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Investigating a narrative based approach to leader development:
Life stories, middle managers and the leader-follower paradox

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Abstract

There is a small amount of emergent leadership literature recommending people incorporate a narrative based approach into their leader development. This approach involves the identification and reflection on experiences and events from ones' life so a story can be told about who they are as a leader (life stories). To date, life stories research has yet to account for the fact leaders must also follow. Middle managers embody this paradox.

This study was an investigation into the potential for life stories to contribute to middle managers' leader development. This study also looked at how life stories might contribute to middle managers understanding of themselves as followers and how they might use life stories in negotiating the leader-follower paradox.

The overall aim was to make a further contribution to understanding the potential for life stories in leader development.

A case study of five Auckland New Zealand based middle managers was conducted. Life history interviews were thematically analysed using life stories as a sensitizing concept. Participants demonstrated little to no previous knowledge, skill or experience in life stories as a development process. They told stories as leaders that generally implied existing life stories self-development themes but they did not explicitly identify them. They told stories as followers that were

somewhat at odds with general opinions they held on following. There was little correlation with existing life stories self-development themes. Overall, Participants' life stories base intrapersonal leader and follower self-narratives had potential to be coherent, but were instinctive and under-developed.

Participants' ability to draw on life stories to identify, discuss and negotiate the leader-follower paradox matched their existing integration of life stories and intrapersonal leader-follower identities. Overall, participants had potential to produce a coherent and integrated leader-follower narrative, but this potential was under-developed. More research is required. A narrative based framework for further leader-follower life stories development processes is offered as a starting point.

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1 Introduction

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section provides a background to the problem. The second section is a statement of the problem. The third section outlines the purpose of the study. The fourth section explains the significance of the study. The fifth section outlines the thesis structure. The sixth section summarises this chapter.

1.1 Background

In the later years of the 20th century leadership researchers began turning their attention to understanding how leaders might reflect on their own lives to construct and develop positive and meaningful self-concepts from which to authentically lead. To date, a scarce body of leadership literature on the concept has emerged. Various terms have been applied: life stories, crucibles of leadership, leadership formative experiences and antecedents (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Janson, 2008; Shamir, Dayan-Horesh, & Adler, 2005; Shamir & Eilam-Shamir, 2013; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). For the sake of clarity, this thesis adopted the phrase “life stories” as an encompassing term.

The life stories research findings were based on the investigation of select leader subsets: senior executives, leadership students and the written biographies of famous leaders (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Janson, 2008; Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam-Shamir, 2013; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Life stories researchers are yet to explore the lives of other leader subsets or consider the paradoxical fact leaders must also follow, despite the fact following is an essential component of the leadership equation (Cronin & Genovese, 2012; Jackson & Parry, 2011; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014).

Middle managers are a leader subset that embody the leader-follower paradox. They have influence and authority over the working lives of some people but they are also managed and led by others (Harding, Lee, & Ford, 2014; Rainey & Watson, 1996). From a narrative viewpoint, middle managers might navigate this paradox by constructing life experiences to tell stories to influence and relate. The problem is the vast array of audiences these stories must reach. These audiences exert constantly differing story telling pressures on the middle manager, complicated by the fact that on an intrapersonal level they are the most crucial audience of all (Sims, 2003). Audiences at lower organisational levels might discount middle managers' stories as not credible, whilst audiences at more senior levels may ignore the stories because they are perceived as not mattering much. Middle managers risk frustration, vulnerability and social isolation if the stories they tell differ too wildly (Sims, 2003).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Life stories have potential to make an important contribution to leader development, but they remain overlooked and under-developed as a leadership concept (Shamir et al., 2005). Life stories researchers had previously investigated a select subset of leaders, but other leader subsets are yet to be researched – middle managers included. This means the potential for life stories in middle managers' leader development is unknown.

Middle managers embody the fact many leaders must also follow, but life stories researchers are yet to investigate how life stories might contribute to leaders' follower development. This means nothing is known about how life stories might contribute to leaders' understanding of themselves as followers. Leading and following is a paradox that can lead to middle management frustration, vulnerability and social isolation (Sims, 2003). Life stories researchers are yet to investigate how life stories might contribute to building a narrative that helps leaders negotiate this tension. This means nothing is known about how life stories might help middle managers in this regard.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The overall aim of this research was to make a further contribution to understanding the potential for life stories in leader development.

The main question addressed was, what might be the potential for life stories in middle managers' leader development?

There were three sub-questions explored:

1. How do life stories contribute to middle managers' development as leaders?
2. How might life stories also contribute to middle managers' understanding of themselves as followers?
3. How might middle managers use life stories in the negotiation of any arising intrapersonal tension caused by the simultaneous roles?

1 4 Significance of the study

This study is an investigation of life stories in the context of a new leader subset.

This research will reveal new aspects of the potential for life stories in leader development that were not previously examined.

This study is a first-time investigation of the potential for life stories in developing leaders' follower attributes. This research will reveal new and valuable insights for further research into the role of life stories in follower development.

This study is a first-time investigation of the potential for life stories in building a story telling narrative to help middle managers negotiate the leader-follower paradox. This research will reveal new and valuable insights for further research into what knowledge skills and experience might be required.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis is structured into five chapters. This chapter introduces the study. Chapter two reviews existing relevant literature including research on leaders, followers, paradox, middle managers, the narrative frame, authentic leadership and life stories. Chapter three outlines the methodology. It was a qualitative research strategy using a multiple case study design. Chapter four presents the analysis and discussion. Chapter five evaluates conclusions against the research questions. Implications for middle managers are outlined and a suggested approach for future life stories research is offered.

1.6 Chapter summary

The first section in this chapter introduced the background to the research problem. Life stories are an emerging but scarcely researched concept in leader development. The second section in this chapter stated the research problem. Life

stories research had yet to investigate the middle manager subset. Leaders must also follow, but previous research had yet to investigate how leaders might use life stories to develop follower attributes. Leading and following is a paradox. Previous research had yet to investigate how life stories might contribute to a narrative that helps middle managers negotiate those tensions.

The third section in this chapter presented the purpose of this study: to make a further contribution to understanding the potential for life stories in leader development. The fourth section in this chapter explained the significance of this research. It will reveal new aspects of the potential for life stories in leader development, new and valuable insights into further research directions for life stories in leaders' follower development, and new insights about the knowledge, skills and experience that might be required to use life stories to negotiate intrapersonal tension arising from the leader-follower paradox. The fifth section in this chapter outlined the thesis structure.

2 Literature Review

2.0 Chapter overview

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to this study. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section discusses the paradoxical difficulty of defining who leaders might be, whilst the second section discusses similar problems with defining who followers might be. The third section introduces the middle manager as an embodiment of the leader-follower. The fourth section suggests the narrative frame as a way middle managers might successfully develop as leader-followers. The fifth section looks at the potential for life stories as a specific source of leader and follower development. The sixth section summarises this chapter.

2.1 Leaders

It is extremely complex to conceptualise who a *leader* is; an undertaking not helped by the difficulty in searching for what has been called the fuzzy, ill-defined edges of *leadership* (Ladkin, 2010). There is no grand theory of leadership; it can be quite rightly characterised according to any one of a number of perspectives, traits, behaviours, patterns of interaction, roles, relationships, follower perceptions, or types of influence (Yukl, 1989). Crossman and Crossman (2011) put it succinctly by stating the multiple debates about the various aspects of leadership had led to the whole field of study becoming obfuscated.

The task of defining who leaders are appears to have inherited the same complexity. Ladkin (2010) suggested leaders were people who enacted higher levels of influence than others in social relationships. Jackson and Parry (2011) agreed by specifying relationships between people must exist for leadership to be enacted. They suggested the personal influence must be multi-directional and there was typically more than one leader and one follower involved. These appear to be agreeable sentiments: leaders are people with high levels of influence in multiple social directions with several others; but they leave no one clearer as to who leaders might really be.

Lewis (2000) stated that a *paradox* is tension made up of contradictory but interrelated elements. The elements seem logical on their own but irrational and absurd when appearing together. Cronin and Genovese (2012) picked up on this when they suggested paradox was a defining feature of leader identity. They elaborated by stating leaders were people who must be moral and just, but ferocious and manipulative when needed. They were humble team players, but self-confident enough to act alone.

Cronin and Genovese (2012) argued people craved leaders who were just like them, but different enough to be great. They suggested leaders had to be vulnerable, but not too vulnerable; realistic, but also visionary; reasonable, yet passionate. Importantly, Cronin & Genovese stated leaders also had to be able to

follow. They termed this the *leader-follower paradox* about which they wrote, “[the] lesson here is to embrace we are all leaders and all followers, all leaders and all managers” (2012, p. 20).

2.2 Followers

It is no less complex to define who *followers* are. Research into followers and followership is in its infancy (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) stated followers and followership were key components of leadership that had been historically overlooked in the research equation due to the leadership focus. Appendix O summarises the historical treatment of followers in leadership research. Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) said that overall, this led to a lack of understanding about what follower and followership constructs could be, and what potential they might have for improving leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. concluded this led to a situation where there was no clear follower concept to work with.

Jackson and Parry (2011) stated the lack of understanding about followers was problematic because very few people were absolute leaders. They argued many people spend most of their lives as followers – something few were prepared to admit and celebrate. They wondered if part of the problem lay with the word itself. They said for many, the term implied a passive second best, with primacy

and influence ceded to the leader. Others pointed to the fact the term follower and subordinate were often used interchangeably, asserting a hierarchical understanding of the relationship to the leader (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Jackson and Parry said various replacement phrases had been suggested to help overcome this bias (including team member, collaborator, partner) yet follower as a descriptor persisted.

Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) did suggest followers were people who willingly deferred to others in some way; they consciously gave away leader identity – thus allowing themselves to be influenced, although they understood they were co-creators of leadership, not just subordinate to it. Crossman and Crossman (2011) agreed. They stated that ideally, followers understood how to participate in leadership without needing to claim overall responsibility for it.

Lewis (2000) observed language choices fed the tendency to polarise, thus driving the tensions already inherent in paradox. Followership literature does not explicitly address leader-follower paradox, but it does seem to suggest follower and leader constructions are not necessarily binary (Carsten et al., 2010). Ladkin (2010) also suggested the roles were probably less discrete than traditionally thought.

2.3 Middle managers

If leaders must also follow, then it is logical to assume both leader and follower concepts are intrapersonal. For example, *middle managers* are the kind of person who can be described as both leader and follower. Harding et al. (2014) defined middle managers as the people who occupy positions in hierarchies between the apex and the core of operations. Huy (2001) outlined this space as two levels below a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and one level above line workers and professionals.

Rainey and Watson (1996) explained middle managers are organisational leaders with most leadership theories and expectations at work on them. They stated they were often (but not always) responsible for others. They have influence and authority over the working lives of those who make things happen. They could develop staff. They could play a vital role by connecting people throughout the organisation and they are also responsible for growth and innovation (Huy, 2001; Sims, 2003).

Middle managers are also organisational followers. Crossman and Crossman (2011) stated middle managers had to follow more senior levels. They are managed, led and sometimes suppressed (Harding et al., 2014). Harding et al. (2014) pointed out middle managers were required to conform to instructions

about how to implement strategy whether they personally agreed or not. They often did so with limited ability to manage upwards and without being fully listened to (Huy, 2001). The resulting push and shove could lead to middle managers dropping leadership identity by reverting to a mediocre, unimaginative stereotype (Huy, 2001; Jackson & Parry, 2011). Put another way, the requirements on middle managers to both lead and follow is contradictory and laden with tension. In this regard, middle managers could be thought of as an embodiment of the leader-follower paradox.

2.4 The narrative frame

It is probable the leader-follower paradox cannot be any better defined than the fuzzy leader and follower concepts that contribute to it. But with middle managers in mind there is a way to characterise the paradox for further discussion. Sims (2003) suggested the *narrative frame*. The narrative frame uses storying as a constant way to construct life and experiences so one could relate to others. By sharing convincing stories with others, middle managers might be able to negotiate, influence and co-construct leadership in a way envisaged by both leader and follower theories.

Sims (2003) cautioned this was not as straightforward as it seemed. He argued middle managers as story tellers were at risk from a peculiar type of frustration,

vulnerability and social isolation because differing story telling pressures were constantly exerted from all sides. Middle managers risked having those at lower organisational levels discount their stories as not credible, whilst at the same time, those at more senior levels of the organisation could discredit their stories because they were perceived as not mattering much.

Sims (2003) stated middle managers were central characters in their own stories. They had to pay attention to how they constructed their persona and what stories they told to who because vastly differing sets of stories were unlikely to sit well together across all audiences, including themselves. Cronin and Genovese (2012) stated people might successfully negotiate the tension of the leader-follower paradox by learning to move beyond either-or to integrative thinking. In the middle management context, learning to develop the narrative frame from leader or follower to a more integrated intrapersonal identity might be one way of doing this.

2.5 Life stories

Sims (2003) stated the self was the story teller's most crucial audience. This section looks at life stories related literature which might assist middle managers to begin development of meaningful personal stories and narratives that might assist negotiation of the leader-follower paradox.

2.5.1 Background

Life stories have origins outside leader development research. Life stories have long been a topic of study in linguistics. Linguists are concerned with the study of human knowledge and behaviour through language (Linde, 1993). Linde (1993) described life stories as a first-person expression of self that created and maintained personal identity apart from others. They involve the retelling of stories and associated discourses such as narratives, explanations, chronicles (and all the connections between them) over the course of the person's life.

Ideally, people evolve and change their life stories to achieve coherence, thus being able to continually exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being good, socially proper and stable. Linde stated the notion of coherence was at the heart of life stories. She defined coherence as the relationships parts of a text should have with each other. The gaps should be near enough so relationships hold, thus allowing overall text to make recognisable sense. Linde warned large gaps had the effect of creating noticeable and problematic discrepancies for audiences. This is similar to the point Sims (2003) made when he mentioned the risks middle managers faced from telling vastly differing sets of stories to others.

Life stories are also studied in folklore. Folklorists practice the oral communication of art, knowledge and literature (Titon, 1980). Titon (1980)

described life stories as a person's spoken word narrative of personal experience – even if transcribed. Titon stated life stories were not an objective recount of historical facts or a chronology of events. Rather, they were an oral based, self-contained fiction that exposed the inner life of the teller whilst telling the audience about their motives. Titon did not explicitly refer to coherence, but he did say life stories served to affirm the teller's identity: who they thought they were, and how they thought they came to be that way. These points are similar to the comments Sims (2003) made when he stated construction of the persona was crucial in building the middle manager narrative.

Life stories have interdisciplinary origins in educational and social research (Goodley, Lawthom, Clough, & Moore, 2004). Educational and social researchers use life stories to understand individual and social worlds. Goodley et al. (2004) argued stories play a central role in the knowledge generated by societies by capturing the diverse and changing nature of individual and social lives. They went on to say life stories were an important research and analysis tool for the development of policy, practice, and theory. They stated life stories told people much about individual, collective, private, public, real and fictional worlds.

2.5.2 Life stories in leadership research

Van Seters and Field (1990) stated the notion a leader develops a sense of self by accumulating ideas is not the preserve of any single school of leadership thought. They argued this quest predated the scientific research of the 20th century, starting with what they called the “*personality era*” of leadership in the late 1800’s (p. 30). Van Seters and Field argued scholars of this period believed would-be leaders could recognise, copy and take from the stories, personalities and behaviours of great men (and some women) from throughout history (Appendix N).

Van Seters and Field (1990) stated over time, new eras evolved when theorists realised current understanding was inadequate to explain the leadership phenomenon. New theories helped evolve and develop leadership thinking by building, adding and sometimes contradicting existing ones (Appendix N). Their article was written in what they called the “*transformational era*” that offered the idea (among other things) leaders could transform their self-concepts (1990, pp. 32, 38). They concluded by suggesting the next evolution of leadership theory might focus on integration (pp. 40–41).

As a theoretical construct, *authentic leadership* research largely appeared in the later years of the 20th century and around the turn of the 21st century, although the concept of authenticity can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy (Gardner, Coglisser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). Some argued the rise of modern authentic

leadership theories were a reaction to discomfort about some aspects of transformational leadership in practice – particularly when transformational leaders sought to manipulate followers to their own unethical ends (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2014).

Authentic leaders looked to act in accordance with deep personal values and convictions to build credibility and win the respect and trust of followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; p. 86). Other authentic leadership research concerns include positive perspectives, strong self-awareness, and strong self-regulation (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2011). Sparrowe (2005) argued development of the narrative self was also an important aspect of authentic leadership. Shamir et al. (2005) pointed out life stories could play a central meaning-making role in this process, but by and large, they were under-researched and overlooked in terms of leader development.

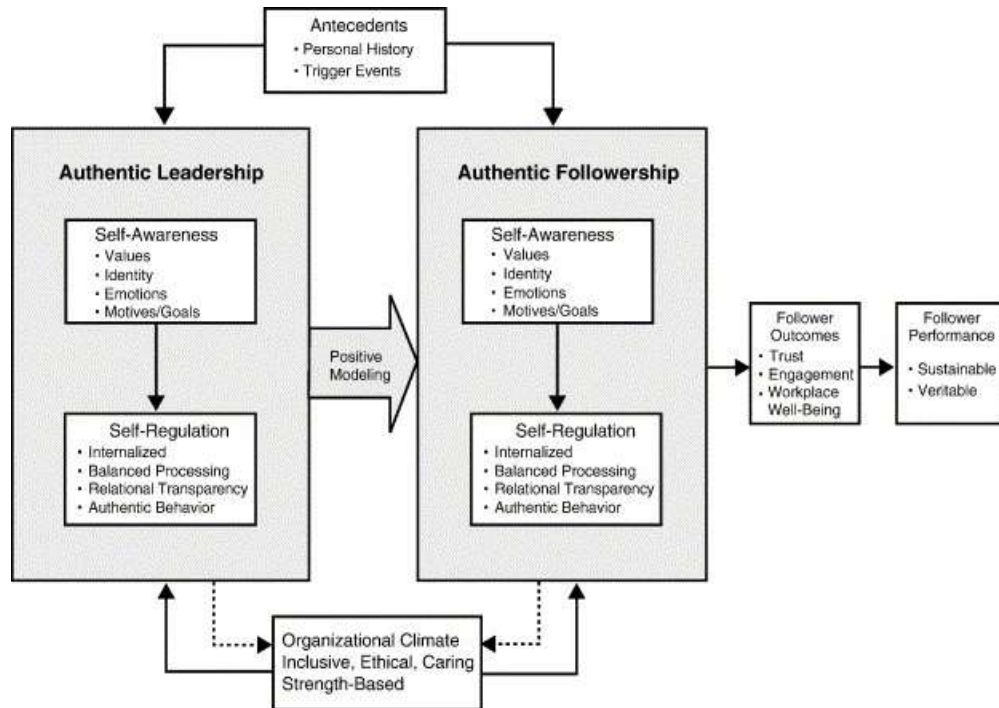
The phrase “life stories” was the collective term adopted for this research project. It encompasses non-leadership life stories literature and several distinct but similar ideas found in (broadly) authentic leadership based research, namely: *antecedents*, *life stories*, *crucibles of leadership*, and *leadership formative experiences* (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Gardner et al., 2005; Janson, 2008; Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The phrase “coherence” was the term adopted for any reference to gaps between elements, concepts, stories and

narratives. Life stories concepts in leadership research are discussed in the following sections.

