A self-described “value-monitor”, she had a very clear understanding of her own values, identifying integrity, caring and commitment to excellence as the most important alongside her number one value; respect.

*“I think it is how you work with people, respecting who they are and what they bring. Respecting people’s differences ... then working out how you can capitalise on those differences” (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

She expanded further on the value of “commitment to excellence” using an example of when she was informed by a senior leader in her organisation that her standards were too high. This came as a surprise to her as she valued high standards and assumed this would be supported, viewing it personally as a positive value, one to foster and encourage in others, not question.

Goleman and Boyatzis (2008) identify organisational awareness; appreciating the values and culture of the organisation, as a fundamental component of being a socially intelligent leader. Jane elaborated on the need for both individuals and organisations to have a clear set of values. She explained how the NSO she is currently working with has three firm values; excellence, accountability, and integrity. These values build the foundation of the organisation from which everything is linked back to aligning with those values. For example, with the team of coaches she is currently working with it is about accepting accountability and responsibility and understanding, how, what they do impacts on the core values and relates back to the shared vision or purpose. She states that consequently everyone has a leadership role and is responsible for demonstrating leadership. Ospina and Schall (2001) explain that leadership emerges in these social collaborative settings, when people come together with differing views but common purpose and principles.

### *Leadership Attributes/Qualities*

As mentioned, the interviewees were not asked directly about the leadership qualities or attributes they consider important, however, several were threaded throughout this interview including loyalty, being approachable, trustworthy and honest. Being a good communicator and the need to have good interpersonal and relationship management skills were also suggested to be key leadership qualities. This links back to Goleman's (2004) fifth component of emotional intelligence – social skill – and how having this skill set contributes to effective leadership. Goleman (2004) states that “the leader's task is to get work done through other people, and social skill makes that possible” (p. 12).

*“You need people who have incredibly good stakeholder engagement ability, so can build fantastic relationships, who are really clear about what they are trying to achieve” (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

This insight is also linked to the findings reported by graduates in Leberman and Shaw's (2012) study as mentioned in case study one. In the same study, CEO's also considered skills such as change management and self-confidence to be important. Jane mentioned on several occasions the need to be able to create, lead, and manage change as part of demonstrating effective leadership. She also alluded to the idea that “you need to have self-confidence in order to make difficult decisions, have courageous conversations and get buy-in from others”. All aspects of effective leadership (Parent & Séguin, 2007).

Finally, sharing a story about one of her mentors that she looks up to, has learnt a lot from, and considers a good operator and leader, Jane highlighted how her mentor always set a high standard. She emphasised her own high standards and how she views this as a component of being a good leader.

### *Feedback and Reflection (Self and Others)*

Jane stressed the value of 360 degree performance reviews and the feedback that is obtained from these appraisals, along with the opportunity they present to reflect,

learn and develop. Goleman (2000) argues that in the workplace, other than during an annual review, most people get very little or only negative feedback on their day to day efforts. He states that feedback is a critical component of 'developing others'.

*"I'm the kind of person who always seeks feedback on things that I do. So understanding if that's working or not working" (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

Jane reflected on how having done a number of these reviews throughout her career has allowed her to "think a little bit about why I do what I do and how could I do things differently". This feedback has been the catalyst for reflection which in turn allows for self-improvement and development. It is therefore not surprising that graduates in the Leberman and Shaw (2012) study reported positive feedback as a positive feature of their career, stating it provided a sense of achievement and feeling of being valued.

On a number of occasions Jane touched on the significant learnings that can be taken from being aware of the way you influence and impact on others. Relatively early on in her career, she attended a three day leadership summit in Australia to listen to the world's 'gurus' speak about their perspectives of leadership. She reflected on how this experience encouraged her to "think about leadership and the way that I impacted on people". She referred back to an old mantra – "what have I done to make someone else's day better?" and the importance of taking the time to think about this, be present and give back. She also mentioned the value in reflecting on who you do not want to be and learning from those that you do not resonate with, highlighting that often you learn more from those who you do not aspire to be like.

### ***Key Leadership Learnings – 'Others'***

"Look, I believe in people!" A strong theme underpinning Jane's perspective of leadership and key leadership learnings was that of 'people'; the belief in people and what they can contribute, and the overall desire to develop people.

### *Develop People*

Numerous times throughout the interview, Jane stressed the need to “get to know your people”, “understanding what makes people tick, what motivates them and how you can align that”. She impressed the importance of having a clear direction and vision and creating trust and confidence in order to “take people with you”. Most importantly believing in those people, recognising their potential and developing them. This correlates closely with the transformational leadership style whereby the leader has the ability to influence, empower, guide and support individuals in their goals and direct them toward the overall objectives of the organisation (Parent et al., 2009b).

Drawing further from her experience at the leadership summit in Australia, Jane talked about the impact one particular speaker had on her, in regards to his teachings on developing people, and highlighted this as a milestone in her leadership learning. The presenter had conducted substantial research with stakeholders and had developed a philosophy about coaching to strengths rather than weaknesses. Jane reflected on how this experience changed her thinking as up until that point she had been concentrating on how she could improve people instead of acknowledging the collective contribution they made to the team. This ties in with the key value ‘respect’; Jane highlighted the need to respect individuals, who they are, what they bring and respect their differences, working out how to capitalise on those differences.

*“You’ve got to get people to recognise people’s strengths and weaknesses and capitalise on people’s strengths rather than their weaknesses” (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

Jane also shared her views that as a leader it is crucial to employ people who are better than you as it allows them to feel more confident in their ability. She argued not to feel threatened by these individuals but embrace their abilities and the contribution they can make to create a high performing team. Jane mentioned that she would often approve trivial professional development requests from staff, as it was about developing the individual and building loyalty.