2.5.3 Antecedents

Gardner et al. (2011) wrote that since the turn of the century there had been an increasing scholarly interest in understanding the sort of authentic leadership that allowed people to express themselves in a way that revealed their identity. Others also noted authentic leadership scholars had a particular interest in examining the questions of who a leader was, as much as where they were going and why they were going there (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2014). Gardner et al. (2005) neatly conceptualised these ideas by stating authentic self-development began with an individual's understanding of their personal histories and trigger events. Figure 2–1 conceptualises the antecedent role of personal histories and trigger events in this process.

Figure 2–1: A Conceptual Framework for Authentic Leader and Follower Development



Source: Gardner et al. (2005)

One feature of this framework is the balance between leadership and followership, but the diagram arrows inadvertently suggest leadership primacy. Many processes captured in the table are linked by singular direction. This seems to assume things only happen in a certain order – for example, positive modelling by the leader only, or antecedents feed leadership but leadership does not feed antecedents. The framework also appears to be ambiguous as to whether development can occur at the intrapersonal level. It does not accurately capture how a person might develop

by freely moving forwards and backwards between leader and follower, or how they might integrate them.

Another feature of the framework is the idea personal history and trigger events have equal importance in the development of positive self-awareness in leadership (leaders) and followership (followers). But Gardner et al. (2005) cautioned antecedents could develop and shape leader self-awareness only as much as individual efforts to reflect and interpret them. Table 2–1 summarises further antecedent detail.

Table 2–1: Antecedents for Developing Positive Leader Self-awareness

Personal Histories Accumulated Life Experiences	Trigger Event (Positive and Negative)
Culture	Further advanced study
Family	Major work promotion
Education	New cultural experiences
Occupation	Meeting inspiring people
Work experience	Loss of a loved one
Role models	Health problems
Prior leadership experience	Crises
Childhood	Financial hardship
	Voluntary career change

Adapted from Gardner et al. (2005)

Table 2–1 addressed leader development only. Perhaps this was another assumption of leader primacy. Gardner et al. (2005) also did not explain how they identified experiences and trigger events, leading to a concern the contents of Table 2–1 are somewhat arbitrary, untested and not a researched reflection of lives. Gardner et al. also gave little detail about how a person might work through reflection and interpretation processes to integrate antecedents together for a narrative coherence that explained who they were.

2.5.4 Life stories

Shamir et al. (2005) used the phrase life stories to describe a narrative and biographical approach to the study of personal meaning behind leadership development in an individual's life. They conducted a study of 16 men on a leadership development course as well as looking at 10 published biographies of famous people. Their aim was to discover life story themes that transcended context. They hoped these themes could support the argument life stories and the messages imparted by the telling of them contributed to leaders' influence just as much as traits, behaviours, and styles.

Shamir et al. (2005) concluded leaders could construct life stories from elements of events in their lives to give them self-understanding and meaning over time. The life stories provided the leader with an important self-concept from which to

describe, explain, interpret and lead. Table 2-2 shows the four prototypical life stories themes to emerge from their study.

Table 2–2: Prototypical Taxonomy of Life Story Themes that Transcend Context

Leadership Development Theme	Life Story Version
As a natural process	A born leader A late bloomer A natural process
Out of struggle and coping	<u>Disadvantaged:</u> background minority socio-economic status Lone struggle Hunger/spirit/tolerance for stress
Through self-improvement learning	<u>Learning from:</u> others role models leaders Learning from experience Liking learning
Finding a cause	Identifying with a movement/cause Finding a sense of direction from a political or ideological outlook Personal ordeal Becoming a prototypical member in a collective story

Adapted from Shamir et al. (2005)

Unlike the antecedents in Table 2–1, the leadership development themes and life stories versions in Table 2–2 were not arbitrary, albeit they were limited by the fact participants were male leadership students and there was no control group. Shamir et al. (2005) argued the themes provided a guide as to how any leader might knit together accumulated life experiences to give self-coherence and self-understanding, regardless of context. Shamir et al. also noted it did not seem to matter if life stories were real or based on objective fact. But at no point did the study uncover or consider to what extent participants might have used life stories themes to assist them identify and develop any follower attributes they might have.

A subsequent study by Shamir and Eilam (2005) offered further insight on the importance of life stories as a source of authentic leader development. They described life stories as an individual’s coherent account of the relationships among self-relevant events across time. They stated authentic leaders used life stories as a self-constructed meaning system to think, feel and act. Shamir and Eilam went on to describe the construction of a life story as a major element in the development of an authentic leader.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) stated life stories formed an important source of certain authentic leader attributes, namely a strong *self-concept* (who I am as a leader) and a high *person-role merger* (why I am here as a leader). They suggested a

guided life reflection approach as to how leaders might explore this. The approach is outlined in Table 2–3.

Table 2–3: A Guided Life Reflection Process (Leaders)

Activity	Comment	Leader Development
Draw a lifeline and identify major events and turning points	Chosen by the leader, rather than discovered objectively.	Self-concept
Attend to feelings and memories	Reflection	Self-concept
Re-evaluate	Self-construction, not an objective testimonial of facts	Self-concept
Draw lessons	Highlight certain aspects and/or ignoring/hiding others	Self-concept
Work the experience into the life story	Establish relationships with fragments, mundane, less comprehensive stories. Involves highlighting certain aspects and/or ignoring/hiding others	Person-role merger
Revise and redirect leader identity	Improve coherence but acknowledge that the life story will never be closed. Who I am and why I am here.	Person-role merger

Adapted from Shamir and Eilam (2005)

It was not clear to what extent (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) trialled this process during their research, but they did state guided life reflection was a highly personal type

of leader development, whereas training about leader skills, concepts and styles could occur in a group setting. They also suggested not all managers could develop into authentic leaders from such a process unless they were at certain stages of their lives and motivated to participate.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) also said some managers simply could not fully incorporate self-concept into their role. They called these managers *non-leaders*. Shamir and Eilam described non-leaders as having a formal leadership position with leadership functions. They were viewed by others as carrying out leadership behaviour, but non-leaders saw these things as external to their core self-concept. Shamir and Eilam described non-leaders as not having a coherent life story to tell. They found these managers demonstrated self-doubt, ambiguity and ambivalence regarding leader identity and ability.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) explored life stories for authentic leadership development only. Authentic followers were discussed only to the point where they acted as authenticators of the leader and their life stories. They did not bring these ideas together to explore how life stories and the guided life reflection process might assist a person to address both leader and follower identities. The study did not consider how conflicting pressures to lead and follow might have contributed to some research participants' struggle to address self-concept, and if this arose because of an unresolvable demand to follow at least part of the time.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) did recommend there were many possible future lines of enquiry from their own study, including a comparison of leaders' life stories to other people. Leaders who follow could be conceived of as other people. Other people could be thought of as middle managers. In that sense, there is an opportunity to explore how the guided life reflection process might help middle managers develop their life stories to identify as both leader and follower. These processes might have potential to reveal more about the links between life stories, self-concept and following.

2.5.5 Crucibles of leadership

Bennis (1990) suggested leaders invented themselves by authentically being their own author. A decade later he elaborated this notion further by discussing the role of crucible experiences in leader development. Bennis and Thomas (2002) described crucibles of leadership as a super-concentrated type of transformational experience that provided the developing leader with the opportunity to find meaning from seemingly unconnected trials and tests, learn from them and emerge stronger. A summary of the crucibles of leadership discussed by Bennis and Thomas is outlined in Table 2-4.

Table 2–4: A Summary of Crucibles of Leadership

Type	Example
Prejudice	For example, gender/race/ethnicity. The individual is confronted by a distorted self-picture. Leaders use it as a self-clarifying and transformational event.
Illness and/or violence	For example, illegal imprisonment. A suppressed or hidden area of the soul is illuminated. Leaders learn that happiness is a function of outlook, not circumstances.
Positive crucibles	For example, a demanding boss/mentor. The leader responds to high standards due to high levels of respect. Leaders are taught how to cope with change.
Creative	For example, taking tension between opposing parties and resolving it. The leader takes two ostensibly unrelated ideas for a radically different approach.

Adapted from Bennis and Thomas (2002)

Bennis and Thomas believed crucibles of leadership gave the transformed leader four essential skills: the ability to engage shared meaning, a distinct and compelling voice, a hardiness and an ability to grasp context that they might not have otherwise had.

Crucibles of leadership appear similar to the leadership as struggle and coping life story themes suggested by Shamir et al. (2005) although they appear to have some limits in terms of leader development. The findings of Bennis and Thomas (2002) came about as a corollary of an investigation into another leadership phenomenon.

They did not set out to research crucible experiences. They intended to research the effect of era on leadership. It was only during that study they became aware the leaders they were interviewing all described key experiences that shaped them, inspired them and taught them to lead.

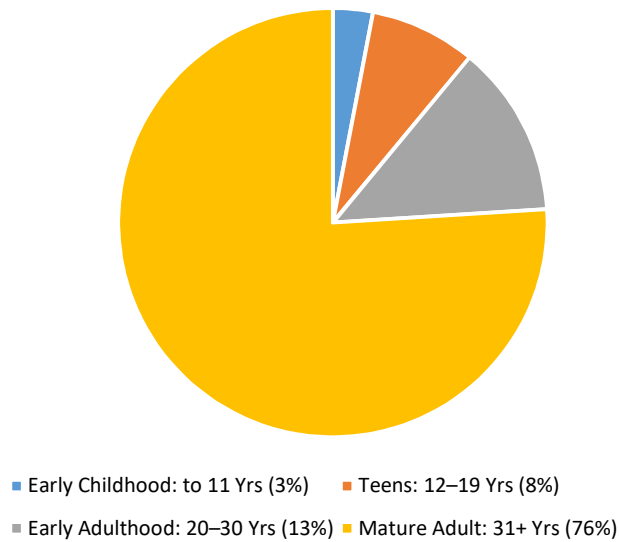
Bennis and Thomas (2002) did not fully explain the process a leader use to gain deeper personal understanding from reflecting and fitting crucible experiences with other fragments of life stories, memories and narratives. Nor did they investigate how crucibles of leadership might help individuals negotiate the reality that they would still spend portions of their lives as followers. Crucibles of leadership remain under-researched in terms of how a leader-follower might use them in the development of life stories.

2.5.6 Leadership formative experiences

Janson (2008) researched how some life experiences seemed to have a high impact on leaders, resulting in self-knowledge relevant to their leadership. Janson termed them leadership formative experiences. Janson conducted research with 61 participants in an advanced leadership development program. Data collection involved three episodes: reflection on life, a sense-making exercise and a sharing and feedback phase. The first episode involved participant reflection and

identification of the age at which their self-nominated leadership formative experiences occurred. The results are shown in Figure 2–2.

Figure 2–2: Age at Which Reported Leadership Formative Experience Occurred



Source: Janson (2008)

Around three quarters of participants reported their highest formative leadership development experience as mature adults; more so than at any other time in their lives. Only 13% of participants identified their highest formative leadership experience in their 20s.

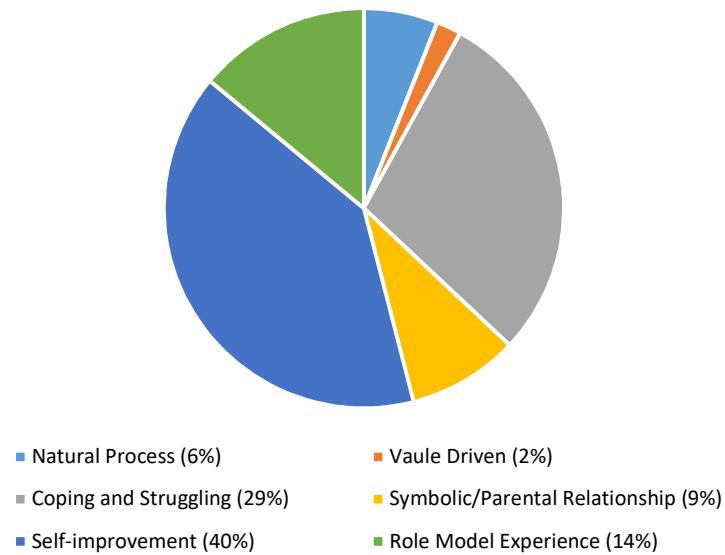
The second episode involved coding and weighting participants' sense-making themes. The coding results are shown in Table 2–5. The weighting is shown in Figure 2–3.

Table 2–5: Sense-making Types of Leadership Formative Experiences

Story sense making	Principles and examples
Natural Process	Subjects must have naturally or without conscious effort taken leadership or had leadership thrust upon them, often for reasons they were unsure of (for example, individual naturally takes charge as a child when self and older cousin gets lost).
Coping and struggle	Includes some element of adversity (for example, dealing with a difficult boss).
Self-improvement	Includes some element of striving to challenge oneself (and-or challenge but not adversity, except in slight degree; for example, taking time out for mid-life academic study to fulfil a dream).
Alignment with a cause	Evidence of being partly driven by serving a cause (for example, indigenous empowerment).
Relationship with (real or symbolic) parents	Includes instances where the relationship with parents was prominent in the formative experience described (for example, wanting to prove to his mother that he would amount to something – unlike his father).
Role models	For instance, where one or more role models was prominent in the formative experience described (for example, subject was developed by admired leaders).

Source: Janson (2008)

Figure 2–3: First Leadership Formative Experience Sense-making.

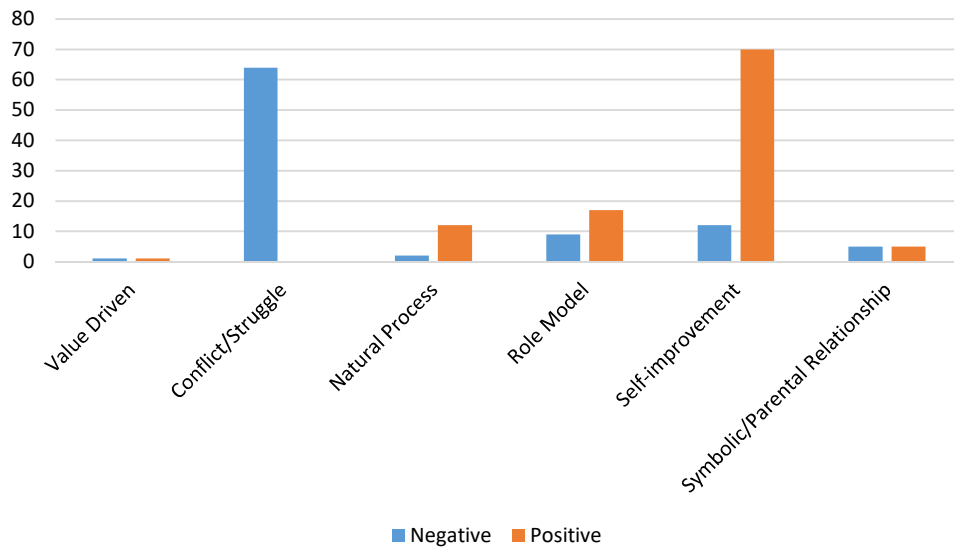


Source: Janson (2008)

Of note is four of the sense-making themes in Table 2–5 broadly appear to correspond with the four prototypical leader development themes in Table 2–2: natural process (as a natural process) coping with struggle (out of struggle and coping) self-improvement (through self-improvement and learning) and alignment with cause (finding a cause). By far the most reported sense making theme was self-improvement followed by coping and struggling. Relationships and values made up around 11 percent of the weighting.

The third episode involved feedback. This was an examination of whether participants recorded the leadership formative experience as having positive or negative emotional valence.

Figure 2–4: Sense-making Per Emotional Valence.



Source: Janson (2008)

Perhaps it is unsurprising leadership formative experiences could be either positive or negative given the concern was whether they were formative or not. This reflected the findings of Bennis and Thomas (2002) who found self-reported crucibles of leadership could be either positive or negative.

Janson (2008, p. 75) found leaders' formative experiences played a material part in shaping and reinforcing their identity. Janson (2008) echoed Gardner et al. (2005) by stating inner reflection processes could contribute to a leader's personal antecedents of leadership by revealing how leadership formative experiences shaped and confirmed identity. That said, a difference between antecedents and Janson's findings is the categories Janson identified were researched, and not seemingly arbitrary.

Janson (2008) also noted leadership formative experiences might not actually form part of a purely authentic life story. Janson mentioned the leaders she researched generally made their own choices about what mattered in their life using their own values and preferences about what was formative, either by consciously or unconsciously blocking out that which did not fit their personal meaning system.

Shamir and Eilam-Shamir (2013) found a similar situation when reviewing findings from interviews with 15 senior Israeli business leaders about their leadership life stories. They reported the leaders focussed on things that affirmed their sense of accomplishment rather than considering the valuable contribution of failure, setback, and conflict. These observations reflected the view of Linde (1993) who said people evolve and change their life stories over time, Tison (1980) who said life stories were self-contained fictions rather than objective

histories, and Sims (2003) who said the story telling self was the most crucial audience of all.

In summary, life stories research in leadership is comprised of a small recent body of loosely related literature that explains how people might reflect on their own lives to construct and develop positive and meaningful self-concepts from which to authentically lead. Table 2–6 outlines a comparison of life stories terms, summaries, themes and descriptions. The research has gaps. Existing knowledge is based on research of select leader subsets: senior executives, leadership students and the written biographies of famous people (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Janson, 2008; Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam-Shamir, 2013; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Other people and leader subsets such as middle managers have yet to be researched (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

2.6 Chapter summary

The first section in this chapter suggested it was unclear who leaders were. It appeared leaders were people who exerted higher levels of multidirectional influence within groups, but they were also sometimes required to exert less influence. The second section in this chapter pointed out followers also formed part of this group but it was also unclear who they were. Leaders were often in both situations at once, making them subject to the leader-follower paradox.

The third section in this chapter introduced and discussed middle managers as an embodiment of the leader-follower paradox but virtue of their occupation of the middle space in organisations. The fourth section in this chapter suggested one way to characterise the middle manager leader-follower paradox was through a narrative frame. Middle managers could construct stories from their experiences and lives to influence and co-construct leadership in a way envisaged by both leaders and followers; but this is not as straightforward as it seems. Middle managers might improve their ability to negotiate the paradox if they learned to develop meaningful personal stories and narratives.

The fifth section in this chapter discussed life stories as a narrative approach. A comparison of various life stories terms, summaries, themes, and descriptions in authentic leadership literature was made. Gaps in the literature were discussed. There was very little leadership research or literature on the topic. Followership had been overlooked, and middle managers as a leader subset had yet to be investigated.

Table 2–6: A Comparison of Life Stories Terms, Summaries, Themes and Descriptions in Authentic Leadership Literature

Author	Term	Summary	Theme	Description
Gardner et al. (2005)	Antecedents	Self-reflection on personal history and trigger events. Includes positive and negative influences, challenges, and experiences. The individual uses this process to answer the question of “who am I?”	Personal histories/ Accumulated life experiences Trigger events	Family Childhood Culture Education Occupation Work experience Role models Prior learning experience Major work promotion Voluntary career change Further advanced study New cultural experiences Meeting inspiring people Loss of a loved one Health problems Crises Financial hardship
Shamir et al. (2005)	Life stories	A narrative approach that is the manifestation and expression of events as perceived and interpreted by the individual that	As a natural process Out of struggle and coping	A born leader A late bloomer A natural process <u>Disadvantaged:</u>

		<p>experienced them. They are constructed from elements of a story to give meaning to prior events that may not have had it at the time. They are then used to express the teller's identity.</p>		<p>Background Minority Socio-economic status</p> <p>Lone struggle Hunger/spirit/tolerance for stress</p> <p>Through self-improvement learning</p> <p>Learning from experience Liking learning</p> <p><u>Learning from:</u> Others Role models Leaders</p> <p>Finding a cause</p> <p>Identifying with a movement/cause Finding a sense of direction from a political/ideological outlook Personal ordeal Becoming a prototypical member in a collective story</p>
Shamir and Eilam (2005)	Life stories	Self-narratives. Individual accounts of relationships among self-relevant events over time.	As per Shamir et al. (2005)	As per Shamir et al. (2005)

Bennis and Thomas (2002)	Crucibles of leadership	A trial or test, either negative or positive, that forces the leader to question who they were and what mattered to them. The experience is transformative in that the individual comes to a new, or altered sense of identity.	Prejudice	For example, gender/race/ethnicity. The individual is confronted by a distorted self-picture. Leaders use it as a self-clarifying and transformational event.
			Illness and/or violence	For example, illegal imprisonment. A suppressed or hidden area of the soul is illuminated. Leaders learn that happiness is a function of outlook, not circumstances.
			Positive crucibles	For example, a demanding boss/mentor. The leader responds to high standards due to high levels of respect. The leader is taught how to cope with change.
			Creative	For example, taking tension between opposing parties and resolving it. The leader takes two ostensibly unrelated ideas for a radically different approach.

Janson (2008)	Leadership formative experiences	Experiences that make a high impact on leaders, helping them to develop their self-concept, and awareness of context. They shape leadership identity when the events are organised into a coherent whole.	<p>Natural process</p> <p>Coping and struggling</p> <p>Self-improvement</p> <p>Alignment with a cause</p> <p>Relationship with (real or symbolic) parents Role models</p>	<p>Subjects must have naturally or without conscious effort taken leadership, or had leadership thrust upon them; often for reasons they were unsure of.</p> <p>Includes some element of adversity.</p> <p>Includes some element of striving to challenge oneself (not adversity).</p> <p>Evidence of being partly driven by serving a cause.</p> <p>The relationship with parents was prominent in the formative experience. One or more role models was prominent in the formative experience.</p>
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Adapted from Shamir et al. (2005) Shamir and Eilam (2005) Gardner et al. (2005) Bennis and Thomas (2002) Janson (2008)

3 Research Methodology

3.0 Chapter outline

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this research. The chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section explains the philosophical building blocks and overall research strategy. The second section sets out the research design and level of analysis. The third section explains the research method and research participant selection process. The fourth section outlines the data collection and analysis processes. The fifth section covers ethical considerations. The sixth section covers research trustworthiness. The seventh section explains research limitations. The eighth section provides a chapter summary.

The overall aim of this research was to make a further contribution to understanding the potential for life stories in leader development. The main question addressed was, what might be the potential for life stories in middle managers' leader development? There were three sub-questions explored. The first was, how do life stories contribute to middle managers' development as leaders? The second was, how might life stories also contribute to middle managers' understanding of themselves as followers? The third was, how might middle managers use life stories in the negotiation of any arising intrapersonal tension caused by the simultaneous roles?

3.1 Approach and research strategy

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) stated researchers can assist others to have a better-informed understanding of their work by explicitly setting out the basic philosophical building blocks of their study rather than assuming it is obvious. This provides clarity about direction: from questions to conclusions, why certain data were collected, how they were analysed, interpreted, presented and what limits they were subject to.

3.1.1 Ontology

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) defined *ontology* as the philosophy of how one chooses to define what is real; whether it be objective (independent of one's lived experience of it) or subjective (through experience and meaning). Objective epistemology assumes reality exists independently of those who live in it, whilst subjective epistemology assumes reality arises only when you experience something and give it meaning.

The research strategy in this study was based on subjective ontology. The narrative frame allows individuals to construct their own reality (Linde, 1993; Sims, 2003). A recurring life stories principle in the literature review was that leaders develop heightened personal understanding when they built self-awareness and meaning from their lives (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Gardner et al., 2005;

Janson, 2008; Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam-Shamir, 2013; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). A research assumption was potential research subjects were likely to have at least some sense of themselves derived from their lives so far, and that was reality for them. There would not be an objective assessment of whether this reality withstood independent scrutiny (something objective epistemology would be concerned with). Another research assumption was leader and follower development were positive concepts.

3.1.2 Epistemology

Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) defined *epistemology* as the philosophy of knowing how one can know. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) added epistemology is also concerned with what are considered sources and limits of knowledge and how they can be argued for. Positivist epistemology assumes knowledge is discovered through objective scientific measurement of a fixed reality (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Positivists gather data using surveys and experiments. Statistical analysis is then conducted to derive understanding via theory and models.

Interpretive epistemology assumes knowledge is derived from the point of view of individuals and how they make sense of experiences and memories (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Interpretivists work alongside others as they create ever-shifting

personal meaning whilst understanding they filter through their own experience. Interpretivists accept any derived knowledge cannot be truly objective.

The research strategy in this study was based on interpretivist epistemology. The literature review highlighted life stories were more about meaning and less about fact (Shamir & Eilam, 2005) a process of altering identity (Bennis & Thomas, 2002) and an expression of events as perceived and interpreted by those who had experienced them with certain parts and participants highlighted and others not (Shamir et al., 2005). The study was interested in researching the extent to which middle managers drew on life stories to understand their leader and follower development rather than the independent truth of it.

Middle managers were likely to be from a range of life stages and experiences. Their knowledge would only provide a snapshot understanding of who they might be as both leader and follower. This snapshot was a research limit. Linde (1993) said the meaning of life stories changed as the circumstances of the teller's life changed, making life stories problematic to study short of recording everything a research subject said and did. Titon (1980) concurred. He said the story teller would never be the same now as they were five years prior. Despite this, it was decided an interpretivist approach was best.

3.1.3 Research strategy

Bryman and Bell (2015) outlined two broad orientations to adopt when designing research. They were either the *quantitative* approach or the *qualitative* approach. Bryman and Bell described typical quantitative research strategies as focussed on the collection of data that allowed a testing of theories with the view social reality was external and objective.

Bryman and Bell (2015) described qualitative research strategies as focussed on words to help the generation of theories with the view social reality was interpreted, constantly shifting and a creation of the individual. In truth, research approaches are often not as clear cut as this; even less so if a conscious decision is taken to mix research methods. Neither approach is superior to the other; they each enable a different focus (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

This study adopted a qualitative research strategy. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) described the qualitative approach as appropriate for exploring any phenomenon previously subject to modest insights only. It enabled the social science researcher to adopt an exploratory and flexible posture to relatively unstructured problems (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The literature review revealed the role of life stories in leader development was under-researched and

overlooked (Shamir et al., 2005). At the same time, life stories research was silent on what contribution might be made to follower development. The relatively unstructured problem in this research was the paucity of life stories theories to guide investigation into the research questions.

3.2 Research design

Once a strategic approach research has been set, a decision must be made on the most appropriate framework to use in data collection and analysis. This framework is called the *research design* (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It is crucial the choices taken allow the right priority and importance to be given to casual connections between variables. Bryman and Bell (2015) stated this then allowed the researcher to best understand the meaning of observed behaviour in specific context, thus gaining a temporal appreciation of social circumstances and their interconnectedness. Table 3–1 summarises five common qualitative research designs.

Table 3–1: A Summary of Common Qualitative Research Designs

Design	Comment
Experimental	Rarely used in qualitative business research. Often used in quantitative research. Quantitative research can involve experiments that move away from test room methods, to where some qualitative methods are also incorporated.
Cross-sectional	Qualitative interviews or focus groups at a single point in time. Can involve content analysis of documents related to a single event or point in time. It generally involves many cases, and looks for variations.
Longitudinal	Ethnographic research over a long period using multiple qualitative interviews. It also can involve multiple content analysis of documents over a long period. It involves mapping change. Has a high time and cost commitment.
Case study	Ethnographic or interview of a single case. Samples are often organisations or individuals. A popular qualitative research design. It focusses on gaining insights into the life of the research subject, and learning from them.
Comparative	Ethnographic or qualitative interview of two or more cases where some comparison is sought. Often used in cross cultural research.

Adapted from Bryman and Bell (2015) and Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015)

A case study research design was chosen. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) described the case study as a proven way of gaining insight in life from the point of view of an individual. This could then be reported as a narrative of lived experience. The case study design had a strong fit with subjective ontology, interpretivist epistemology, and qualitative research strategy.

3.2.1 Level of analysis

Another critical aspect of research design is deciding on the appropriate level of analysis. Table 3–2 sets out the features of each level. Bryman and Bell (2015) described this as the *societies, organisations, groups, individuals (SOGI) model*.

Table 3–2: *The SOGI Model*

Level	Comment
Individual	Research focused on specific types of individuals, for example: managers, individual employees, or executives.
Group	Research focused on certain types of groups, for example: police officers, health professionals, boards of directors.
Organisation	Research focused on companies.
Societies	Research focused on the national, political, environmental, social, technological, economic, and legal contexts groups organisations operate in.

Adapted from Bryman and Bell (2015)

Some research designs combine multiple levels of analysis; but doing so leaves the question open as to whether there can be meaningful and easily understood findings. This research adopted the individual level of analysis. At the heart of life stories is an individuals' own potential to discover and develop the meaning behind their self-concept and self-awareness (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Gardner et

al., 2005; Janson, 2008; Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Any other level of enquiry would likely have rendered less easily understood findings.

3.2.2 Multiple case study design.

Case studies can be *single design* or *multiple design* (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The single case design tends to focus on intensive enquiry into how specific and unique the subject is. The multiple case design tends to focus on testing and extending theory by using several individuals as instruments. The overall aim of this research was to contribute to further understanding about the potential of life stories in leader development. For this reason, a multiple case study design was chosen.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) stated there were no hard rules concerning the minimum number of individual units of analysis when designing a multiple case study. Between four and ten individual cases is common (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Additional cases can incrementally increase the ability to generalise findings, but unlike statistical sampling there quickly comes a point where extra cases provide very marginal contributions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). For these reasons as well as access and time reasons, five individual units of analysis was chosen.

3.3 Research methods

Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 49) stated “a *research method* is a technique for gathering data.” It should not be confused with research design which guides the execution of method and data analysis. Table 3–3 summarises common qualitative data collection methods.

Table 3–3: A Summary of Common Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Method	Comment
Sampling	Data is collected by sampling cases and participants strategically. This method assists the researcher to generalise to a wider population. It is often purposive to the goals of the research, meaning research questions will be answered. Documents can also be sampled.
Ethnography and participant observation	Data is collected when the researcher intensively observes and/or participates in day to day activities so they can draw understanding from an insider’s viewpoint. Research occurs either overtly or covertly ‘in the field.’ Time intensive. Notes are made, then written up afterwards. Provides rich insight, but can be limited to what is seen by the researcher.
Interviewing	Data is collected by talking to one subject at a time. This method is more flexible, less time intensive, and less intrusive than ethnography/participant observation. Qualitative interviews fall in to two categories: semi-structured or unstructured. A good method for attempting to reconstruct events with higher degrees of focus.
Focus groups	Data is collected via a group interview. This method allows participants to challenge each other as members of a group. The researcher can observe how meaning is constructed. Groups can take a long time to organize, and be dominated by some members at the expense of others.

Adapted from Bryman and Bell (2015)

Formal sampling was not a material consideration in the research method. Neither ethnographic nor participant observation was deemed suitable due to time constraints. Focus groups were deemed inappropriate because this research was focussed at the individual level. Bryman and Bell (2015) stated a strength of the qualitative interview was the focus on the interviewee and any path they took to express themselves, as well as the flexibility for the interviewer to pursue rich detail. With these ideas in mind, interviewing was chosen as the data collection method.

3.3.1 Research participant selection process

Middle managers were the leader subset chosen for interview. As mentioned previously, Rainey and Watson (1996) argued whilst middle managers led others, they also followed more senior levels. Middle managers were viewed as fertile ground for exploring the potential role of life stories in negotiating the leader-follower paradox.

Rainey and Watson (1996) stated middle managers could be several types professional who worked in the middle of organisational hierarchies. Sometimes a middle manager may not actually supervise others, but they did not belong to the first level of the organisation. Huy (2001) broadly defined middle managers as people who were at least two levels below CEO, and one level above frontline

supervisors. An amalgam of these ideas was used to establish middle manager selection criteria. Potential research participants had to be at least two organisational levels above the bottom of the organisational hierarchy and at least one level below the senior-most level.

This amalgam allowed slightly more flexibility in terms of organisational position but still ensured potential research participants were formally led by someone. It did not matter if the potential research participant had line control over other staff, only that they had regular working relationships with those at lower levels of the organisation. For time, cost and travel reasons, potential research participants had to reside in Auckland, New Zealand. Finally, potential research participants could not have a working or close personal relationship with the researcher.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) stated it was common in qualitative business research to use personal contacts or other simple sampling procedures rather than more systematic sampling techniques. This was the approach adopted to identify potential research participants. Potential research participants through family, friends and work networks. Each potential research participant was provided an information sheet and a life stories participant consent form (Appendix B; Appendix C). These documents formed the basis of the research agreement. Potential research participants were admitted to the study once signed documents were returned.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 The life history interview

Bryman and Bell (2015) described two special forms of qualitative interview: the *life history interview* and the *oral history interview*. Bryman and Bell stated the life history interview allows a look at the entire biography of the research participant, including diaries, letters and photographs. It also combined elements of the unstructured interview and the oral history interview. In the unstructured interview, the researcher investigates a general list of topics using an aide memoir.

Although similar to the life history interview, the oral history interview is normally more specific. The participant is asked to reflect only on certain events or periods from the past (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The life history interview was chosen for this study because it gave greater scope to glean information by having research participants engage in a reflexive consideration of their whole lives.

3.4.2 Interview processes

Interview processes were broadly based on an oral history interview guide suggested by Truesdell (n.d) with adaptations to fit the life history interview format. Truesdell set out several steps to take before, during and after each interview. She stated goals must be set before each interview. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) described this as the process of developing research questions

into interview questions. The goals of these interviews were to research how life stories contributed to participants' development as leaders; how these same life stories might also have contributed to understanding themselves as followers, and how they might use life stories to negotiate any arising intrapersonal tension caused by the simultaneous roles.

An interview aide memoir was designed. It contained open questions to encourage conversation and exploration about the research participants' stories, memories, experiences, events and themes as leader, as follower, and how they might have contributed to negotiating their role as leader-follower (Appendix F). Truesdell (n.d) recommended research participants be sent questions in advance so they could reflect on memories, events, people and experiences they may not have considered in a long time.

The aide memoir was sent to each research participant approximately one week before each interview along with an explanation it was a flexible guide for conversation rather than a formal interview structure. Research participants were also sent a set of optional timeline exercises (Appendix G). Adriansen (2012) recommended timelines as an effective method for assisting life history research. Timelines involve drawing a line across a piece of paper with the participant's birth at one end and the present day at the other. Participants then map out and

reflect significant life events by marking them along this line. Timelines were not collected for analysis.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) stated there were several ways of recording interviews including notetaking, handwriting, writing notes afterwards, taping or visually recording. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggested it was best to record qualitative interviews. Recording allows uninterrupted interaction, an accurate record of what was said and the ability to thoroughly and repeatedly examine what was spoken about. The decision was made to audio record and transcribe each interview. An authority to record was included on each participant consent form. A confidential transcription service was enlisted (Appendix C; Appendix D).

Interviews were audio recorded over a two-week period at a location of the research participants' choosing. The interviews were transcribed, checked then electronically sent to each participant for review and release authority (Appendix E). No alterations, additions or deletions were made to transcripts. The audio recordings were stored electronically with one back up copy made. One participant asked for a copy of the audio interview.

3.4.3 Analysis

Bryman and Bell (2015) stated data analysis methods in qualitative research tended to be more flexible than those used in quantitative research. *Thematic analysis* is common. Themes can be thought of as categories identified by the analyst. They are broadly related to research questions and help to obtain a basis for understanding collected data. The thematic analysis used in this research involved identifying, understanding and explaining meanings; a focus Eriksson and Kovalainen described as looking to address the issue of “what is being told” (2015, p. 219).

The logic behind this research was *abductive*. Abductive reasoning involves making logical inferences to build on theories by seeking to engage with puzzling aspects of a phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Although thematic categories were drawn directly from existing life stories research, they were not used as a pre-given theoretical framework. Instead, they were used as a *sensitizing concept* (Appendix H). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) said sensitizing theoretical concepts from prior research was an abductive approach that could help the description and analysis of any central features as they emerged from data.

The first phase of analysis involved reading each individual case separately. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015, p. 130) called this process “*within case analysis*.”

Each case was analysed according to a process recommended by Bryman and Bell (2015). They were read for stories, memories experiences, events, influences, themes from a leader perspective, a follower perspective and then a paradox perspective (Appendix H).

The identification of life stories themes also involved looking for repetitions, metaphors, analogies, topic transitions, similarities, differences, obvious linguistic connectors, missing ideas, and theory related material. The next phase of analysis involved comparing all the cases for broad thematic similarities and differences. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015, p. 130) called this process “*cross case analysis*.”