*“If you invest in the whole individual and you invest in them beyond just that period of time, you get so much more” (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

### **Key Leadership Learnings – ‘Sector’**

Having worked in the sport and recreation sector for more than 20 years, Jane has experience with a diverse range of organisations and therefore has extensive insight into the industry in New Zealand. Her work with both for profit and not for profit organisations, including private and public companies, has enabled her to develop a clear understanding of what the sector needs in order to continue to grow and thrive. The most significant theme that emerged in regards to key sector leadership learnings was that of building teams.

#### ***Building Teams***

As mentioned, Goleman (2008) identifies social skill as one of five components of emotional intelligence. An aspect of social skill is the ability to build and lead teams through building rapport with others and developing and fostering relationships. In response to being asked what type of leadership does the sport sector need, without hesitation Jane responded that there is a need for people who can build teams.

*“I think you need people who can take people with you ... people who have incredibly good stakeholder engagement ability ... can build fantastic relationships, who are really clear about what they are trying to achieve” (Jane, 8 October 2015).*

When elaborating on the sector’s needs, Jane asked “do you ever sit down and talk about what is a team?” and questioned whether students are being taught how to build teams, change the culture and get people engaged in organisations. She commented that we are lucky in the sport sector as people are filtering through from the coaching world however “they might not have the hard skills” and suggested a need for people with not only the technical but also the soft skills.

On the whole, this aligns back to the 'people' side of leadership and the need to develop people and work collaboratively. Johnson et al.'s (2012) article on *Collective Leadership: A case study of the All Blacks* portrays a prime example of the success attributed to a collective leadership model. It demonstrates how crucial creating a culture and building a team is to the overall success of the team, regardless of the context. Jane referred to, on numerous occasions, the notion "of building high performing teams". She reflected on an experience working with a super rugby team and the ways in which they build their leadership team through developing a vision, clear accountabilities, shared commitments, trust and confidence and having courageous conversations. As in the All Blacks case, this collective leadership approach has been a crucial factor in maintaining their winning legacy (Johnson et al., 2012).

Furthermore, 'team-builder' and 'teamwork' were two of the key leadership descriptors identified by participants in the Parent et al. (2009b) case study on a major World Championships. Results found that the success of an event largely comes down to the team stating that "the more people you positively involve, the more support and connected those individuals will feel" (p. 176). Evidently, regardless of the context, building high performing teams and embracing a team approach has positive outcomes and is associated with effective leadership.

### ***Case Two Summary***

Her vast industry experience in 'leadership positions' across a number of different organisations and sectors has provided Jane with an extensive platform of knowledge, learning and leadership perspectives. Encompassing both the 'leader' and 'ship' views of leadership, it is evident that Jane values the role of the assigned leader and their contribution, and also the idea that leadership is a collaborative, collective experience. Underpinning this is her passion for people, the need to develop people and build high performing teams in order to have effective leadership within the sector.

### Case Study Three

At present, James (not his real name) holds a senior position within a lead sport and recreation entity in New Zealand. Previously, he was the CEO for a regional sports trust and national sporting organisation. His career did not begin in the sport sector however. He originally trained as a teacher and spent his first 20 plus years of employment in this field, attributing a lot of his leadership learnings and skills to “being in the classroom”. On reflection, he noted that he did not realise he had acquired so many valuable skills until leaving the teaching profession stating that “I was quite concerned that I was taking nothing with me and going into a space where I had absolutely no business background”. His current position focuses on managing relationships with partner organisations such as regional sports trusts and funding agencies. He views himself as a reciprocal advocate for both the organisation he is employed by, and for the stakeholders in which he is assigned to work with.

#### ***Key Leadership Learnings – ‘Self’***

It was apparent throughout the interview that through his maturity and diverse experiences, in not only the sport sector, James has developed a comprehensive, holistic view of leadership. His definition of leadership was very pragmatic with reference to “simplifying the world for other people” in order to allow them to do what needs to be done.

*“I think one of the critical roles of people in leadership is to put your arms around all of that complexity, contradiction, and clutter and make it clear and simple for people who then have to do something”  
(James, 15 October 2015).*

He shared the notion that leadership is about “trying to develop a vision that you can communicate to other people who have only got five minutes to get it”, such is the nature of the sport sector whereby often those contributing are volunteers.

He went on to express his thoughts that “leadership is conferred on people, it’s not just assumed ... it’s given to you ... it’s gifted to you”, suggesting that on the whole



leadership is a responsibility and an honour. Contributing to his perspective is his belief in the need for emotional intelligence and sensemaking in leadership and the strong core values of which he lives by (Jackson & Parry, 2011).

### *Emotional Intelligence*

James shared his thoughts around his own leadership style, highlighting that he has a somewhat “quiet” approach and is “quite intuitive, but where I get to intuitively I can generally backfill logically”. He reflected on the influence his parents, specifically his mother, had on shaping him to be the way he is. He explained how his “father was a carpenter who placed high value on mathematics, logical thinking and sequence – IQ by another name – and not a good fit with the natural cast of my mind, especially when I was young”. His level of self-awareness allowed him to identify the characteristics in his father that he did not want to develop in himself, and instead worked on being more like his mother.

He suggested that the quiet approach is strongly related to emotional intelligence referencing key components such as communication, listening, having self-awareness, intuition, and service orientation. Again, these align closely with Goleman’s fundamental capabilities of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000).

*“... my personal kind of approach has been ... what I call a light touch. I’m not a fire and brimstone preacher” (James, 15 October 2015).*

Jackson and Parry (2011) suggest that often, when you analyse leadership failure, it is not cognitive behavioural concerns that are the cause but instead emotional issues. In this, the authors’ offer that the ‘leader’ may have insufficient emotional resilience or toughness to be effective. Schneider (2013) suggests that sport managers with emotional depth are calmer under pressure as their sense of awareness guides them on how and when to act on one’s own feelings and the emotions of others.