3.5 Ethical considerations

Research approval was given by Massey University after it was evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it was not reviewed by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Appendix A). All research was conducted in accordance with Massey University’s code of ethical conduct for research teaching evaluations involving human participants. Each research participant was guaranteed anonymity for themselves, any named individual and any named organisation.

Research participants were informed of their right to decline to answer any question, have the recorder to be switched off at any time during interview, withdraw from the study up to five days after interview and ask any questions about the study at any time during participation (Appendix B). Ethical issues relating to organisations did not arise because this project did not seek to access organisations or collect organisational materials.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) described *trustworthiness* as a term used to describe the evaluation of qualitative research. Trustworthiness is based on four criteria: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *conformability* (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Trustworthiness generally parallels the reliability, validity and generalisability criteria featured in quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Credibility concerns the plausibility of the researcher's account of a social reality (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Findings and conclusions were based on links between established life stories research, research participant interviews and thematic analysis (Appendix H). Transferability concerns the degree of similarity between the researcher's project and others in order to provide some comparison (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). This study drew on a literature review of relevant academic authors.

Dependability concerns the degree to which logical, traceable and documented research is offered to the reader. Conformability concerns the degree to which interpretations and findings can be linked to the data and understood by others (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). This supervised study was conducted, assessed and presented in accordance with the Massey University School of Business postgraduate research protocols.

3.7 Limitations

This study had several limitations. It was limited in scope, size and duration due to the fact it was undertaken in fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree of master of advance leadership practice. The study was also limited by tenuous relationships between leadership theory, followership theory, paradox, authentic leadership research, and varied life stories concepts.

The abductive logic approach meant the researcher had to select what Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 27) called a “best explanation” from data interpretation. The interpretation was another limitation. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) stated narrative based research did not produce one definite truth, only a version of it.

This study was also limited by use of a single unstructured interview to collect data. Unstructured interviews risk becoming a case of what the research participant wants to talk about (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Researchers may not obtain the desired level of detail about topics of interest without subsequent interviews. Ultimately, the decision to conduct a single interview was based on time constraints.

Another limitation was the decision not to triangulate. *Triangulation* involves use of more than one method or source of data in a study to cross-check results (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Triangulation might have provided more trustworthiness but this research was based on one method to collect and explore life stories. Finally, the study was limited by the decision to focus on the narratives of five Auckland New Zealand based middle managers recruited through relatively informal networks.

3.8 Chapter summary

The first section in this chapter explained the foundations of this research project. It was a qualitative research strategy based on subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. The second section in this chapter discussed research design. It was a multiple case study design at the individual level. The third section in this chapter detailed the research method. Data was collected using a

life history interview with middle managers. The fourth section in this chapter outlined data collection and analysis processes. Life history interviews were recorded and a thematic analysis completed.

The fifth section in this chapter confirmed research was conducted in accordance with Massey University's code of ethical conduct for research teaching involving human participants. The sixth section set out research trustworthiness. The seventh section in this chapter set out study limitations. The study was limited in scope and size, an abductive logic meant research interpretations were a best explanation only. Data collection was limited by use of a single unstructured interview and the transferability of any findings was limited.

4 Analysis and Discussion

4.0 Chapter overview

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The first five sections contain the analysis and discussion of cases studies. The sixth section contains the cross-case analysis and discussion. The seventh section summarises this chapter.

4.1 Case study one: Participant A

Participant A (aged late 30s) was a female middle manager with a local government organisation. At the time of interview, she was responsible for leading a recently restructured team of around 80 people. An interview transcript synopsis is contained in Appendix I.

4.1.1 Life stories

Participant A was raised on the North Shore of Auckland. She was the “bossy one” of three sisters. Her parents encouraged them all to develop their own personalities, but her father was strict. This made her conscious of not wanting to upset people. She followed instructions at school because she wanted to please the teacher. Participant A graduated university, but struggled to find work.

She volunteered with the North Shore City Council before deciding to further her education by completing a master's degree overseas. Participant A moved to Japan and taught English for three years. This period was "a valuable experience" and "an adventure." She eventually chose to complete her masters in London, as that would allow her to work in the United Kingdom after graduation.

Participant A held two important jobs in the United Kingdom. The first was in transport planning with a local council. She quickly realised the impact transport could have on peoples' lives. Transport planning was a developing field. It gave her the opportunity to move around and up. Participant A moved into a position with two people reporting to her. She found managing them a struggle because they would not necessarily do things the way she wanted them done.

The second job was in the same field, but at another local council. It involved managing six people. She was trained to coach. She learned to work with people to identify and agree on outcomes. She was also taught to manage upwards. Her supervisor was a "mentor" in that regard. She learned to understand the importance of the political world; particularly how to make business cases and convince senior leaders for small gains rather than, "constantly hitting a wall." overall, the experience taught her resilience.

Participant A met, married and had a child with a Londoner. After 10 years of negotiation with her husband, they agreed New Zealand would be a better place to raise a child. Suitable employment came up. Within six weeks Participant A moved the family back to New Zealand. Participant A was employed to manage 20 people and deliver a \$200 million transport project over three years.

Her work experiences in the United Kingdom put her in a good place to understand the direction her organisation was going in. After 18 months, the organisation restructured several teams including hers. She was approached to apply for a more senior role. Participant A was hesitant, but after reassurance she took it on.

The new role had management challenges she was not quite ready for including disciplinary procedures and her own time management. Her staff were experts but de-motivated. Her department held values around transport priorities that were not shared by the wider organisation or the public. Her work environment had become very hierarchical. She had many masters to constantly convince and negotiate with, despite being a leader in her area.

4.1.2 Leader themes

The life stories Participant A told implied a theme of development as a natural process. Shamir et al. (2005) stated these leaders told stories where leadership was shown from an early age. Participant A discussed various leader roles to explain how her leadership developed. Participant A mentioned leading her sisters as a child, “I’d say the earliest memories would be about, um, being with my sisters and being the one that was directing things.”

Each phase of her life offered further explanation of developing self-awareness: coping with managing two people, coaching and leading six people, managing upwards and leading a recently restructured department. She stated, “I was always career minded, and always wanted to progress within a career.”

Janson (2008) argued leadership development as a natural process included experiences where people had leadership thrust onto them. Of her most recent role she said, “he had an opportunity for me which he felt I was not quite ready for ... I was um quite hesitant about it ... I decided to take up the opportunity ... probably should have looked into that much further ... because it’s been enormously challenging.” Of her future, she said, “this current position has really had me thinking about where I want to go as a leader. I think ... I’d like to head into a position that’s, um, affecting policy change.”

A second implied theme was development through self-improvement and learning. Shamir et al. (2005) stated these leaders gave special place in their stories to experiences and role models. Janson (2008) mentioned self-improvement involved an element of striving to challenge oneself. Participant A linked several stories together to explain learning.

She said of her time in Japan, “I couldn’t speak Japanese ... that was quite an adventure ... that really taught me about respecting that culture rather than trying to impose my own preconditions on other people.” She spoke of learning from British work culture, “then in London ... I guess it’s a really specific culture that um, changed enormously slowly over time, so understanding the little gains that could be made.” She also valued the experience of higher education.

Participant A credited a “mentor” who taught her to manage upwards. She stated, “I certainly work with some people here who haven’t had that experience, and don’t understand about managing the people that are more important to them, as well as the ones they have direct influence over.”

Another story was the experience of learning to coach staff. She described this as the most useful management experience in understanding what she did wrong.

Participant A stated she now saw herself as, “not confrontational ... I don’t overreact or get angry about things. My style is to build and negotiate relationships.”

A third implied theme was development through finding a cause. Shamir et al. (2005) said these leaders told stories that identified themselves as a prototypical member in a cause, leading to self-actualisation through achievement of purpose. Participant A positioned herself as protagonist for transport planning; something she appeared passionate about. Of her career in London she said:

Very quickly I understood the impact transport has on people’s lives, and your ability to impact on people ... it was easier to move upwards in transport ... so I got to work on some projects that really in Auckland only in the last few years we’ve been doing ... it probably helps me through this period in Auckland when we are growing ... I think it is being able to understand that um, Auckland will be like these cities at some point. So, I am considered to be a leader in that – in the area I am working in.

4.1.3 Follower themes

Participant A implied similar follower development themes in her life stories:

I think the key themes in that, are understanding myself and understanding other people ... if you don't do that you will find it very difficult to progress though life and have ... an acceptance or comfort in what you're doing ... if you can't understand why people make the decisions they make.

Participant A implied a theme of development as a natural process. She described following as "something I have probably got better at." She said school taught her following was about fitting in and trying to please the teacher. She also identified her father was the sort of person you did not upset.

Interestingly, Participant A pointed to her time in Japan as an experience of learning to be different but still following, "so, I think it is something to everybody should do – is go and live somewhere where they're the different person ... and have to follow a culture ... and have an understanding of what that feels like." She was able to ascribe leader and follower development to the same experience.

Participant A implied a theme of self-development by learning from others and role models. Janson (2008) stated it was for the leader to assign emotional valence (either good or bad) to an experience, including role models (Table 2–5; Figure 2–

3; Figure 2–4). She recalled she did not always agree with the way her first two supervisors managed, “I didn’t agree with a lot of their choices and ... it was quite challenging to do things you didn’t necessarily agree with ... that was a good learning for me – that you’re not the boss of the world.”

She returned to this theme in more positive terms when speaking about learning to manage upwards, “I learned a lot from him, um, in terms of the importance of convincing and demonstrating ... and that you can work around a system ... rather than hitting a wall ... that taught me a lot in terms of resilience.”

A third implied theme was self-development as coping. Life stories for leader development by coping involves learning tolerance for stress and developing a sense of self from setback (Shamir et al., 2005). Participant A referenced similar sentiments when she explained how she coped as a follower:

One of my key strengths is resilience ... when I’m asked not to do something or not to progress something – I will continue if I feel strongly about something, to make the case for something. Um, of course there are times that, yeah, you have to do something that you don’t want, and that becomes the end of story ... accepting that is a challenge. You have to chalk that down to a learning experience of working with other people.

4.1.4 Paradox

Participant A stated she was in “a very middle, middle, management position” with many masters, and this was a new thing – although she did not call it a paradox. She said it seemed her current organisation was moving in hierarchal direction at a time when most other organisations were flattening. She described significant problems in road safety that her team felt the organisation did not seem to take seriously enough. This made them demotivated.

She described her immediate manager as, “a micro manager who wants to know every single detail.” She said it was the first manger she has had like this. She found it undermining. She described her other manager as wanting to get everything done quickly. Meeting these two sets of expectations whilst trying to lead her staff was very challenging. She admitted the need to manage people problems she wasn’t quite prepared for had contributed to a poor work-life balance.

On one hand, Participant A felt tension from her responsibility to lead staff after a period of change. She also felt tension from having to answer to multiple senior staff with differing styles. She said this frustrated her ability to manage upwards. She was responsible for organisational change, but also subject to wider strategic decisions that might not align with her cause. This is not a unique middle

management paradox (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Harding et al., 2014; Huy, 2001). Participant A characterised these tensions as a struggle (mentioned once) a challenge (mentioned eight times) requiring a lot of effort (mentioned once) demoralising (mentioned once) and frustrating (mentioned once).

Participant A narrated her life stories in a way that gave her a coherent sense of herself as both leader and follower. She did not seem to use her stories to express a singular leader or follower identity. Participant A expressed herself as a blend of both. When asked, she summed up the themes of her life as a matter of “self-awareness” and “awareness of others.”

The implied themes gave her a natural understanding of her resilience (mentioned twice), ability to negotiate and build relationships (mentioned three times) sense of comfort in what she was doing (mentioned once) understanding of others (mentioned once) knowing she was a leader in her work (mentioned five times) understanding of the political world (mentioned three times) and the ability to manage upwards (mentioned three times). She summed up her leader-follower role by saying “I’m still learning.”

4.1.5 Summary

Life stories focus on leader development. That said, this case study demonstrated middle managers like Participant A appear to have a natural ability to use them to develop balanced self-awareness even if they do not explicitly identify and state life stories themes. Gardner et al. (2005) identified high levels of self-awareness as an important component of both authentic leader and follower development (Figure 2–1). This case highlights the potential of using life stories to explore those concepts on an intrapersonal level.

Shamir et al. (2005) mentioned life stories were under-researched and overlooked in leader development. Even middle managers with naturally balanced self-awareness of their leader and follower identities would still benefit from building knowledge, skills and experience of life stories for personal development.

Ultimately, improved intrapersonal development as a leader-follower would improve the sort of integrated thinking Cronin and Genovese (2012) believed was required for knowing when and how much to emphasize one identity or the other in any given leader-follower situation.

4.2 Case study two: Participant B

Participant B (aged mid 50s) was a middle manager with a large financial institution. At the time of interview, she was head of a department, leading a team

of around 10 people across the upper North Island. An interview transcript synopsis is contained in Appendix J.

4.2.1 Life stories

Participant B was neither disciplined nor focussed at school. She held a summer job working in the Post Office which became full-time after her School Certificate year. Participant B followed both her parents into banking. Participant B had an interesting relationship with her mother. It was either “really good, or really bad.” She only understood her mother as she got older. Their relationship shaped her resilience.

At 18 years of age Participant B had her first leadership experience when she spent three weeks managing a branch for someone who was on leave. She was too young and immature to take much from the experience. She was offered leadership roles over the ensuing years. She did not take them because she did not “suffer fools.” She did not want to manage personalities and their home lives.

She was “self-led.” She made a life-long habit of observing managers to take the good from what they did. During these years, she married, had children,

separated, then became a single mother. She always ensured she listened to her children, showing them empathy and concern.

Participant B stayed with the organisation through various mergers and restructures until 2003 when she went to work for another large financial institution. In 2005 Participant B was enticed to work for a private firm. This brought her into contact with people and financial practices she did not agree with, so she left. Participant B then worked for a mortgage origination business. The business had no controls and one of the directors had been adjudicated bankrupt.

The funders found out and pulled support for the company. Participant B was the only one of 16 staff to retain a job. At around this time the global financial crisis hit. Participant B spent a bit of time working for the funder, was out of work for a month, then gained employment with the financial institution she currently works for. Participant B learned the values of integrity, reputation and being true to yourself during this period.

Participant B was promoted to her current role over colleagues. She felt she had got to the point in her life where she had something to offer and give back from

her life experiences. Her team had recently undergone a restructure. At the time of interview, she had been asked to complete a time and motion study. She had repeatedly tried to gain further context around what might be about to happen. She felt something was at play, but admitted she was “frustrated” and “deflated” by the lack of information. She described it as a first-time situation for her.

4.2.2 Leader themes

Many of the life stories Participant B told had an implied theme of development based on her relationship her mother. Janson (2008) identified these types of stories as leadership formative experience based on relationships (either good or bad) with parents (Table 2–5; Figure 2–2; Figure 2–3; Figure 2–4).

Janson did caution there was some debate about how authentic narratives could be if they were built from the distant past due to the passage of time and self-editing. That said, as far as participant B was concerned, her relationship with her mother taught her about herself as a parent and as a leader. It was a topic she returned to five times:

I’ve got a very strong mother, and my relationship with her has been either very good or very bad. I’ve kind of built up quite a resilience ... I’ve never wanted to parent like my mother ... I want to, you know, show empathy, I

want to be concerned about their lives ... she is so pig-headed and I can be too ... I think I'm empathetic and understand that people are different, and have different working styles. It's like with my mother, and being a single mother raising children, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. A lot of who I am is shaped from my early years.

A second implied development theme was the crucible experience of working for troubled privately owned financial institutions around the time of the global financial crisis. She returned to this story three times. Bennis and Thomas (2002) said crucibles gave leaders (among other things) a hardiness and an ability to grasp context they might not have otherwise had. Participant B learned she was not prepared to stand by people without integrity. The experience also taught her the importance proper financial management, honesty and of her own reputation:

This was the finance in that space and I'm just like – I don't want to work for this company anymore; I'm just not 100% happy ... I had a pretty good reputation. I'm a reputational risk you know ... And then I went there, but there were like, no controls or anything ... one of the directors unbeknown to me had been adjudicated bankrupt ... I was working the lender ... and oh, it was challenging to say the least. I got two job offers within a month of leaving. You saw leaders that had a real lack of integrity ... I was probably one of the first to go ... for ... the whole integrity piece ... then you've got uncertainty ... what am I going to do for work? It's all about being true to yourself.

A third implied theme was development as a late bloomer by learning from experience. Shamir and Eilam (2005) said late bloomers do not see themselves as leaders until a suitable opportunity presents itself. They also said those who learn from experience perceived their life stories as a series of experiences events and role models – both good and bad:

Over the years, you see really good managers and really shite managers, and so you take ... thinking, man (laughs) if you're a leader ... I've had bosses in the past say "hey have you ever considered a leadership role?" And I'm like nah ... but I actually think you get to a point in your life where you I guess grow up and think, oh actually you've got something to offer ... you've now got life experience ... I can honestly say that is because of all the things that have gone on in my past.

4.2.3 Follower themes

Participant B did not draw on her life stories to explain development as a follower – an identity she struggled with. She admitted an aversion to the concept, reflecting the view of Jackson and Parry (2011) who thought many people did not like the phrase or simply did not like to admit they were followers. She said, "I don't think I have ever been a follower." She held a passive perspective on followership. She equated following with "sheep" who "go with the flow" and "do anything for a quiet life."

Interestingly, Participant B said she had always been “self-led.” Carsten et al. (2010) stated self-leadership was a feature of active follower perspectives on followership. In this construct, self-leadership is the way followers take personal responsibility for creating leadership without relying on a formal leader.

Participant B stated, “I know where your trying to go with it, I know, like in terms of following instruction ... I feel like – someone who just conforms and goes with the flow – the PC brigade (laughs).” Participant B did not generally equate following with active behaviour despite demonstrating an instinctive understanding of it.

Participant B told her life stories in a way that hinted at an active follower identity without her consciously grasping it. On one hand, she seemed to express a leader-centric view of followership. On the other hand, there were hints of follower-centric and relational perspectives in her stories (Appendix O). Her life stories about following were expressed as accumulated life experiences (Figure 2–1; Table 2–1). Accumulated life experiences can contribute to follower development (Gardner et al., 2005). Her experiences contributed to her overall self-awareness, her ethics, integrity, honesty, empathy, relational transparency and work performance.

These attributes meant she was the person people would take to meetings when opinion and influence was needed. She said a boss had told her, “I work to the beat of my own drum.” She admitted she had learned to bite her tongue. She had learned to be true to herself and to understand that self-performance meant your boss would “leave you alone.”

4.2.4 Paradox

Participant B spoke five times about a leader-follower paradox in her current role, although she did not use that term. Her work group was restructured in 2016. Recently she had been asked to complete another time and motion study for her superiors. She had a very good relationship with her immediate supervisor, but the supervisor at the next level would not explain the context behind the request. They had sessions and phone conferences but she did not know what she was “up against.”

She said, “there is something else at play and I find it very frustrating.” Participant B felt there might be the need for further restructures but could not say for sure. She stated she wanted to front foot the issue, but at the same time had to face staff questions, feedback and allay fears without a clear idea of what was happening. She explained this was the first time she had ever struck the leader-follower role.

Participant B felt tension from her responsibility to lead staff. She said, “I feel really defensive of them.” She also felt tension because she may have to “toe the company line” by “delivering a message with conviction.” Added to this was her frustration at the perceived lack of honesty from superiors.

Participant B understood there was always natural tension when people did not agree, but she characterised her situation by saying it left her feeling “really deflated.” She had “never felt so flat” and she found it very “difficult” and “frustrating” without the context she had been asking for.

This is not a unique middle management paradox. Middle managers are organisational leaders who must also implement strategy whether they agree or not and without being fully listened to (Huy, 2001; Rainey & Watson, 1996).

Participant B did not narrate her life stories in a way that expressed a coherent understanding of self as both leader and follower. She did not consciously connect and integrate the two identities despite her implied life stories themes providing her with a self-awareness of her resilience, pig-headedness, empathy, concern, integrity, honesty and personal reputation.

She had self-awareness as a leader, but not so much as a follower. This contributed to her struggle when talking about followership. She described it in passive terms despite her accumulated life experiences suggesting she might hold other perspectives and constructs. It was not clear to Participant B how she might use meaning from her life stories to negotiate her situation. When asked, she stated she was uncertain, but “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.”

4.2.5 Summary

This case study reflected some of the limits identified in the literature review. Life stories only focus on leader development. There is a lack of understanding about followership and language choices tend to polarise and drive leader-follower paradox (Cronin & Genovese, 2012; Lewis, 2000; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Middle managers like Participant B have the potential to improve their overall self-awareness, self-concepts and personal narratives by exploring a guided life reflection process (Table 2–3) similar to that suggested by Shamir and Eilam (2005) particularly as it relates to reflecting on life stories and revisiting personally held ideas about following. Any guided life reflection process would require modification for a follower focus. Doing so would improve integration between leader and follower self-awareness, self-concepts for a more coherent narrative.

4.3 Case study three: Participant C

Participant C (aged late 40s) was a middle manager with a state service organisation. At the time of interview, she was head of an investigation branch in central-west Auckland. She led around 40 people. She also chaired the local committee of the national employees' association. An interview transcript synopsis is contained in Appendix K.

4.3.1 Life stories

Participant C was the second child to a 19-year-old mother and shepherd father. She was raised on a farm in the Bay of Plenty. When she was 4 her parents bought a takeaway shop. She recalled getting up to feed herself in the mornings.

Participant C described her mother as strong. She got a lot of who she was from her. They fell out around 18 years ago, and the relationship was never the same again. At school Participant C put 110% into sports. She put demands on herself with school work. She said, "I just don't fail at things."

Participant C's parents separated just as she started full time work at a bank. Participant C felt she had to stay at home to look after her father and brother. She described herself as still her father's minder and her brother's mother. Within a very short time Participant C was elected as a union representative. She was

promoted quickly, but left after missing out on a branch manager role. She believed this was because she was a 24-year-old female.

Participant C joined her current employer after becoming involved in a court case as a witness. After seven years, she joined a women's committee because she thought it was time to give back. She did not stay long as it was "all slating males." She did not want to be treated like one of the guys but she still liked being part of the group.

Eventually Participant C had a child. She returned to work after some months but felt she could not leave her baby. She resigned. 10 months later she tried to return part time. The human resources (HR) department would only accommodate her full time at a lower level in the organisation. Participant C chose to become self-employed instead.

Participant C was successfully self-employed but wanted to return to her old job. She made contact after two years. After negotiation with previous supervisors and HR she returned part-time to her original level within the organisation. She went full time after a few months due to the amount of work she had on. Her conflict

with HR continued for a year as she fought to have her previous service recognised.

Participant C became the chair of the local committee of the national employees' association. She advocated for six years to have female representation in governance roles. During this period, she learned to negotiate. The advocacy reinforced the need to remain professional.

Participant C was promoted to her current role at the beginning of 2016. She stated she had grown a lot during the previous 14 months. She had high demands on her staff, but also of herself to protect their welfare. She admitted she only recently understood she was a leader even though she did not feel one. She did not think she was a follower.

4.3.2 Leader themes

Many life stories told by Participant C implied a theme of self-development based on her relationship with her parents, particularly her mother. Both Gardner et al. (2005) and Janson (2008) stated childhood, family and relationships with parents

were themes to draw leader self-meaning from (Table 2–1; Table 2–5; Figure 2–2; Figure 2–3; Figure 2–4).

The strength and independence she learned from her family featured in other stories about doing well at school, sports and work. She said:

I'm the one who's put the, I suppose, demands on myself because there was nobody else going to do that ... I have high expectations of my staff, I also have high expectations on myself that I will be there to protect them.

Participant C told two stories that implied a crucible experience in her development. The first involved missing out on promotion when working in the finance sector. The second involved having a baby, leaving her employer and then battling to re-join the organisation. Of the first incident:

When I didn't get one of the jobs I applied for [I asked] if that was why [being a 24-year-old female]. And the silence and the gurgled response at the end – they didn't even really need to answer me. That's why I left.

The second incident:

I didn't think I had a maternal bone in my body ... and came closer to the time to come back to work and I just couldn't leave this baby ... so I came back to work and I was still breast feeding ... and it was awful having to sit in my office and close the door and push the chair up so that I could express. I resigned and everyone tried to talk me out of it ... I tried to come back and HR manager told me I'd have to come back full time and come back as a ... so I said that's not happening and hung up. Yeah that was ... I'll never forget that. My family and friends were just mortified.

Participant C did return to her employer:

I did that for two years ... I rang my very first ... and said, "what's the story" and he said, "oh that's just silly." And I spoke to ... and he said, "oh look that's just ridiculous, you don't have to come back as a ..." And he must have called me every month for about six months and every time he rang I'd find another excuse for not coming back, and the very last phone call I said "well what pay would I come back on?" The week before I was meant to come back ... rang me and said, "look I am not going to beat around ... if you want to come back you will have to come back full time." I said, "well if that's the case, rip my application up." She went away and came back and said, "oh yeah you can come back [flexible employment option]."

The understanding and self-clarity she gained from the crucible experience tied in with a third implied development theme: identifying with a cause. Janson (2008) stated these stories contained evidence of being at least partly driven by a principle. Participant C spoke of involvement with two committees. The first was a woman's committee. The second as chair of the local branch of the national committee where she advocated for six years for female representation in governance roles.

These stories might suggest a feminist cause. *Feminism* is concerned with improving the position of women and equal rights; but many females who are concerned with these things may not self-identify as feminists (Duncan, 2010).

Participant C did not relate the stories from a feminist perspective:

One of them was, I can't remember what it was called, but it was the women's committee. So, I went to a few of those meetings but it was all slating males. I thought, no I'm not into that because I still like to be part of the group. It's something I never wanted to be. I never ever thought that I would be the voice for females. That's not me ... I just fall into these things (laughs) and I suppose the more effort you put in the more passionate you become about it ... I was never brought up in a, I suppose, this women's lib type environment, and I'd never (pause) just never crossed my mind.

Participant C identified her principle as a fight for fairness:

I suppose coming back, and the fight I went through – I know how hard it is to fight for yourself or stand up for yourself in a professional manner. It's a hard job and we don't get treated fairly. I've always had that welfare of staff, the caring. So as a leader I see it as my job to make sure that everything's fair.

4.3.3 Follower themes

Participant C did not explicitly draw meaning from her life stories to explain self-development as a follower. She twice stated “I don't think I am a follower” and “It wasn't until I looked at this timeline and thinking about the words ... if I ever was a follower.” She appeared to hold a passive perspective on followership.

Carsten et al. (2010) stated passive followership features following orders to make sure things are done the leader's way, thus taking comfort in minimal responsibility and deference. Participant C elaborated, “I look and think ... you've found somebody that you're following ... and you don't make your own decisions. Yeah, you're not yourself, you're what this other person is that you want to be.”

Gardner et al. (2005) said high levels of self-awareness and self-regulation were required for authentic follower development (Figure 2–1). Participant C did tell one story to suggest she had instinctive understanding of follower self-awareness and self-regulation. She was elected chair of the local branch of the employee's association. The previous chair had been very confrontational:

I made it very clear that I wasn't a fighter – I'm a negotiator. Once you start fighting and getting into pointing this finger it's not professional and I want to be treated professionally.

This story hinted Participant C might potentially hold relational or constructionist views of following (Appendix O) but overall, Participant C did not have a coherent follower development narrative. She did not consciously draw meaning from her life stories to express a follower identity despite demonstrating an instinctive awareness of her self-concept, values, and convictions:

It's all those past experiences, I suppose, that have made me who I am now. So now I look, I suppose, as to what habits or traits I don't want to have rather than what I am looking to be.

4.3.4 Paradox

Participant C did not identify any specific middle management paradox. That said, she did generally identify the importance of being heard:

I know we get told to do stuff sometimes and you have no choice in it. I think a lot of things where I've been told to do stuff, and I really do have strong thoughts about it – I will park those thoughts ... If whoever's making the decisions thinks no, we're still going ahead, I've done what I can. You can either dwell on it and get really bitter, or ok. As long as you've said your bit and put your thoughts forward – at least you've tried.

Participant C admitted she had never thought much about herself as a leader or follower, “yeah, that's where I struggle with the leader and follower. I still don't consider myself a leader, even though I know I am” and “I still don't think I am a follower.” The result was Participant C did not express a coherent leader-follower identity despite her life stories implying instinctive self-awareness of her inner strength, fairness, professionalism, independence, drive, integrity and transparency.

4.3.5 Summary

This case study reflected some of the limits discussed in the literature review. Life stories focus on leader development. There is a lack of understanding about followership and language choices tend to polarise and drive paradox (Cronin & Genovese, 2012; Lewis, 2000; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Middle managers have life stories themes to explore even if they do not explicitly recognise them. A guided life reflection process similar to that suggested by Shamir and Eilam (2005) could be used for this purpose (Table 2–3). There is also potential to use a similar process to help middle managers explore and reflect on life stories to improve personal understandings of follower development. Care would need to be taken with descriptors and language. Together, the two exercises would improve integration between self-awareness and self-concepts for a more coherent leader-follower narrative.

4.4 Case study four: Participant D

Participant D (aged early 40s) was between jobs. At the time of interview, he was days away from starting a new middle management role with a privately-owned company. Most recently he was a middle manager with a health product firm. He led 23 employees. An interview transcript synopsis is contained in Appendix L.

4.4.1 Life stories

Participant D moved from Edgecumbe to Auckland at age 10. He mixed with a group and got into mischief. He lost friends in his fourth form year due to his behaviour. He occasionally led social activities during high school. He also had his first leadership experience – he captained his rugby team. At that time, the experience of people looking to him for direction was not a natural thing.

Participant D graduated university and worked as a marketing assistant in charge of managing fast moving consumer goods projects using cross functional teams. This was his first serious leadership role. He learned a lot but felt he still needed to have all the answers. Participant D worked overseas in finance for a few years. He returned to New Zealand. Eventually he landed a role with a large health company. He had a similar leadership role to his first job, but he did not enjoy having limited influence in a large corporate environment.

Participant D spent four years working for a small start-up company. He had regular contact with the CEO, the chief financial officer (CFO) and the board of directors. It was a big personal development process. He learned more about opinion, confidence, influence and decision making. It was here he learned nobody has all the answers. He left because he did not agree with the strategic direction.

Participant D spent time contracting. He became involved in leading a year-long project completing due diligence on a nutraceutical business. He considered investing his own money. The personal pressure of financial responsibility was another learning curve. Eventually he did not buy in. He did not agree with the direction of the company.

Participant D then spent four years working for another health product firm. He started as the national sales manager and finished as the general manager for sales and marketing. The last year in the job was a personal challenge. He struggled in his working relationship with a wealthy investor who had a creative and unstructured approach to the company.

The CEO was occupied with other business interests. Participant D tried to establish direction for his team, but felt unable to because he was “properly out of his depth.” Eventually he admitted this to his staff. He could not get direction from the investor or the CEO. He was unhappy in himself. He could not see things changing, so he resigned.

4.4.2 Leader themes

Many of the life stories Participant D told had an implied theme of development as a natural process despite the fact he personally drew little leader growth from his younger years (captaining his high school rugby team aside). Shamir and Eilam (2005, p. 404) stated these sorts of life stories often had “a quality of obviousness” about them that demonstrated the story teller had built an almost fatalistic tale about their ability to lead.

Participant D tied his personal development to specific life events: managing cross functional teams in his first job, understanding the limits of his influence in the corporate environment, choosing to move to a smaller work environment, taking an opportunity to involve his own money in a nutraceutical business, and latterly stepping into the challenge of a general manager role.

Of high school rugby, he said, “that was my first sort of exposure to having people look at me for direction.” Of his first job, “I ... was there for around two years. I felt I got to being comfortable in sort of directing things. I sort of grew in that role.” Of his time with a large corporate, “I always have my own ideas around what I wanted to happen. I found it really hard in a ... bigger environment to feel like you’re having influence even though you had leadership and you had the ability to influence – there was a lot more cogs.”

Of his time with a start-up company, “so it was the first time that I’m on my own going to the team and them looking to me for guidance. So, I felt for me that was a very big development process as a leader being comfortable in your own opinion ... and having the ability to influence decisions.” Of the venture, “I felt like my decisions were having a real impact on people and that was quite confronting ... but I guess going into the role you draw on the experience you’ve had previously.” Of his most recent role, “that’s one of the learnings I’ve had through my career is to be aware ... you’re not going to be in control with everything and you’re not going to have all the answers.”

Another implied theme to emerge was development for authentic leadership. Gardner et al. (2005) stated reflection on antecedents was key in improving self-awareness and self-regulation for authentic leader development (Figure 2–1; Table 2–1). Participant D repeatedly self-reflected on his accumulated life experiences. On self-awareness, he said, “so I think it’s about not giving up on that person you are in terms of empathy or your genuineness or what’s important to you from a values perspective. It’s a skill you learn the older you get ... of being aware of what your emotional engagement might be.” On self-regulation, “you’ve always got to put yourself from the fact you are a leader, and that you are not one of the lads or the team anymore, and there is going to be times when you have to be forceful and assertive in situations.”

About positive modelling he said, “when I started working, the bosses I respected the most and got on with the most were genuine. The way [they] got the best out of me is when there was an authentic relationship ... so I always wanted to have a sense of genuineness and empathy with people. So, I’ve always tried to do that [authentic relationship] with people I work with.” In terms of his leader development he said, “a leader is someone that naturally wants to make decisions and wants to bring someone with them and is comfortable doing that in their own skin. [They] have empathy and is genuine, but strong and assertive at the same time.”

4.4.3 Follower themes

Some of the life stories Participant D told had an implied theme of development as a struggle and coping – one that he did not see as entirely positive. He stated, “the older I get, the more I feel less comfortable following” and “I don’t mind following – as long as I agree.” Participant D appeared to hold a passive perspective on follower identity. (Carsten et al., 2010) stated passivity in followership was characterised by support, obedience, and non-confrontational teamwork. These are ideas Participant D touched on when he described followers as people who were comfortable taking direction and satisfaction from contributing to a team.

Participant D told two follower stories to describe his struggle. The first was from his time in a large corporate environment. He spoke of frustration at his limited influence which he characterised as being a cog in the wheel that needed other cogs to fall into place for anything to happen. The second was at the start-up company. He eventually left due to disagreement over strategic direction:

I can manage up, but I get very frustrated when I don't agree with the direction something is going in. I used to be a bit of a little shit at school when I was younger, so I probably revert back to that ... it's when you get to a point where you're having to implement ... big decisions that you just don't fundamentally agree with ... I find [it] really challenging actually.

Another implied theme to emerge was Participant D's self-awareness of his follower development. Gardner et al. (2005) stated reflection on antecedents was key in improving self-awareness and self-regulation for authentic follower development (Figure 2-1; Table 2-1). Participant D repeatedly self-reflected on accumulated life experiences. He characterised it as, "an internal compass sort of thing – what do you naturally feel more comfortable with, ah, in your own self?"

4.4.4 Paradox

Participant D spoke at length about the challenge of the final year in his most recent role:

We have a very wealthy investor who ... had his own quirky ideas about what he wanted to do ... one day it would be this, and the next day we're going to spend three million on that, and the next day we were going to run over it. So, there was no clear structure ... I was really left up to sort it out. My CEO was looking at buying other businesses and stuff, and it was the only time in my career that I've felt like I was properly out of my depth.

Participant D described the isolating effect of tension, and coming to an understanding of himself as a middle manager:

I didn't necessarily handle it that well internally because I felt I wasn't getting the support ... my expectations on myself to deliver that role and feeling like I wasn't able to do that, and then feeling the pressure of other people ... and feeling I was not able to give direction. Because like any middle manager ... if you get clarity from the top ... you can move [but] ultimately there's only so much you can do.

Participant D left the company, but described what he learned:

I can't see this changing ... I was unhappy in what I was doing and I ended up deciding ... it was better for me to personally not be there ... it probably was the hardest year of my career ... it came down to a personal satisfaction and head space thing ... The biggest thing I learned ... was that you're never going to get everything right and to achieve something you have to take action ... So, I'm probably not a great follower. I think in my own way I'm probably pretty stubborn ... that reflects how I handled myself in the last year ... I didn't know how to change that and influence that ... because it was dealing with someone who was not logical ... maybe he was just a lot more creative and lateral thinking than I was.

Participant D felt tension from limited ability to manage upwards to a creative person whilst trying to lead staff. On reflection at interview he understood this. Perhaps this tension was driven in part by his belief that leaders "make decisions." The tension was also partly driven by his own belief he was not a great follower. The result was an intrapersonal struggle to narrate a story his superiors would take seriously.

He also felt tension from not being able "to give direction." This manifested itself when he internalised his situation (something he mentioned three times).

Participant D negotiated some of that tension with authenticity, “if you don’t have that clarity then you, you’ve got to be a little bit open with your team ... if you get that empathy going with your team then people will tend to see the genuineness.”

This is not a unique middle management paradox. Middle managers are held responsible for growth and innovation, but they often have limited ability to manage upwards and are not listened to. This can lead to frustration and social isolation (Huy, 2001; Sims, 2003).