When reflecting on emotional intelligence in relation to the sport sector, James referred to a challenge in that new graduates coming into the industry are often young, however the people they are working for or alongside are not. He framed this as a “generational kind of mismatch” suggesting that there is a need for these new

graduates to be aware of their surroundings, recognise those interfaces and “simply understand the world they live in”. He stressed the need to invest in building those relationships in order to learn from each other and find the middle ground.

*“If you are going to try and engage somebody of a different generation to do something differently, you’ve probably got to make some sort of gesture somewhere early on that you understand their world and can offer them something that helps” (James, 15 October 2015).*

Interestingly, a number of the components of emotional intelligence James refers to such as awareness, listening and empathy align with the notion of servant leadership (which will be elaborated on below) and the characteristics associated with this style (Greenleaf, 1977; Pye, 2005; Spears & Lawrence, 2004). As mentioned in the previous case study they also correlate with aspects of authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2009).

### *Values*

Emotionally intelligent individuals are committed to using emotional intelligence to guide ones core beliefs and values (Schneider, 2013). James shared a story about a conversation he had had with his daughter about their family values. He explained how she had stated that they do not have any obvious values (as they had not been specifically talked of), however he knew that if she was to do something that was not approved of she would have known “within an instant” the values that had been compromised. This sharing suggested that James believes that you do not necessarily always have to be overt about values in order for people to understand and accept them. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2012) indicated that behaviour and decision making is strongly influenced by values.

*“Sometimes leadership is below the level of language ... it’s kind of that subtext” (James, 15 October 2015).*

James identified a number of different values that were important to him including respect and consistency along with being genuine and committed, however several others stood out in particular that influence his everyday experiences and interactions.

For James, it comes down to serving others and being accountable to yourself, others and the wider community. He spoke frequently of the value of relationships and the need to be believable and authentic in order to build rapport and establish and manage relationships. Greenleaf (1977) recognised the desire to build and develop personal and collaborative relationships as a key component of servant leadership, a leadership style which will be elaborated on in more detail below.

On a number of occasions, James shared the idea that for him it is about doing work that has a purpose; explaining that it needs to be “worthwhile and valuable” and “benefit other people”. He also elaborated on how leadership is about helping others find that common purpose. Similarly, participants in the Parent et al. (2009a) study, identified having a shared purpose or vision and being able to communicate that well to others, as a significant feature of leadership.

#### *Leadership Attributes/Qualities*

Throughout the interview James referred to a number of different qualities and attributes of leadership. The most prominent, threaded throughout the entire conversation was that of sensemaking. Pye (2005) suggests that we view leadership as a case of sensemaking in action as she argues that “to understand leadership as a sensemaking process helps to illustrate more clearly what happens in the daily doing of leading” (p. 46). It was clear that James viewed leadership as an opportunity to make sense of complex situations and then deliver a clear, simplified message to others, effectively removing the “clutter” from the situation.

*“It’s about weighing up what’s in front of you, deciding what’s important and what’s not ... setting things in order of priority ... packaging those things in a way that you can give them to someone to execute in a way that is manageable given the resources they have got” (James, 15 October 2015).*

James elaborated on his definition of leadership explaining how “leadership is about taking responsibility for that simplifying or streamlining or making plain what needs to

happen now". Sensemaking is an ongoing, social interaction that "occurs in the ongoing interactions between people as they enact their environments" (Pye, 2005, p. 45), and suitably fits with the social, relational view of leadership and the complex nature of the sport sector, with its myriad of organisations, individuals and influences (Bennis, 2009; Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005).

Reflecting on his teaching experiences and his first role in the sport sector he explained how the two related in that it was "about crystallising things" in order to get "buy in" from others whether that be students or colleagues. James shared the idea that you need to be "believable or authentic" in order to get others on board and that it comes down to building rapport and trust. He revealed how teaching allowed him to master some of the valuable skills such as communication and relationship management; transferable skills which are also of significant value in the sport sector. Parent and Séguin (2007) found that stakeholders most frequently identified networking skills as the most critical quality for successful leadership. Communication, public relation skills and credibility, among others, were also identified supporting the notion that leadership is a two way, social, relational interaction (Ospina & Schall, 2001; Parent & Séguin, 2007).

### ***Key Leadership Learnings – 'Others'***

Not only is leadership about knowing and understanding self and ones values but also being able to understand and relate to others. James' current role is focussed on managing the relationships with key stakeholders and therefore his view on the importance of developing these partnerships with others was somewhat anticipated. Underpinning his perspective is the philosophy of servant leadership and recognising the important role 'followers' play in leadership.

### ***Serving Others and the Idea of Servant Leadership***

When reflecting on the entirety of the interview it was evident that the theme of servant leadership was emerging from the onset. Early on in the conversation, James directly identified servant leadership as a philosophy he values and from there on it

was entwined through the interview. Spears and Lawrence (2004) suggest that this style of leadership is a more holistic approach, encouraging a sense of community and promoting shared decision making.

*“The idea of servant leadership ... I place quite a high value on that and I think people that walk into our sector thinking about command and control are kind of misplaced” (James, 15 October 2015).*

James discussed how, in principal, within his role a service to the community position exists as he attempts to anticipate what someone might need or want and deliver that for them. However often it is for people “whose faces I don’t know ... names I don’t know ... people I don’t meet”. He takes this idea further explaining that “in a way it’s about being relevant, valuable and finding ways to make the work of volunteers easier, more productive and more enjoyable”. This links back to the uniqueness of sport and the significant contribution volunteers make to the industry, the largest group of ‘servants’ to the sector (Dalziel, 2011), and in essence is an example of servant leadership servicing servant leadership. In the study by Parris and Welty Peachey (2012), which explores the servant leadership style of a leader and the effect on volunteers in events, it was concluded that this type of leadership can result in the development of long-term volunteers who then go on to become servant leaders. Findings also suggest that servant leadership in turn enhances volunteer motivation, a valuable discovery considering the worrying attrition rates of volunteers in the not for profit sport sector (Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012).