4.4.5 Summary

This case study demonstrated the value of middle managers having strong life stories themes for leader development, even if they are only implied. It also highlighted the potential to reflect on antecedents, self-awareness and self-regulation to refine understanding of follower identity. Without doing this, the follower identity will probably have limited potential for the middle manager.

Middle managers with strong life stories themes as leaders would still benefit from exploring themes for follower identity. A refined follower self-concept would yield improved ability to negotiate the leader-follower paradox by balancing and integrating leader-follower self-awareness and self-concepts. An

adapted guided life reflection process similar to that suggested by Shamir and Eilam (2005) may assist this process.

4.5 Case study five: Participant E

Participant E (aged late 50s) was a middle manager with a local government organisation. At the time of interview, he was on secondment to a project. He was normally head of a department leading approximately 100 staff. An interview transcript synopsis is contained in Appendix M.

4.5.1 Life stories

As a youth, Participant E was a “sixer” at scouts. He graduated from university in Australia and took a job with an irrigation board in Dunedin. He supervised two older staff. He doubted he provided them with much. He was “a scientist” who was just happy to be employed. After six years, he took a job in a regulatory department of a North Island local government organisation.

At that time, Participant E did not view himself as a leader, although he was still supervising staff. He viewed himself as a “logistician” who got things done. This was something he took pride in. He learned a bit about differing leadership

approaches from two bosses. One was “hard driving” and the other was “laid back.”

Another learning experience during that period time was the negotiation with an employee for her resignation rather than firing her (something he previously did without much thought). His knowledge of what made a good or bad manager evolved over the years with experience. He grew to understand it was the person aspect that defined leadership.

After 18 years Participant E was forced to renegotiate his job. He was offered a \$20,000 pay cut to keep it. He chose redundancy. He moved to Auckland, and got a better paying local government job with responsibility for around 100 staff. He learned sometimes it took certain situations to realise your worth and what you know. He also realised he was now a leader. Participant E’s organisation went through several restructures and mergers over the years. The current project Participant E is involved in is another iteration of that process.

The current project put Participant E in a classic middle management position. His job was to implement policy, but also to lead people who were uncertain about the future. His life experiences gave him the ability to use stories to help his staff,

although he admitted storytelling did not assist him to manage upwards. His supervisors just wanted facts.

At the time of interview, Participant E's regular position had been disestablished. He was not sure where he would be employed at the end of the project. He had interviewed for a 2 I/C position with one local government organisation and a CEO position with another one. He doubted he would take either job as his "leadership ambitions had plateaued."

4.5.2 Leader themes

Many of the life stories Participant E told spoke of slowly evolving a leader identity. He admitted he never set out to lead; it was something he "fell into." Shamir et al. (2005, p. 20) stated these sorts of life stories were typical of those who understood leadership as a natural process, but saw themselves as a "late bloomer."

Participant E described himself as a "scientist." He characterised himself as a natural logistician who "implemented." He stated he only understood with the passing of time that people mattered as much as "widgets." He slowly discovered

a capacity to lead. His first job in local government came with a supervisory aspect, “I took the option to get exploring, y’know, the, kept the challenge.”

He started to realise the value of the whole person when negotiating a resignation “that was the first time I felt I did something leadership ... as opposed to managerial.” He told a story of moving to Auckland for employment, “I got offered a ... position in Auckland with responsibility of 100 odd staff, and suddenly I realised well – maybe I am a leader.”

Of his current self-awareness, he said, “I think I’ve developed over time ... I’ve evolved to where I consider that the staff are actually as important as the outcome ... I would just like to be a better leader ... I think there is a lot more in the soft skill area that I could learn.”

Bennis and Thomas (2002) stated crucibles of leadership taught people the ability to engage shared meaning, a distinct voice, hardiness, and the ability to grasp context. Participant E told a story of redundancy due to age and length of service. It implied a crucible experience. He described the effect redundancy had, what he learned about himself and how it formed part of his development:

A new chief executive came in ... his understanding ... was that anyone who'd been in a job more than seven years was stale and should be replaced. I was quite happy – I had a great job, um, owned a house; life was sweet. I was made redundant ... yeah, that was a real watershed. I came up to Auckland and quite frankly was offered a job at twice what I was paid. I hadn't realised what experience one had gained, and a lot of that was managerial-leadership ... and right now, we are going through a reshape. That's the advice I can ultimately pass on to others is that, y'know ... you don't know what options and opportunities are available until you are forced to look at them.

Another implied development theme was the value participant E placed on cumulative experience as a source of leader development. This was something he referenced more than 10 times:

I never used to ... put store by leadership courses ... when you actually do it you ... recognise what [it] is. So, a lot of those examples you come across and learn ... So – um, these are the things you learn as you go along what seems to be a really good idea; you have to make those mistakes to keep learning.

Sims (2003) described how middle managers could use their experiences to build narratives to explain what they were doing. Participant E linked his cumulative experiences to storytelling:

I've been around so long ... I can usually find some anecdote some story, and if that is something that I have I can recommend to anyone who wants to be a leader or manager – is to learn the art and value of storytelling because it helps things along so much.

Sims (2003) cautioned middle manager narratives could have limited leadership impact if senior managers were indifferent to them. Participant E confirmed this when directly asked about it:

No, to be honest. Um (pause) all you can do up is – actually, it's almost as if you have got to be the follower. You've just got to lay out the facts ... that's what the next level up really wants. They don't actually want to know the detail.

Both Huy (2001) and Jackson and Parry (2011) felt much of the mediocre unimaginative middle manager stereotype came about when middle managers retreated from leadership identity in the face of performance pressure from senior organisational levels. It was not clear if Participant E was admitting this, but he did make his comments with an air of certainty and resignation.

4.5.3 Follower themes

Participant E explicitly identified he had a naturally stronger follower identity than leader identity. He felt the difference was concern for work versus concern for people. The theme to emerge was a lifelong struggle to overcome his natural tendencies. He said:

I didn't see myself as a leader. I started off as thinking widgets were important and that ... everything was sacrificed for the greater good. I actually thought I'd be the perfect adjunct because I actually saw that as, as my role in life ... just give me a job. For 18 years that was my life story. I let others do the leading. They made the policy and I implemented it ... but there is only so much following that can be done – and if you actually really want to change something you have to become the leader ... as opposed to the manager.

Participant E told a story about role models who taught him to understand how to distinguish between identities:

There were two sides of the coin. There was a hard driving type ... that was my boss two up and my boss one up was more um, ah, laid back. If I had to describe myself I'm probably more the hard driver type, but I learned ... it was the soft sell that in the long term achieves more ... those two were quite

dramatic in allowing me to sort out ... what approaches to take at different times.

Participant E said he now thought the difference was:

As a follower, you did what you were told, you organise things, you organise the troops and things happen. Um, leadership I think makes you a better person because you can see the bigger picture ... you can see more of the impact of what your decisions are.

Carsten et al. (2010) argued following orders and supporting decisions were hallmarks of a passive perspective of follower behaviour. Participant E equated following with concern for work, doing what you were told, goal achievement, implementation, job completion, and the greater good. Participant E held a leader-centric view of following (Appendix O). He minimised the potential value of further follower development in favour of a desire to improve as a leader.

4.5.4 Paradox

Participant E spoke about the restructure he was involved in. He did not call it a paradox. He described the need to implement change on behalf of superiors, provide context to staff, and the knowledge he might not have a job at the end of the process:

Right now, I am in a position where you have to be leader and follower at the same time. It doesn't matter what I think about it – that's the policy that's been set ... I'm a follower in that, and do all the best things I can; but also, I have to lead a group of people. So, I go into meetings with staff and they are really concerned about what is going to happen ... I say at least you've got a job – I've been disestablished. Unfortunately, it's the fate of the middle manager you know – with no friends, you know, anywhere. We're responsible if anything goes wrong and we never get the credit for what goes right. So, ah, yeah – I'm not sure if that makes any sense.

Participant E felt tension from his leadership responsibilities to the staff and his followership obligations to his superiors and the organisation. He was resigned to social isolation because of the situation. This is not a unique middle management paradox. Middle managers are organisational leaders with most leadership expectations on them, but they are also organisational followers who must implement strategy whilst being viewed as relatively unimportant by senior managers (Harding et al., 2014; Rainey & Watson, 1996; Sims, 2003).

Sims (2003) stated many of the stories told by middle managers are contested, denied or ignored by others. Participant E identified the power of narrative and storytelling as a leader, but not as a follower. There is potential for Participant E to revisit the meanings of his life stories to improve his storytelling. He has potential to refine his self-awareness and leader-follower self-concepts by reconsidering how he integrates these identities – something he admitted he had never turned his mind to, “I find the subject of your thesis to be incredibly interesting and it’s caused me to think a little bit about, um, followers and leaders.”

4.5.5 Summary

This case study highlighted the potential for life stories to help middle managers revisit their understanding of follower development as much as they might assist in leader development. This case study also highlighted how story telling middle managers are vulnerable to social isolation if they cannot construct a coherent narrative for all organisational audiences.

Shamir et al. (2005) mentioned life stories were overlooked in terms of leader development. This case study highlighted middle managers have little to no knowledge, skills or previous experience in reflecting on life stories as a leadership development process. A guided life reflection process similar to that

suggested by Shamir and Eilam (2005) could be used to help motivated middle managers to build knowledge, skills and experience in the use of life stories for leadership development (Table 2–3) provided the process also looked at follower development. A potential benefit would be improved coherence in narratives based on more balanced and integrated leader-follower self-awareness and self-concepts.

4.6 Cross case analysis and discussion

4.6.1 Leader themes

Table 4–1 summarises the life stories themes for leader development identified in the case studies.

Table 4–1: A Summary of Featured Life Stories: Leader Development Themes

Theme	Author	Frequency
Crucible of leadership	Bennis and Thomas (2002)	3
Learning from experience	Shamir et al. (2005)	3
Natural process	Shamir et al. (2005)	2
Late bloomer	Shamir et al. (2005)	2
Accumulated life experiences	Gardner et al. (2005)	2
Relationship with parents	Janson (2008)	2
Identifying with a cause	Janson (2008)	1
Self-improvement and learning	Shamir et al. (2005)	1
Finding a cause	Shamir et al. (2005)	1

Table 4–1 reveals participants broadly expressed leader development themes, and those themes generally matched existing life stories literature. The themes surfaced during the telling of life stories, although it is important to note they were implied rather than explicitly stated. Table 4–1 is ultimately a matter of research interpretation. The process of identifying themes from life stories was a matter of subjectivity based on the thematic analysis (Appendix H).

Some participants had a natural ability to express themselves through story telling. In those cases, leader development themes were clear. The stories made a coherent narrative with Participants A and D being two cases in point. In contrast,

other participants struggled somewhat. The narratives were less coherent. Participant C was a case in point. She admitted “I still don’t consider myself a leader, even though I know I am.” Those who struggled still expressed an instinctive understanding of the importance of life stories in their leader development. Accumulated life experiences (Gardner et al., 2005) helped those participants make certain points.

An important finding was participants had little to no knowledge, skills or previous experience in reflecting on life stories as a leader development process. Of her interview, Participant A stated “interesting questions.” Participant C stated “I was looking at this timeline and thinking about the words.” She had only just begun to understand she was a leader, even though she did not consider herself as one. Of his interview, Participant E stated “it’s caused me to think a little bit about, um, followers and leaders.”

All participants expressed a desire to continue leader development at some point during their interviews. Participant A admitted she was thinking hard about where she really wanted to go as a leader, whilst Participant B wanted to bring empathy and understanding to her leadership. Participant C saw welfare and fairness as her key principle whilst Participant D wanted to be genuine. Participant E wanted to improve his soft skills. Although participants’ life stories as a current contribution

to their leader development appeared to be implicit and not fully recognised, there was potential to develop them given participants appeared willing to do so.

Shamir and Eilam (2005) suggested a guided life reflection process could help leaders develop life stories for an improved self-concept and person-role merger, particularly if they were at a stage where they were motivated to participate. This analysis found middle managers who are motivated to explore the contribution of life stories to their leader development could build the skills knowledge and experience to do so from engaging in that process. Life stories as a sensitising concept (Table 2–6) and the guided life reflection process in Table 2–3 would be the suitable starting point.

4.6.2 Follower themes

Table 4–2 summarises the life stories themes for follower development identified in the case studies.

Table 4–2: A Summary of Featured Life Stories: Follower Development Themes

Theme	Author	Frequency
Struggle and coping	Shamir et al. (2005)	3
Accumulated life experiences	Gardner et al. (2005)	3
Natural process	Shamir et al. (2005)	2
Learning (others and role models)	Shamir et al. (2005)	1

Table 4–2 reveals participants’ life stories demonstrated much less expression of their follower development, yet all participants were followers in the sense they had more than one line manager above them. The themes identified had a basic match with existing life stories literature. Follower themes were almost exclusively implied, apart from Participant E who was candid in his admission he was a natural follower. Table 4–2 is ultimately a matter of research interpretation. The process of identifying themes from life stories was a matter of subjectivity based on the thematic analysis (Appendix H). Although life stories had not previously been applied to follower development, the results were consistent with the general lack of understanding about followers and followership in the leadership equation (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Some participants had an aversion to the word follower. This is consistent with the views of Jackson and Parry (2011) and Crossman and Crossman (2011) who pointed out the pejorative association many had with follower as a descriptor.

Jackson and Parry and Crossman and Crossman wondered if other descriptors might assist people to think about followership more positively, although this was not something pursued in the interviews. Some participants refused to identify as followers. They framed follower behaviour in passive or leader-centric terms (Appendix O), resulting in less coherent follower narratives from life stories.

The irony was these participants used accumulated life experiences to tell stories about themselves as followers with active behaviour. These stories hinted at relational and constructionist views of followership (Appendix O). That said, life stories have a subjective ontology and interpretivist epistemology. It is the self-knowledge the individual draws from their stories that gives meaning to their development (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). It is important to note this research did not pursue the identification of unique follower life story themes during interpretation.

The case study of one Participant did highlight the potential of life stories to contribute to follower development. Participant A demonstrated this in the telling of a story about her years in Japan. From one perspective, Japan formed part of her wider narrative about leader development by learning from experience. From another perspective, she learned about respectfully following when you are a minority. The natural ability to draw meaning from the experience enabled

Participant A to express a coherent narrative about her follower identity and how she might continue to develop it.

All participants expressed at least one positive thought about follower development at some point during their interviews. Participant A said following was something she had got better at whilst Participant B placed value on self-leadership. Participant C said the idea of following helped her to look at habits and traits she did not want to have whilst Participant D felt following had helped develop his ability to manage upwards. Participant E used followership as an important baseline for his leader development.

As mentioned earlier, participants had little to no knowledge, skills or previous experience in reflecting on life stories as a leader development process. This meant participants' understanding of how their life stories might contribute to follower development was virtually unrecognised. However, the analysis of participants' life stories for follower themes, although thin, indicated considerable future potential for development.

This analysis revealed leaders are also followers who tell stories with unrecognised but valuable follower attributes. The personal guided life reflection

process could be modified to help motivated middle managers explore how life stories might contribute to understanding themselves as followers. Table 4–3 illustrates how this might look.

Table 4–3: A Modified Guided Life Reflection Process (Followers)

Activity	Comment	Follower Development
Draw a lifeline and identify major events and turning points	Chosen by the participant, rather than discovered objectively.	Self-concept
Attend to feelings and memories	Reflection	Self-concept
Re-evaluate	Self-construction, not an objective testimonial of facts	Self-concept
Draw lessons	Highlight certain aspects and/or ignoring/hiding others	Self-concept
Work the experience into the life story	Establish relationships with fragments, mundane, less comprehensive stories. Involves highlighting certain aspects and/or ignoring/hiding others	Person-role merger
Revise and redirect follower identity	Improve coherence but acknowledge that the life story will never be closed. Who I am and why I am here.	Person-role merger

Adapted from Shamir and Eilam (2005)

Exploring life stories concurrently for both leader and follower themes would be a way to help middle managers to develop the knowledge skills and experience to integrate leader-follower self-awareness, self-concepts for a more overall coherent narrative. Life stories should be treated as a sensitising concept (Table 2–6).

4.6.3 Paradox

Table 4–4 summarises the paradoxes identified in the case studies.

Table 4–4: A Summary of Featured Leader-Follower Paradoxes

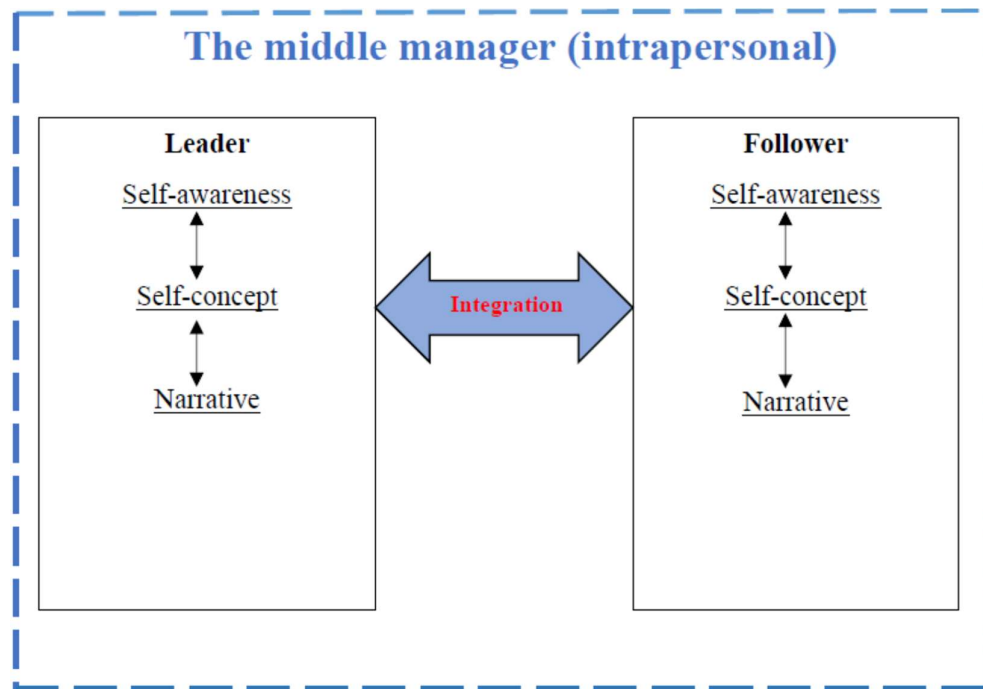
Participant	Paradox	Used the word paradox	Descriptors used	Acknowledged self as a middle manager
A (Restructure)	✓	✗	Undermined Struggle Challenge Demoralising Frustrating	✓
B (Restructure)	✓	✗	Frustrated Deflated Flat Difficult	✗
C (None)	✗	✗	(None)	✗
D (Relationships)	✓	✗	Out of my depth Pressure Internalise Hardest year Headspace	✗
E (Restructure)	✓	✗	No friends	✗

Four participants discussed situations where they felt intrapersonal tension to both lead and follow although only three participants called themselves a “middle manager.” The paradoxes were not unique, although participants did not use that term to describe their situation. The four participants described their intrapersonal tensions. Their descriptions hinted at a struggle with some frustration, vulnerability and social isolation.

On negotiating their respective situations, Participant A said it was something she was learning from. Participant B felt it would make her stronger if it did not kill her. Participant D understood there was only so much that he could do as a middle manager; he had to be guided by his internal compass (which was why he resigned). Participant E was resigned to the fact his paradox did not make any sense.

The paradoxes demonstrated participants were all leaders and all followers (Cronin & Genovese, 2012, p. 20). The ability of participants to identify and discuss their situations matched their respective intrapersonal integration of leader-follower self-awareness, self-concepts and narratives. Figure 4-1 illustrates how these concepts can relate to each other at the intrapersonal level.

Figure 4–1 A Suggested Illustration of Integrated Intrapersonal Leader-Follower Self-Concepts



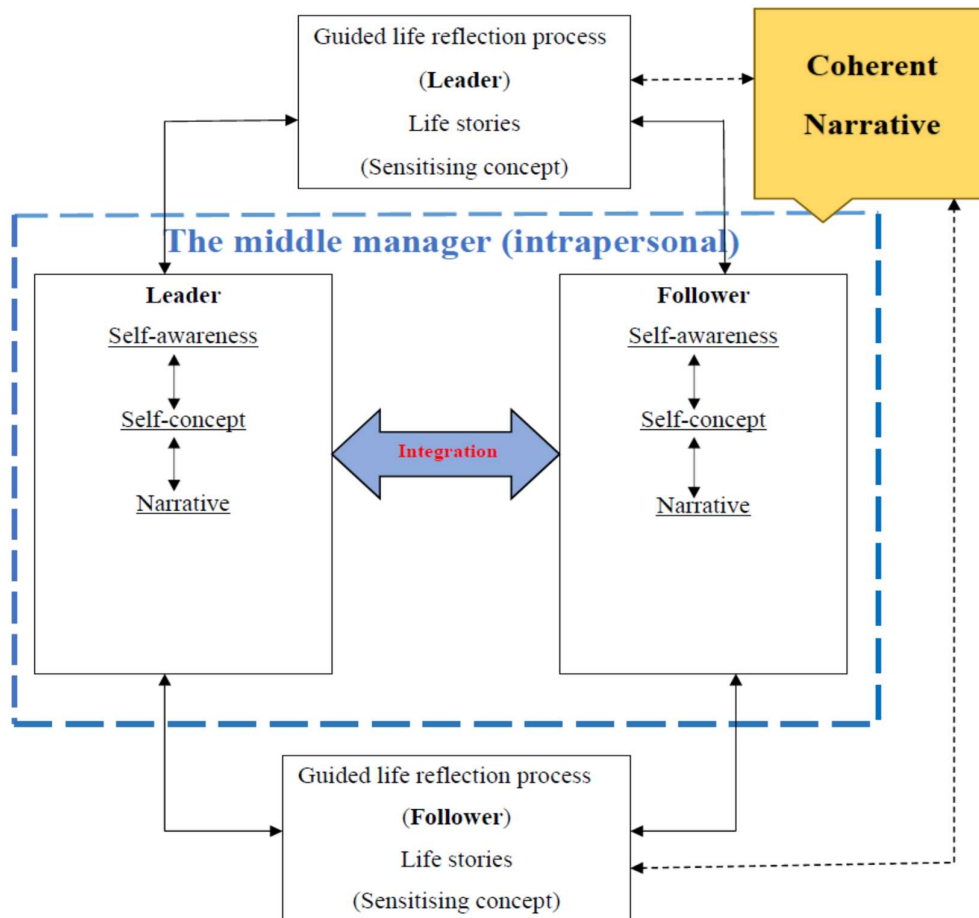
Adapted from Cronin and Genovese (2012) and Gardner et al. (2005) and Shamir et al. (2005) and Shamir and Eilam (2005)

Participant A aside, participants had varied but lacking integration between under-developed life stories based intrapersonal leader-follower identities. The existing relationships between these concepts defined their overall ability to negotiate intrapersonal tension.

There is potential to develop the integration of intrapersonal leader-follower self-awareness, self-concepts and narratives. Doing so would improve the contribution of life stories to middle managers' negotiation of intrapersonal tension arising from the leader-follower paradox. The narrative frame is important for the process

(Sims, 2003). Life stories as a sensitising concept and the guided life reflection processes must be included (Table 2–3; Table 2–6; Table 4–3). Figure 4–2 brings these concepts and processes together to illustrate how they combine for a suggested narrative based approach to further leader-follower life stories development.

Figure 4–1 A Suggested Narrative Based Approach to Further Leader-Follower Life Stories Development



Adapted from: Bennis and Thomas (2002) Cronin and Genovese (2012) Gardner et al. (2005) Janson (2008) Sims (2003) Shamir et al. (2005) Shamir and Eilam (2005)

The directional arrows in Figure 4–2 indicate free movement backwards and forwards through processes rather than assuming the primacy of one element over another.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The first section in this chapter analysed and discussed case study one. Middle managers with a natural self-awareness of leader and follower identities would still benefit from building explicit life stories skills. Doing so will help middle managers improve the sort of integrated thinking needed to know when and how to emphasise either role in any given situation.

The second section analysed and discussed case study two. Middle managers could improve overall self-awareness by participating in a guided life reflection process, particularly as it relates to revisiting personally held ideas about following. Care would need to be taken with descriptors. The result would be improved leader and follower self-concepts.

The third section analysed and discussed case study three. Middle managers could improve leader and follower self-concepts through a guided life reflection process to explore life stories. Care would need to be taken with descriptors. The result

would be improved total self-awareness and self-concepts for a more coherent leader-follower narrative.

The fourth section analysed and discussed case study four. Middle managers with strong implied leader development themes will still benefit from using a guided life reflection process to exploring the same life stories for a refined follower self-concept. The result would yield improved ability to negotiate the leader-follower paradox by balancing and integrating leader-follower self-awareness and self-concepts.

The fifth section analysed and discussed case study five. Middle managers with strong follower self-concepts could benefit by using life stories to refine them whilst also working on leader development. This case study also highlighted middle managers may have never spent time thinking about the potential contribution of life stories in their overall development. Guided life reflection processes would help balance self-concepts and improve the person-role merger.

The sixth section in this chapter presented and discussed the cross-case analysis. Participants implicitly expressed leader development themes during the telling of life stories. Participants had little to no knowledge, skills or previous experience in reflecting on life stories as a leader development process. Motivated middle

managers would build their knowledge, skills knowledge experience of life stories by exploring them using the suggested guided life reflection process and life stories as a sensitising concept.

Participants demonstrated less expression of their follower development. This was problematic because the participants were followers as well as leaders. It was also consistent with a wider lack of understanding about followers and followership in the leadership equation. Participants had little to no skills or experience in reflecting on life stories for follower development. Motivated middle managers would concurrently build their knowledge, skills and experience of life stories for follower development by use of a modified guided life reflection process.

Paradoxes proved participants were leader-followers. Their respective abilities to identify and discuss them matched existing intrapersonal integration of leader and follower self-awareness, self-concepts, and narratives. Overall, integration was under-developed. Figure 4–2 illustrates there is potential improve this by combining concepts and processes for a narrative based approach to leader-follower life stories development.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Chapter overview

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section summarises the overall research aims and objectives. The second section evaluates to what extent they were achieved. The third section discusses implications. The fourth section discusses limitations. The fifth section makes suggestions for future life stories research. The sixth section summarises the chapter.

5.1 Summary of aim and objectives

The overall aim of this research was to make a further contribution to understanding the potential for life stories in leader development.

The main question addressed was, what might be the potential for life stories in middle managers' leader development?

There were three sub-questions explored:

4. How do life stories contribute to middle managers' development as leaders?
5. How might life stories also contribute to middle managers' understanding of themselves as followers?
6. How might middle managers use life stories in the negotiation of any arising intrapersonal tension caused by the simultaneous roles?

5.2 Evaluation

Middle managers as a leader subset had not previously been investigated in life stories research. This research established life stories make an implied but not fully explicit contribution to their leader development (Table 2–6; Table 4–1). The middle managers interviewed for this study had little to no knowledge, skills or previous experience in life stories as a development process. They ranged in natural ability to draw and explain leader self-concepts from life stories, although they all demonstrated an instinctive self-awareness of the importance of accumulated life experiences in the telling of their stories. These findings were consistent with the fact life stories research is generally scarce and overlooked in leader development (Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Leaders must also follow. Middle managers are the embodiment of this. Previous life stories research had not investigated the potential relationship with follower development. This research established existing life stories concepts make a much less recognised contribution to middle managers' understanding of themselves as followers (Table 2–6; Table 4–2). One research participant aside, the middle managers interviewed barely linked their life stories with follower development. Stories based on accumulated life experiences contained potentially valuable and useable follower attributes although they were not investigated further for potentially new life stories themes. Overall, these findings were consistent with the wider overall lack of understanding about the potential of followers and followership in the leadership equation and pejorative views of follower and

followership descriptors (Jackson & Parry, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). There is potential to revisit accumulated life experiences to establish whether they yield unique follower based life stories themes.

Leading and following is a paradox. Existing life stories research had not previously examined how life stories might contribute to the negotiation of intrapersonal tension arising from it. Participant A aside, middle managers had varied but lacking integration between life stories and intrapersonal leader-follower identities. Each middle manager interviewed in this study could identify and discuss a leader-follower paradox according to their existing intrapersonal integration of leader-follower self-awareness, self-concepts and narratives (Figure 4-1). These findings reflected the ambiguity in existing authentic leader and follower development frameworks (Gardner et al., 2005).

5.3 Implications

The evaluation raises three significant implications regarding the potential for life stories in middle managers' leader development. The first implication is the potential to improve the contribution of life stories to their leader development by exploration of the guided life reflection process suggested by Shamir and Eilam (2005). The middle manager must be motivated to participate. Exploring this process will build overall knowledge, skills and experience in reflecting on life

stories for self-development. The outcome will be an improved self-concept and person-role merger with their leader identity (Table 2–2).

The second implication is the potential for middle managers to improve the contribution of life stories to understanding themselves as followers by exploration of the modified guided life reflection process. The middle manager must be motivated to participate. Exploring this process will build overall knowledge, skills and experience in reflecting on life stories for self-development. Any insights gained will be new and valuable because existing life stories theory overlooks the follower component of personal development. Attention must be paid to any unique follower life stories themes that arise. This will signal a potentially new research direction. The outcome will be a more balanced self-concept and person-role merger with their follower identity (Table 4–2). Both processes should occur concurrently. Once again, life stories should be used as a sensitising concept (Table 2–6).

The third implication for middle managers is the potential to improve use of life stories in the negotiation of any arising intrapersonal tension caused by the simultaneous roles. Figure 4–2 illustrates how motivated middle managers should go about exploring the integration of life stories, guided life reflection processes, intrapersonal leader and follower self-awareness, self-concepts and for an overall more coherent narrative. This will improve ability to tell acceptable stories to all

organisational members – starting with the self as the most crucial audience of all (Sims, 2003). The benefits will be greater use of life stories to help negotiate the frustration, vulnerability and social isolation that can be brought on by intrapersonal leader-follower tension.

5.4 Limitations

The findings in this research were subject to several limitations. This was a very small scale research project conducted by one post graduate student over a six-month period. Participants were informally recruited from Auckland New Zealand based organisations. More formal recruitment methods from a wider geographical base might have provided more diverse or different insights.

Life stories continually evolve with telling and retelling (Linde, 1993; Shamir et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The case study research design meant only a snapshot of the stories was obtained. These same life stories might hold completely different meanings for the participants in 12 months' time. Different research methods or sources of data might also have yielded different findings, particularly if triangulation had been incorporated.

The research findings were limited by tenuous links between leadership theory, followership theory, paradox, authentic leadership research, and life stories research. These constructs are fuzzy and ill-defined (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010) built on existing and contradictory ideas (Van Seters & Field, 1990) overlooked and misunderstood (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) subject to their own paradoxes (Cronin & Genovese, 2012) and under-researched (Shamir et al., 2005).

Finally, the abductive logic approach afforded flexibility in enquiry but data collection, interpretation and findings were the best explanation of only one researcher. Use of multiple researchers and more formal data coding may have altered interpretation.

5.5 Future research

This research contributed further understanding about the potential for life stories in leader development by exploring their applicability to the middle manager leader subset for the first time. This researched established life stories have potential to positively contribute to middle managers' leader development but middle managers currently possess little to no knowledge skills or previous experience in developing them.

This sets the scene for further research into the potential of life stories to the middle manager subset. This research suggests the next step is to explore the processes involved in developing life stories based personal narratives.

Researchers and motivated middle managers should explore use of life stories as a sensitising concept alongside guided life reflection processes to learn more about the knowledge, skills, and experience required to develop and integrate life stories based intrapersonal leader-follower self-awareness, self-concepts and narratives (Table 2–2; Table 2–6; Table 4–2; Figure 4–1). This research is likely to unearth unique follower life stories themes. If so, this will signal a new research direction.

Researchers and motivated middle managers should also explore the potential of life stories and guided life processes to integrate with intrapersonal leader-follower self-awareness, self-concepts and narratives to create overall story telling coherence. The illustration in Figure 4–2 provides the starting road map. This enquiry will provide further insight into how a narrative based approach to life stories can develop to the sort of integrated knowledge required to emphasize either the leader or follower within when navigating the leader-follower paradox. Shamir and Eilam (2005, p. 412) were right. There is much more to learn from the life stories of ‘other’ leaders. On behalf of all leaders who must follow, the hope is this study is not the final word on the matter.

5.6 Chapter summary

The first section in this chapter recapped the purpose of this research: to contribute to further understanding about the potential for life stories in leader development. The second section in this chapter evaluated research findings. The third section in this chapter outlined research implications. The fourth section in this chapter outlined the limitations that affected research findings. The fifth section in this chapter made recommendations for future research. It was suggested an exploration of the processes involved in a narrative based approach to leader-follower life stories development is the next step.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics notification – low risk



Date: 26 April 2017

Dear Mathew Knowsley

Re: Ethics Notification - 4000017655 - Researching the use of stories in middle management leadership: How analogous are they with the literature on use of stories in senior leadership?

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please go to <http://rims.massey.ac.nz> and register the changes in order that they be assessed as safe to proceed.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise

Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 F 06 355 7973
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz W <http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz>

Appendix B: Participant information sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

The role of 'life stories' in middle manager development

You are invited to take part in an interview investigating what role 'life stories' play in how a middle manager develops themselves as a leader. My name is Mathew Knowsley, and I am conducting research for the post graduate degree of Master of Advanced Leadership Practice.

This research aims to provide more understanding about the role of 'life stories' in leader development. 'Life stories' are your account of the relationships between events and experiences from your life, over time.

I would like to interview you in a comfortable setting of your choosing. Interviews are expected to take 45–70 minutes.

With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview. I want to explore with you your experiences of being a middle manager, and how your 'life stories' might have helped you negotiate the challenges of this role.

It is possible you may recall life events and experiences that cause personal distress and/or discomfort. At no point are you obliged to discuss (or continue discussing) any event or experience from your life that you do not want to.

To meet the selection criteria, you must reside within the Auckland New Zealand region, be a current or recent middle manager with at least two layers of staff below you, and at least one layer of supervision above. You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any question
- ask for the recorder to be switched off at any time during the interview
- withdraw from the study up to five days after the interview
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

You can contact either of the following people should you have any questions about this project:

Supervisor

Dr Jeff Kennedy
Senior lecturer
w: (09) 414 0800 ext 43378
e: J.C.Kennedy@massey.ac.nz
Room QA3.02
Massey University School of Business
Albany Campus

Researcher

Mathew Knowsley
h: (09) 526 4425
m: 027 241 4661
w: 021 191 3082
e: mknowsley@hotmail.com
14 Peek Street, Ellerslie
Auckland, 1051

Research ethics approval

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk (ethics notification number: 4000017655). Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C: Participant consent form



The role of 'life stories' in middle manager leader development

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name printed

.....

Appendix D: Transcribers confidentiality agreement



The role of 'life stories' in middle manager leader development

TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I (Full name - printed) agree to transcribe the recordings provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make any copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project.

Signature: **Date:**

Appendix E: Transcription release authority



The role of 'life stories' in middle manager leader development

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full name printed _____

Appendix F: Interview aide memoir

INTERVIEW AIDE MEMOIR

This is a general list of open questions (tell, explain, describe, sketch) that will be used to prompt topics of conversation. They are a guide only. Topics will be explored with more detailed questions (what, when, why, how, who, where?) and some closed questions (yes, no, either/or).

Introduction

- Time, date, place, topic
- Details of self and participant

Leader

- Tell me the story of yourself as a leader
- Tell me about your earliest memory or experience as a leader
- Describe other experiences/people/events from your life that developed you as a leader
- Explain how they fit together as a story of your life
- Describe the life theme(s) that you have identified

Follower

- Tell me the story of yourself as a follower
- Tell me about your earliest memory or experience as a follower
- Describe other experiences/people/events from your life that developed you as a leader
- Explain how you work them together as a story of your life
- Describe the life theme(s) you have identified

Leader and follower

- Explain the differences and similarities between the life themes you identified as a leader, and the themes you identified as a follower
- Tell me your story as a middle manager
- Tell me about an experience/person/event where you had to be both a leader and a follower
- Describe how your life story themes contributed to you negotiating those roles
- Describe how this is developing you as a leader

Appendix G: Reflective time line exercises

These reflective time line exercises are designed to help prepare you for our interview. They allow you to reflect on your total life; the various moments, experiences, memories, epiphanies, relationships – anything you understand to have contributed to your developing sense of self:

- As a leader and;
- As a follower

You will not be required to share this exercise. Results and conclusions will remain private to you.

1. Time line as a leader:

Draw a line across a page (like so)

Mark the far left of the line with your earliest leader memory. The far right of the line is the present. Work along this line in any order you choose. Mark and note moments, experiences, memories, epiphanies, relationships and things. You can do this in any manner you choose. Consider each one and try to recall the feeling that accompanied it. Re-evaluate it, and then move to the next one. After this activity, reflect on what you have noted. Consider any lessons and themes you may have identified about your developing sense of self as a leader.