Perhaps not so directly but just as significantly, the notion of servant leadership was implied on a number of other occasions throughout the conversation. James spoke of his teaching career, a service profession demanding many of the characteristics of servant leadership, and how this was “fantastic preparation” for working in the sport sector. In relation to ten of the characteristics of a servant leader (as documented in the literature review), James made inference to the majority of these including listening, empathy, awareness, foresight, commitment, and building community (Spears & Lawrence, 2004). On a number of occasions he brought it back to being a servant of the community or trying to develop an organisation that can serve

a constituency or community. Several of these characteristics also link to components of emotional intelligence as mentioned above.

Also embedded in this understanding are his views around feeling a sense of responsibility to the wider sport and recreation community, acting as an advocate in his role for both the organisation he is working for and those he is working with. He explains that with leadership the idea is that you “exercise the sword on behalf of the community”, linking back to the notion that “leadership is conferred on people”, that it is a privilege and in return you “owe them [the community] some service that is meaningful to them”.

#### *Understanding Others - ‘Followers’*

Although James did not use the ‘followed-centred’ term as such, through dialogue about knowing and understanding others and the importance of building and managing relationships, the idea of ‘follower-ship’ or ‘follower-centred leadership’ emerged. Jackson and Parry (2011) give credit to the role of follower in leadership acknowledging that there is a lopsided focus on leaders and much attention needs to be drawn to the ‘follower’ who also plays a pivotal role in the leadership relationship. James’ perspective aligns with this, placing little emphasis in his sharing’s on the ‘leader’ and instead drawing attention to others or ‘followers’.

Drawing on the focus of his current role, James expressed that it is about “knowing the partner well enough that you understand any business risk ... that you have a level of trust”. He explained how important it is to “understand their world and be relevant to it, and that you have to believe that what you are doing is worthwhile and valuable to other people”. By the way in which he spoke with genuine passion and conviction, it was clear that he was in this role to serve others and believed that leadership is not an individual experience.

*“You don’t do things for your own personal good. So there has to be some purpose, some sense that its important work that there are benefits for other people” (James, 15 October 2015).*

Furthermore, as the servant leadership style suggests, prominence is given to the appreciation and consideration of followers (Meindl, 1995; Parris & Peachey, 2012). James mentioned that he looks for where he can work with the willing, stating that “you can’t work with the unwilling” and implying that ‘followers’ need to be willing and eager to cooperate and be part of the process. Underpinning James’ ‘follower-centred’ approach, is his foundational belief in the importance of relationships and building rapport with others, arguing that “in any social interaction somehow there has to be a sense that is conveyed that you are believable or authentic”.

### ***Key Leadership Learnings – ‘Sector’***

“I think leadership in the sports sector is different to leadership in a commercial environment”. Throughout the interview, James emphasised the importance of context and the unique environment of the sport industry whereby “nobody owns it”. The significance of context and the role context plays in influencing leadership and leadership patterns and effectiveness is related to a social, relational view of leadership and is therefore also emphasised by multiple authors (Grint, 2005; Kihl et al., 2010). The most prominent theme that emerged from what James shared in regards to sector related leadership was the need to recognise the community and ‘grass roots’ level of the sector, and to work collaboratively with people and entities at this level.

### ***Community/Grass Roots Focus***

James’ fundamental belief is that the foundation of sport and recreation in New Zealand, the “driving force” is at the grass roots, community level. He spoke passionately about the need to “respect where this comes from” and questioned “how do you make sure you don’t destroy that ... neglect that? How do you get leaders that

actually understand that at a profound level, so that all of the other decision making that they do doesn't lose sight of the fact that down at community level there is something really precious?"

*"I think we need leadership that respects the base of the sport and recreation community" (James, 15 October 2015).*

He touched on a couple of examples of successful athletes who have all come from small towns suggesting that often even the talent originates from suburban or rural New Zealand, from the smaller communities. James believes leadership in our sector is about fostering these communities however argues, "there is more money in sport and recreation now than there ever has been but it still doesn't reach the ground level". He states that "the power supply doesn't come down the pipe from head office" but instead "that energy emerges in neighbourhoods and is replenished in neighbourhoods".

Drath (2001) proposed that leadership happens when individuals in a community come together to create a mutual, shared understanding of their responsibilities so that their common purpose is realised. He also suggested that it is by entering into the community and embracing the shared meaning making processes and languages of the community, that we can really understand how leadership happens.

James explained how the current strategy for community development in the sector is aimed at identifying "opportunities of scale" at community level in order to encourage "better collaboration between multiple groups in a concerted approach". He suggested this "community ownership is where you get sustainability from" by helping, for example, not just one club but bringing a number of organisations together to "help each other out". Furthermore, he argued that leadership is about helping people find that common purpose and then allowing and supporting them to take ownership (Ospina & Schall, 2001; Schneider, 2013).



*“They [communities] are perfectly capable of figuring out how to do things better ... they don’t need outsiders from somewhere coming to tell them” (James, 15 October 2015).*

Ospina and Schall (2001) insist that much of the leadership that exists can be seen in communities, teams, across fields and through collaboration. Interestingly, this notion of community-centric leadership also aligns closely with the servant leadership approach. Both creating a shared vision and building communities are identified as aspects of servant leadership by Parris and Welty Peachey (2012) in their study of a cause-related sport event. It is also the servant leadership approach of the volunteers and individuals in these communities, their “time given, expertise gifted that actually drives the sport and recreation at ground level”.

### ***Case Three Summary***

Evidently, James has extensive experience across the not for profit sector in both the education and sport fields. The foundation of his servant leadership philosophy stems from a longstanding career in teaching and more recently his relationship management role. His passion for community and grass roots development and appreciation of the major contributions this fundamental area delivers, also contributes to his underlining principles. James clearly values the more subtle, intuitive, quiet approach to leadership, placing emphasis on the importance of relationships, sensemaking, emotional intelligence and the significant role of followers.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to investigate stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector. More specifically, this overall aim was explored through the use of two guiding sub-questions: 1) what are selected individual stakeholder perspectives of leadership; and 2) what themes emerge from these perspectives that advance knowledge and understanding of leadership in the New Zealand sport sector?

In order to address this intent, a qualitative study was conducted incorporating a case study approach. Data were gathered from three individual stakeholders through semi-structured in-depth interviews resulting in rich, insightful sharing's. Their views on leadership were further explored through three sub-areas; leadership in relation to self, others and sector. Due to the complex nature of the leadership phenomenon, it is important to note that there is no one perspective that can fully explain or define its complexities (Bresnen, 1995; Kihl et al., 2010; Leopkey & Parent, 2009; Pfeffer, 1977). Using a stakeholder approach, however, has enabled insight into the perspectives of three relatively diverse individuals with a range of experience in the sector which in turn can contribute to the growing body of leadership knowledge.

Across the three case study interviews, interestingly a range of leadership attributes and qualities surfaced from each of the interview conversations, including several leadership styles. In addition, a range of values were highlighted along with a number of key leadership learnings from each case participant. Furthermore, when reviewing the three case studies together (i.e., cross-case comparison), three significant concepts emerged: *knowing self and the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership; the importance of relationships; and leadership as a relational, collaborative phenomenon*. These summary findings and concepts are synthesised in more detail below.

## Leadership Attributes and Qualities

Despite no directly related question, a number of leadership attributes and qualities were either identified specifically, or emerged from the discussions. Table 1 below provides a list of the most dominant leadership attributes and qualities across the three interviews.

<i>Attributes/Qualities of Leadership</i>	
Approachable	High standards
Authentic	Honesty
Commitment	Integrity
Confidence	Loyalty
Consistency	Relationship skills
Emotional intelligence	Sensemaker
Follower	Team builder
Good communicator	Trustworthy

*Table 1: An overview of key leadership attributes/qualities derived from participant insights*

The majority of the attributes or qualities identified by the three participants can be linked back to some of the existing literature that explores leader attributes and qualities, and reveals characteristics of leadership (e.g., Goleman, 2000, 2004; Leberman & Shaw, 2012; Parent et al., 2009a; Parent & Séguin, 2007; Pye, 2005). Furthermore, in the Parent et al. (2009b) study, participants identified key leadership descriptors, which for the most part correlated to the attributes and qualities of leadership found in this research (i.e., team builder, relationship skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills).

One attribute that stood out from the others was the idea of sensemaking or being a sensemaker. The significance of this quality emerged throughout James' interview as he placed emphasis on the idea that leadership is about making sense of complex situations in order to simplify situations and experiences for others. As part of the summary case analysis process, the other two participants also revealed similar ideas, implying that leadership is about being willing to take the time to listen, being clear and able to prioritise and in turn get 'buy in' from others to work towards a common purpose or vision. Schneider (2013) argues that collective achievement is largely dependent on the sport manager's ability to help others buy into the mission. Pye's (2005) study highlights the need for everyone to be involved in contributing to a

'collective understanding' and 'shared' definition of reality. When the 'leader' moved from "imposed vision to sharing the process of shaping meaning and developing common-sense-making" (p. 44), staff were more likely to 'buy in' and see the bigger picture. Typically, the literature which is concerned with leader or leadership behaviour, refers to the significance of leaders influencing others in the direction of a preferred definition or meaning of reality as sensegiving (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007).

Furthermore, across the three case interviews, along with the traditional transformational leadership, a number of more contemporary leadership styles were highlighted including authentic, shared, followership, transformational, and servant leadership. Most of these styles emerged through the stories and experiences shared by the participants, however James directly expressed resonance with servant leadership. Similarly, in the Kihl et al. (2010) study, stakeholders identify transformational, followership, and shared leadership as characteristics and behaviours of effective leadership. In their review of leadership Avolio et al. (2009) pay attention to all five of these leadership styles emphasising the significant contribution they make to the knowledge in leadership research. They recognise authentic and shared leadership as emerging pillars of interest tailing the growing attention to servant leadership, however identify followership as an area lacking discussion and research.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### *Knowing Self and the Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership*

A summary analysis of the three interviews suggest that, for the case study participants, leadership starts with self, highlighting the fundamental basics of knowing self and the importance of emotional intelligence.

In order to understand self, one must have a clear understanding of personal goals, aspirations and values (Goleman, 2004; Petrovici, 2014; Schneider, 2013). Reflection is a key part of this process, taking the time to reflect on experiences and learnings (Goleman, 2004; Petrovici, 2014) and consider the way in which we have been socially constructed and the factors that have influenced our way of thinking and ideas.

It was evident through what they shared, the examples used, and experiences drawn on, that each of the three case participants placed significant value on the notion of knowing self and the role of emotional intelligence in leadership. Each participant made reference in some way to the idea of having a good understanding of self; your strengths, weaknesses and limitations, and being able to manage yourself with others. John placed emphasis on the aspect of self-awareness specifically, and all three alluded to the importance of emotional intelligence or 'soft skills' implying that it is not just the technical skills or knowledge that is needed in the sector. Overall, these findings align closely with the results of Leberman and Shaw (2012) whereby participants also reported on the importance of skills such as self-awareness, interpersonal skills, and relationships building, as opposed to the technical and more practical expertise.

Reflecting on Goleman's (2004) five competencies of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness (empathy), and social skills), it is apparent that across the three interviews the participants deemed all five components noteworthy. Self-awareness, empathy, and social skills were all overtly discussed among the stakeholder's whereas self-regulation and self-motivation were more indirectly implied. A number of the leadership qualities identified in this study such as honesty, integrity, trustworthy, and being approachable align directly with emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004). Furthermore, Schneider's (2013) summarises that "emotional intelligence is a common thread to the successful management of sport organisations" (p. 43) and that emotional intelligence can enhance and develop the sport manager's approach to leadership.