2. Time line as a follower:

Draw another line across a page (like so)

Mark the far left of the line with your earliest follower memory. The far right of the line is the present. Repeat the instructions above. Reflect on what you have noted and consider any lessons and themes you may have identified about your developing sense of self as a follower.

Finally, compare the time lines with each other (make any further notes you feel you need to). Reflect on the lessons and themes of both these exercises. Consider the similarities and differences. Re-evaluate them and consider any additional lessons or themes that you may have identified about your sense of self as both a leader *and* follower.

Appendix H: Participant transcript thematic analysis guide

Leader signposts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identified • Formal hierarchy • Higher level of multi-directional influence in group • Individually responsible for leadership 		
Follower signposts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might use of a variety of terms such as team member, collaborator, partner • Willingness to defer to another • Consciously gives away a leader identity • Co-creator of leadership • Passive behaviour • Formal hierarchy 		
Paradox signposts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for others but also managed and led by senior staff • Influence and authority over others but may have limited ability to manage upwards • Grow people and negotiate them but often not fully listened to • Connect people through the organisation but can be themselves suppressed by senior management • Responsible for organisational growth and innovation but must also conform and implement strategic decisions 		
Authentic leadership concepts signposts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts according to deep personal values and convictions • Wins trust and respect of followers • Positive perspectives • High self-awareness and self-regulation • Strong self-concept and person-role merger 		
Term	Summary	Theme	Description
Antecedents	Self-reflection on personal history and trigger events. includes positive and negative influences, challenges, and	Personal histories/ Accumulated life experiences	Family Childhood Culture Education

	experiences. The individual uses this process to answer the question of 'who am I?'	Trigger events	<p>Occupation Work experience Role models Prior learning experiences</p> <p>Major work promotion Voluntary career change Further advanced study New cultural experiences Meeting inspiring people Loss of a loved one Health problems Crises Financial hardship</p>
Life stories	A narrative approach that is the manifestation and expression of events as perceived and interpreted by the individual that experienced them. They are constructed from elements of a story to give meaning to prior events that may not have had it at the time. They are then used to express the teller's identity.	<p>As a natural process</p> <p>Out of struggle and coping</p> <p>Through self-improvement learning</p>	<p>A born leader A late bloomer A natural process</p> <p><u>Disadvantaged:</u> Background Minority Socio-economic status</p> <p>Lone struggle Hunger/spirit/tolerance for stress</p> <p>Learning from experience Liking learning</p>

		Finding a cause	<u>Learning from:</u> Others Role models Leaders Identifying with a movement/cause Finding a sense of direction from a political/ideological outlook Personal ordeal Becoming a prototypical member in a collective story
Crucibles of leadership	A trial or test, either negative or positive, that forces the leader to question who they were and what mattered to them. The experience is transformative in that the individual comes to a new, or altered sense of identity.	Prejudice Illness and/or violence	For example, gender/race/ethnicity. The individual is confronted by a distorted self-picture. Leaders use it as a self-clarifying and transformational event. For example, illegal imprisonment. A suppressed or hidden area of the soul is illuminated. Leaders learn that happiness is a function of outlook, not circumstances.

		Positive	For example, a demanding boss/mentor. The leader responds to high standards due to high levels of respect. The leader is taught how to cope with change.
		Creative	For example, taking tension between opposing parties and resolving it. The leader takes two ostensibly unrelated ideas for a radically different approach.
Leadership formative experiences	Experiences that make a high impact on leaders, helping them to develop their self-concept, and awareness of context. They shape leadership identity when the events are organised into a coherent whole.	Natural process	Subjects must have naturally or without conscious effort taken leadership, or had leadership thrust upon them; often for reasons they were unsure of.
		Coping and struggling	Includes some element of adversity.
		Self-improvement	Includes some element of striving to challenge oneself (not adversity).
		Alignment with a cause	Evidence of being partly driven by serving a cause.

		Relationship with (real or symbolic) parents Role models	The relationship with parents was prominent in the formative experience. One or more role models was prominent in the formative experience.
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Appendix I: Participant A interview transcript synopsis

Participant A Date: 14 July 2017	
Topic	Comment
Travel NZ-Japan-UK	Education Culture Work experience
Study	Masters
Work	Progressive levels of seniority
Recent restructure	People challenges
Family	Sisters Encouraging parents
Lack of employment	Volunteer
Japan	Immigrant Culture shock Adventure
UK	Money Experience New goals Study
Work	Transport planning Easy to move Investment Opportunities
Formal leadership	Two people Struggle to make transition Telling
Next formal leadership	Six people Coach/train Jointly agree outcomes People not like me
Family	Husband and child Trigger to return Opportunity Stressful to move back

	Quieter lifestyle
Restructure	Offered opportunity Significant step up Partway through \$200M program Convinced More challenging than thought Lots of people management
Staff	Team leader didn't work out Not able to give time Team member acting up Experts/demotivated Disciplinary Lot of people management
Managing upwards	In second job Political work system Boss is mentor Skill others don't have
Values	Safety of pedestrians Resilience/don't give up Make the case Won't argue Implement something you don't want Draw on previous experience Belief and resilience Demoralising to team
Follower	Want to fit in at school Follow Japanese culture Learn to make little gains Still learning Many managers
Leader/follower	Currently Teams/budgets/targets Considered a leader Constant negotiation Two managers
Follower	London Not boss of world Don't agree with choices Convince and demonstrate Work around and don't hit walls Resilience
Current	Multiple managers

	Hierarchical Challenge
School	Please teacher
Family	Strict father
Style	Negotiate Build relationships Rational Influence

Appendix J: Participant B interview transcript synopsis

Participant B Date: 4 July 2017	
Topic	Comment
Global Financial Crisis	Fraud Worked for a funder Current job
Parents	Both worked in banking Followed them Started with a holiday job
School	Wasn't disciplined or focussed
1984–2003	18 years old Three weeks managing a branch Didn't really embrace it Personalities and lives
Parents	Resilience from mother Understanding as she got older
Family	Divorce Single mother Resilience Not parent like mother Empathy and concern
Managers	Observe Good and bad
Leader training	External course Age range Other courses
Follower	Work to beat of my own drum Don't go with flow
Restructure	8–9 months ago Current T.I.M study Boss is aloof Not honest Want to solve problem as a team Unsure of impact Frustrated

Follower	Mother Pig-headed Bite tongue
Restructure	Not know how to manage it Be up front Trying to lead and grow team Understand changes happen
Global Financial Crisis	Work for finance company Unsavoury people Another company Director bankrupt No controls Funders pull out Only one to keep a job Reputation and integrity True to self
Learning	Natural tension Empathy People are different
Restructure	Integrity/clear/honest/open Not happening Tension Deflated Don't know rationale
Family	Single mother Won't kill you/make you stronger Survival
Work	Offered leadership roles Don't suffer fools Didn't want dramas Had something to offer
Role models	Observe others Clients
Leadership course	Observe others
Restructure	Not sure how to deliver Defensive of staff Challenge/upfront/honest Must do it
Follower	Not sure about this Follow directions

Global Financial Crisis	Leave if don't agree Reputational risk
Restructure	Not sure about follower aspect Convey requirements How it works What been told Deliver message Frustrated First time situation
Uncertainty	Parenting children Single mum Parents Reaffirmed by staff
Leadership	Doesn't kill you/make you stronger
Current staff	Observe Find out how to contribute Staff assist each other
Follower	Sheep Follow instruction Not delivered bad news yet

Appendix K: Participant C interview transcript synopsis

Participant C Date: 6 July 2017	
Topic	Comment
Banking	After school Union rep Promoted quick 8.5 years
Prejudice	Missed out on manager roles 24 – Female HR not honest Left
Association	Advocacy for females Six years Making traction Didn't want to be female voice More effort = more passion
Mother	Strong Had young Housewife Takeaways shop Get degree Admits like mum Clash
Father	I am his minder Comes to me for everything Stayed to look after Don't have his culture
Employer	Witnessed a crime Joined
Children	Had child Couldn't leave baby Back at work Resign New house Tried to come back HR clash Ran own company
Role models	Worked to get her back

	Clashes with HR
Sport	110%
Follower	Not a follower Find someone to follow Don't make your own decisions Not yourself
Workwise	Get told to do stuff you don't agree with Park thoughts Say your bit Move on Don't dwell
Family	Brought myself up Make own breakfast
School	Demands on self
Women's committee	Slagging men Wanted to put back in after seven years
Fighting	HR to recognise previous service Supervisor
Family	Angry at school Brother's keeper Feels responsible for father
Leaders	Peoples' people Not whether they like you
Current role	Promoted Welfare of staff Caring for staff I make decisions Fair/transparent Can't make everybody happy
Hard decisions	Panels Have say Time consuming
Role model	Negative Association chair Decided to be professional

Professionalism	Personal behaviour
Current role	Growth Strong senses High expectations Protect staff Rotation
Follower	I don't think I am a follower

Appendix L: Participant D interview transcript synopsis

Participant D Date: 11 July 2017	
Topic	Comment
Youth	Leading in peer group Fun things Rugby team Look to me for direction Not a natural thing
University	Follower Getting to know yourself
First job	Manage projects Cross functional teams Deep end Opportunity Pressure Get to know people Had to have answers
Overseas	Finance No leader role
Corporate	Cross functional teams Make own calls No direct reports Learned more in first job
Start up	Not a cog Own ideas Hard to influence Frustrations This job not corporate No direct reports Real impact No-one to turn to Senior people to him for guidance Big development Exposure to boards No-one has all the answers Back ideas Two direct reports Another learning curve Left because I didn't agree with strategy

Nelson	<p>Contracting Engineer and accountant Due diligence Every dollar counts Decisions had a real impact Fish out of water Drew on previous experience Develop and learn</p>
Health product firm	<p>Start with three people in sales Took on export – five people Then GM sales and marketing – 23 people Owner had whacky ideas All businesses have quirks</p>
Business owner	<p>Work with CEO to second guess Show confidence and guidance to the team Frustrating Only so much you can do No marketing strategy People disengaged Owner doesn't know what he wants to do CEO left him to sort it out Felt out of depth No clear structure CEO not helping People want guidance Internalised it Demotivated Only so much you can do</p>
Paradox	<p>Got more honest with team Create empathy Better team environment More supportive</p>
Contracting	<p>Put own money in This is a difference Decisions are about the bottom line</p>
Health product firm	<p>Owner moved down Tried to hire two people but vetoed Things were not changing Had to leave Hardest year of my career</p>

Role models	Genuine people Empathy I want to have that Fine line Time to be forceful and assertive
Health product firm	9 out of 10 times problems don't go away Do not have to get everything right Decide and go with it
Follower	Nice to sometimes not have the responsibility Not a great follower Stubborn Reflects how I handled myself Clash if I don't agree
Start up	Lead-follow Didn't agree with what was going on Got frustrated Lost motivation Normally good at managing up As long as get point across Proactive style Can implement things don't agree with Problem is when you fundamentally don't agree Not getting listened to and having no influence
Development	Reflect Rather make own mistakes and live with it than be frustrated by others Prefer the smaller environment
Teen years	Moved from Edgecumbe Fell in with peer group Mischief Easily influenced Intermediate years Lost friends Had to reflect on that
Business owner	Eccentric Idea one day/the next day No consistency in thinking Couldn't mould his thinking Sometimes brilliant

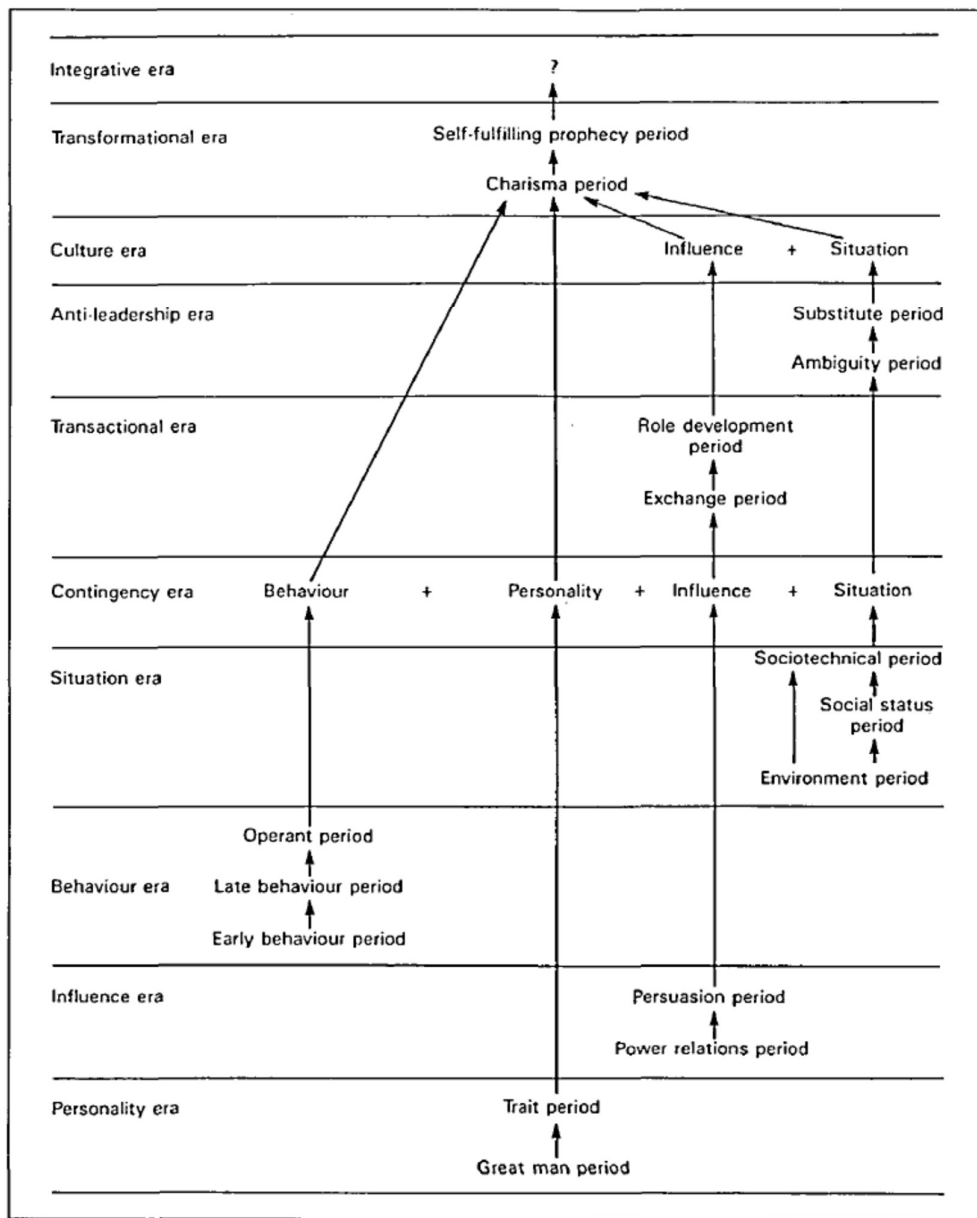
	<p>Sometimes off the wall Probably a more creative and lateral thinker</p>
Paradox	<p>Pressure from what I wanted to achieve Expectations of self Feeling not able to do it Feeling not able to give direction Could not get clarity from CEO Ultimately created internally Left because could get no clarity</p>
Follower	<p>Don't mind following as long as I agree Managing frustration is a skill you learn as you get older</p>
Leader	<p>Want to make decisions and bring people with them</p>
Follower	<p>Comfortable in taking direction Satisfaction out of contributing to a team Internal compass Confidence thing</p>

Appendix M: Participant E interview transcript synopsis

Participant E Date: 14 July 2017	
Topic	Comment
Youth	Scouts
Scientist	Didn't set out to lead Took a local govt job Still didn't see self as a leader Two staff to supervise but not a leader
Leadership	Negotiated a resignation Can be win-win People rather than widgets Felt like leadership Defined by person aspect
Training	Done leadership courses but don't put a lot of store in them Evolution
Role models	Local govt Two different bosses Observed them Helped to sort what approach works at different times
Scientist	Six years in Dunedin Moved Two staff Wanted to explore and challenge
Redundancy	After 18 years Offered pay cut to keep job Job in Auckland Don't know worth until afterwards
Experience	You learn Staff crisis Employed the wrong people
Resilience	Current project
Leadership	People are as important as the outcome Slow realisation

Follower	<p>Always saw self as a person to go out and get things done</p> <p>A natural fit</p> <p>Saw as important</p> <p>Make policy and implement it</p> <p>Only so much following you can do</p>
Current project	<p>Doesn't matter what I think</p> <p>Middle managers have no friends</p> <p>Staff concerned about jobs</p> <p>Use the art of storytelling</p>
Story teller	<p>Does not work upwards</p> <p>Bosses don't have time for details</p>
Youth	<p>Glad to have a job</p> <p>Not even following</p>
Story	<p>Leaders make calls</p> <p>Terminating staff</p>
Leader-follower	<p>Organiser versus big picture</p>
Future	<p>Interviewed for jobs</p> <p>Wife's work</p> <p>Leadership ambitions plateaued</p> <p>Want to be a better leader not a greater leader</p>
Follower	<p>Soldier</p> <p>Herds people</p> <p>Implements</p>
Leader	<p>Creates and sets direction for people</p>

Appendix N: Van Seters and Field's evolutionary tree of leadership theory



Source: Van Seters and Field (1990)

Appendix O: Treatment of followers in leadership research

	<p>Leader-centric: (followers as recipients or moderators of leader influence in producing outcomes)</p>	<p>Followee-centric: (followers construct leaders and leadership)</p>	<p>Relational view: (followers engage with leaders in a mutual influence process)</p>	<p>Role-based followership: (leader as recipient or moderator of follower influence in producing outcomes)</p>	<p>Constructionist followership: (followers as co-creators with leaders of leadership)</p>
Scientific management	✓				
Trait approaches	✓				
Behavior approaches	✓				
Contingency approaches	✓				
Charismatic & transformational leadership approaches	✓				
Romance of leadership					
Implicit leadership theories		✓			
Social identity theory of leadership		✓			
Lord's connectionist information-processing				✓	
Weierter's charismatic relationships				✓	
Follett's power with				✓	
Hollander's relational view				✓	
Leader-member exchange theory				✓	
Klein & House's "Charisma On Fire"				✓	
Padilla, Hogan & Kaiser's "toxic triangle"				✓	
Followership typology approaches					✓
Carsten's followership role orientations					✓
Sy's implicit followership theories					✓
Followers as shapers of leaders' actions					✓
Followership behaviors					✓
DeRue & Ashford's leadership identity construction process					✓
Shamir's co-production					✓
Collinson's post-structuralist identity view					✓
Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien's relational (discursive) approach					✓

Source: Uhl-Bien et al. (2014)