This research study offers evidence to suggest that the inclusion of knowledge and capability development of emotional intelligence in the undergraduate curriculum of sport qualifications would benefit the development of the student and contribute towards their understanding of leadership. This correlates with conclusions from Leberman and Shaw (2012) who summarised that there is a "disconnect between preparation for the sector and requirements in the sector" (p. 3) whereby the skills and capabilities being taught are not necessarily aligned with those needed out in the industry.

### *The Importance of Relationships*

As a growing number of leadership authors imply, once we have a clearer understanding of self, and have embraced and encouraged self-awareness and self-knowledge, we can look beyond to the relationships and interactions with others toward the essence of leadership (Goleman, 2000, 2004; Jackson & Parry, 2011; Schneider, 2013). Leadership is not a solo mission, instead it is created through dialogue, conversations and interactions between people (Ospina & Schall, 2001; Smircich & Morgan, 1982).

In line with a strong body of knowledge that highlights the significance of relationships within leadership (Goleman, 2000, 2004; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008; Greenleaf, 1977; Leberman & Shaw, 2012; Leopkey & Parent, 2009; Parent, 2008; Schneider, 2013) the importance of relationships and building and managing relationships with others was also a significant finding of the present study. The category of 'Others' included relationships with peers, colleagues and stakeholders. Each participant of this study consistently stressed this fundamental theme throughout their interview. They often referred back to, or linked responses in other areas (e.g., leadership qualities, styles, values, and needs of the sector) to the idea of the importance of relationships. John summarised it succinctly stating that in leadership "the ability to have, lead and influence effective relationships is critical" (John, 7 October 2015).

Similarly, the importance of relationship building was the most significant theme that came across in Leberman and Shaw's (2012) study. Schneider (2013) too, found that all five components of emotional intelligence improve sport managers effectiveness in managing relationships. The results of Petrovici's (2014) study found that for a 'leader' the skill of relationship management is of critical importance as establishing and maintaining relationships is essential to the progress of an organisation. Petrovici (2014) also indicated that interpersonal relationship is associated with sensitivity towards others and the desire to build and maintain relationships.

The question is how do we teach and develop the capability of building and managing relationships?

Establishing and managing relationships, communication, building networks and rapport with others, and team building is what makes up the 'social skill' component of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004). John and James both explicitly discussed the role that communication plays in building and managing effective relationships. They each elaborated on not just the verbal communication skills necessary but also stressed the need to be an effective listener and allow others to feel heard. John and Jane both mentioned the importance of open, honest conversations and the need to be able to have sometimes difficult, courageous conversations. As recognised explicitly by Jane, a key aspect of valuing and encouraging relationships building is being able to build teams, specifically "high performing teams" (Jane, 8 October 2015).

The three case participants of this study specifically discussed the importance of building relationships with not only team members but also with stakeholders, highlighting stakeholder engagement as a critical component of working in the sport sector. Kihl et al. (2010) argue that stakeholders are owners, contributors and co-creators of leadership along with the organisations they work with. As the literature review explores, stakeholders play a major role in the leadership process both informally and formally, especially within the context of sport, therefore establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders is critical.

#### *Leadership as a Relational, Collaborative Phenomenon*

As stated in the research design section, two of the selection criteria for participants for this study was their insight and appreciation for the importance of leadership and their high experience levels of leadership from a more informal, unassigned leader perspective. It was therefore somewhat anticipated that their key leadership sharing's would be less 'leader' focussed, however the extent to which all three articulated the importance of collaborative and relational leadership was revealing.

Sport is often a relational, social experience, and an avenue for bringing people and communities together. Considering this, it is therefore surprising that sport has seemingly encouraged a leader-centric style of leadership, dominated by males and

often focussing on those at the top (CEO's, boards, coaches, captains, managers). Research in relation to sport and leadership is still heavily focussed on individual 'formal' leaders, their leadership styles or attributes and the effects they have on performance or success (Frontiera, 2010; Kellett, 1999; Parris & Welty Peachey, 2012; Wright & Côté, 2003).

The findings in this research suggest that it is time to move our attention away from the 'leader' and towards 'leadership'; a social, collaborative, relational experience (Grint, 2005; Ospina & Schall, 2001). Across the three interviews, this theme of leadership being a relational, collaborative phenomenon emerged from the onset. From the conversations about the importance of emotional intelligence and relationships, through to discussions about developing people, building teams and the role of followers, it was clear that the thoughts and perspectives of each case participant on leadership, extended much further than the 'leader'.

John had a clear focus on the importance of relationships, valuing the contribution of others and society connective-ness. Along with the key role of stakeholders, he stressed the need to create an environment where we are collaborating and working together, of the belief that everyone contributes to leadership in the sector. James emphasised the need to take it back to the community and grass roots level in sport, suggesting that leadership in our sector is about fostering these communities and involving them, "the power supply" (James, 15 October 2015) in decision making. Of the three, Jane had a slightly more 'leader' orientated perspective. However, despite being the participant to refer to the individual 'leader' the most, it was indeed clear that this was embedded in a very collaborative, shared, and social perspective of leadership. Her emphasis on the relational aspect; developing people and building teams, along with her view that everyone has a leadership role, suggests she too believes that leadership cannot be enacted by one assigned individual, and requires a collective approach. Overall, evidence suggests that all three participants view the '*ship*' component as the cornerstone of '*leadership*'.



## **Limitations and Influences on Findings**

Considering the small sample size, it is evident that the findings were insightful and thought-provoking. Although just three stakeholder perspectives were captured, considering the similarities across the three, it is likely there are others in the industry with similar views.

As part of the qualitative thematic analysis, the data in this study was coded and interpreted by the researcher. Key ideas and themes were surmised based on the researcher's understanding and perceptions of the information discussed in the interviews. Each participant reviewed and confirmed that the transcripts were a true and accurate record of the conversations, however, the limitation of the researcher's influence on interpretation needs to be considered. Every effort has been made to demonstrate transparency in the method (case selection) and analysis to allow the reader to also draw their own conclusions. In addition, participant voices have been offered first hand on many occasions, to further facilitate transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the social constructionist lens employed throughout the research process has influenced the research design, analysis, interpretation and conclusions of findings.

## **Implications of the Research**

### *Contribution to the Theoretical Conversation about Leadership*

As mentioned, there is limited literature on stakeholder perspectives of leadership in the sport sector, let alone specific to New Zealand. It was therefore anticipated that this study would make a contribution to the theoretical and conceptual conversations about leadership in the sport setting and would offer a platform for future research and investigation.

As Schneider (2013) suggested in his research about emotional intelligence in sport leadership, it is crucial to understand the significance of emotional intelligence and the role it plays in developing and enhancing those contributing to the sport management sector. The findings of this dissertation support this suggestion,

highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence, and specifically the social skill component of building and managing relationships.

The findings of this study challenge the abundance of leader-centric literature suggesting that the focus of leadership research, specifically in the sport context (but also relevant to other areas), would benefit from being embedded in the collective, shared, relational approach, and less pre-occupied with the individual leader. This is not to say the research in the area of leader identity, behaviour, and effectiveness is not of value, however, it is time to move forward to a more encompassing exploration. Although, as outlined in the literature review, some research with this social, collaborative viewpoint does exist, and while other literature in this area is continuing to emerge, the timing could not be more appropriate to explore further (Jackson & Parry, 2011).

This study also advances thinking in the area of context specific leadership knowledge. The social constructionist standpoint views leadership as dependent on context and acknowledges the role context plays in influencing leadership (Grint, 2005; Kihl et al., 2010). The context of this study, the New Zealand sport sector, is a unique setting comprised of a variety of organisations and contributors. Despite sport playing a significant role in the social development of the nation, sport leadership research in this context however is limited (Collins & Jackson, 2007). Findings from this study, specifically the insight around the importance of shared, collaborative leadership, contributes to this growing area of interest.

### *Contribution to Practice*

Along with contributions to theoretical conversations about leadership, there are also a number of practical implications of this study. A main output of this research was to gather the insight and key leadership learnings to inform curriculum development in, the soon to be established, first year leadership paper at AUT. Among the other key leadership learnings, the findings of this study have revealed three main elements that will enhance the teachings of leadership; the importance of knowing self and emotional intelligence, the importance of relationships and significance of leadership

as a relational, social phenomenon. These learnings can be drawn on and used as a framework to build the content for the forthcoming leadership paper.

These findings suggest that leadership teachings should begin with knowing and discovering self before extending the leadership knowledge further. As mentioned, they also contribute to the conversation about the importance of emotional intelligence and the need for these soft skills, not just the technical expertise. As previously mentioned, Leberman and Shaw (2012) reveal a disconnection between the content taught in university and the skills needed for woman in the sport industry. They highlighted that the current content taught to sport management students in New Zealand universities is highly content focused, with few opportunities to develop the 'soft' skills. As Goleman (2008) suggests emotional intelligence can be learnt. There is therefore reason to believe that it is not only vital to include these teachings but viable also.

This leads on to the second practical implication of this research, the opportunity to incorporate a stronger leadership focus in the subjects containing a practical 'industry experience' component. Emotional intelligence skills such as empathy and relationship building are difficult to teach, however, if students are taught the content knowledge and then given an opportunity to embed this into practice, the outcomes are more likely to be successful. This practical implication is supported by Leberman and Shaw's (2012) suggestion that by giving students opportunities to reflect on learning and integrate into practice, it will enable them to develop some of the identified skills.

### **Future Research Opportunities**

This study provides insight into some of the thinking around leadership in the New Zealand sport sector. With such a diverse industry, further investigation into perspectives of additional individual stakeholders would enhance the findings. A wider scale focus, from a broader range of organisations (i.e., profit, commercial, not for profit etc.) as well as other stakeholders such as volunteers, different ethnicities, cultures and age, would provide a more comprehensive overview of sector views.

The findings in this study have created a foundation for future research opportunities and highlight the gaps in the literature in a number of areas. The emergent themes of knowing self, emotional intelligence, and the importance of relationships coupled with the lack of leadership literature in the context of sport, highlights the need for future research in this area. This research could also benefit from investigating ways in which to teach and practice these soft skills without compromising on the technical content that is expected to be covered in sport qualifications. Furthermore, exploring how these leadership teachings can be encouraged and evaluated as part of a practicum or work-integrated learning subject would also be an important focus for future inquiry.

The body of work in leadership literature would also be extended further if future studies continued to focus on the idea of leadership as a shared, relational experience, in order to extend beyond the leader-centred perspective. This present study highlights that this way of thinking exists within sport, however, it needs to be explored further in order to fully understand the perspective and how it can advance the sector.

## Concluding Statement

In conclusion, the topic of leadership is an exciting, evolving, thought-provoking area of interest to which new research will continue to contribute. Combine this with a stakeholder approach to exploring leadership, situated within the sport context and embedded in a social constructionist perspective, along with the intention to inform leadership curriculum development, and the findings and exploration opportunities are abundant and rewarding.

As the sport sector in New Zealand continues to change and develop so too do the opportunities to investigate from both a practical and academic position. In New Zealand, sport has a good core, with a higher purpose rooted in social and economic development and collective community advancement (Collins & Jackson, 2007). The sector is rich with people who are passionate, experienced, educated and willing to contribute. There is already a lot of valuable work taking place and if we leverage off this potential and continue to encourage new thinking and developments we can succeed in being a *world leading sport system*.

Furthermore, recognising the importance of knowing self, emotional intelligence, creating and managing relationships and the social, relational viewpoint helps us to better understand the overall notion of leadership as a phenomenon, an experience available to and enacted by all. Leadership is, after all, not an individual, solo mission.

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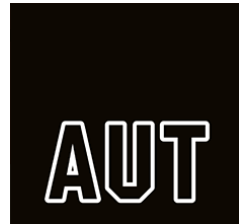
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## APPENDICES

## **APPENDIX A**

### ***Interview Guide***



### Interview guide questions

- How would you define/describe leadership?
- What are you aware of/have you learnt about your leadership?
- What values underpin your leadership (style)?
- Can you share some stories of people from the sport community that have made significant contributions/influences/changes? Those in either assigned leadership role or unassigned roles?
- What type of leadership does the sport (and recreation) sector need?
- What are some of the challenges and opportunities for sport leadership going forward?
- If you could influence the next cohort of graduates what would be some of the key leadership learnings you would want them to have learnt?

## **APPENDIX B**

### ***AUT Ethics Committee Approval***

## AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology  
D-89, WA505F Level 5 WA Building City Campus  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)



5 August 2015

Lesley Ferkins  
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Lesley

Re Ethics Application: **15/274 Stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Subcommittee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 5 August 2018.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 5 August 2018;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 5 August 2018 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,



Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Katie Vulinovich ,Gaye Bryham

## APPENDIX C

### *Participant Information Sheet*



## Participant Information Sheet

### DATE INFORMATION SHEET PRODUCED:

25 July 2015

### PROJECT TITLE

Stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector.

### An Invitation

Hello, my name is Katie Vulinovich and I am completing this study as part of my dissertation, a requirement for the Masters of Business in Sport Management in which I am undertaking.

I am interested in gaining insight into stakeholder perspectives of leadership within the New Zealand sport industry. This insight will help to inform the curriculum development of Leadership papers in the AUT Bachelor of Sport and Recreation in turn better equip our graduates for the industry.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research as your experience and insight will be of great value. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection (October 2015).

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH?

*The purpose of this research is to fulfil the dissertation requirements for the Masters of Business in Sport Management. As mentioned, this research will also be used to inform curriculum development of the Leadership paper in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation. Findings of this research may be used for academic publications or presentations.*

### HOW WAS I IDENTIFIED AND WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH?

Those considered for this study are individual stakeholders of the New Zealand sport industry, selected from major sport organisations including NZ Olympic Committee, Sport NZ, High Performance Sport NZ and National Sport Organisations. You have been offered the opportunity to participate based on recommendations from consultation with individuals within the sector and referrals from supervisors. You were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Senior position in the organisation however not an assigned formal leadership role (i.e. are not in CEO positions).
2. Have worked in a variety of sport organisations (including not for profit, for profit, regional, national etc.)
3. Have an appreciation for the importance of leadership, and leading/enacting leadership without formal authority.
4. Available and willing to engage in the interview process and offer insightful reflections.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THIS RESEARCH?**

To participate in this research you will be interviewed for up to one hour about your perspectives of leadership. You will be interviewed by the researcher and supervisors and these will be confidential sessions. Data will only be used for the purposes in which it is collected.

## **WHAT ARE THE DISCOMFORTS AND RISKS?**

It is not expected that you will experience any discomfort or risk by participating in this research.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?**

As this research will be used to inform the BSR curriculum it will contribute to developing the capabilities of graduates ensuring they have a better understanding of leadership and therefore have a positive influence on their contribution to the sport and recreation sector. For participants this research provides an opportunity for them to reflect on their leadership experiences and insights. For the researcher, this study will enable them to fulfil the requirements of their qualification.

## **HOW WILL MY PRIVACY BE PROTECTED?**

You will be given the choice (in the consent form) as to whether or not you are comfortable with your name and organisation being identifiable. If you do not wish to be identified any material paraphrased or quoted from transcripts will only be identified with a label such as 'Stakeholder 1'. In the interview only appropriate questions will be asked. You will be provided with copies of the transcripts to review, approve and confirm that the recordings and data gathered is a true and accurate representation of what was said. You will be given the opportunity to feedback to the researcher if you wish to extract or remove any parts of the conversation.

Please note that due to the size and nature of the industry limited confidentiality only can be offered.

## **WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH?**

The cost of participation is time. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

## **WHAT OPPORTUNITY DO I HAVE TO CONSIDER THIS INVITATION?**

You have one week to consider whether or not you would like to participate.

## **HOW DO I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH?**

Agreement to participate in this research is done by signing and returning a Consent Form that will be given to you.

## **WILL I RECEIVE FEEDBACK ON THE RESULTS OF THIS RESEARCH?**

**A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH WILL BE EMAILED TO YOU UPON COMPLETION OF THE STUDY.**

## **WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THIS RESEARCH?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Katie Dee, [Katie.dee@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Katie.dee@aut.ac.nz), (09) 921 9539.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext 6038.

## **WHOM DO I CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH?**

### **Researcher Contact Details:**

Katie Dee, [Katie.dee@aut.ac.nz](mailto:Katie.dee@aut.ac.nz), (09) 921 9539

<b>Project</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Details:</b>
<b>Lesley Ferkins, <a href="mailto:Lesley.ferkins@aut.ac.nz">Lesley.ferkins@aut.ac.nz</a></b>			

## **APPENDIX D**

### ***Consent Form***



## CONSENT FORM

*Project title: Stakeholder perspectives of leadership in organisations within the New Zealand sport sector.*

*Project Supervisor: Lesley Ferkins*

*Researcher: Katie Vulinovich*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 25/07/2015
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ Are you happy for your name and organisation to be disclosed in the write up? (please tick one) Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 5 August 2015  
AUTEK Reference number 15/274***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*