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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE PERCEPTIONS

OF E-LEADERS ON VIRTUAL TEAM LEADERSHIP

by

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DeAnn Chriestenson
December 2016
Educational Leadership

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE PERCEPTIONS

OF E-LEADERS ON VIRTUAL TEAM LEADERSHIP

Abstract

Corporations are facing a more complex and challenging global business environment, and many have implemented a virtual workforce to maintain their competitive advantage through maximizing productivity, reducing product time to market, and cost reduction. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of virtual leadership, as seen through the eyes of study participants (Merriam, 2009). Participants included fifteen Fortune 500 virtual team leaders who had prior experience leading traditional co-located teams. Data collected through telephone interviews were transcribed verbatim and NVivo 11 assisted in the coding, analyses, and presentation. The data analysis emerged with four major themes: (a) establishing and maintaining rapport with subordinates in the absence of physical cues; (b) monitoring and assessing individual performance and the importance of follow-up on observed performance issues; (c) having inherent people skills to bridge the distance created by working over a virtual platform and across different time zones and geographic locations; and (d) establishing effective virtual communications systems and workflow processes (Lepsinger, 2014).

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented
by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Friedman (2005), Marquardt and Berger (2000), and Prahalad (1990) once wrote that there are forces of change at work in the world that will dominate the business world of the 21st century. The Industrial Revolution was characterized by a single disruptive force that transformed everything (Dobbs, Manyika, & Woetzel, 2015).

Today, there are four fundamental forces reshaping the world economy (Dobbs et al., 2015). The first among these forces of change is the movement of the center of world economic activity from developed economies to emerging markets (Dobbs et al., 2015). Dobbs et al. emphasized that less than 20 years ago 95 percent of Fortune 500 companies were stationed in developed economies. The authors stressed that in less than a decade from now more Fortune 500 companies will be headquartered in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East than in the United States or Europe. Second among forces disrupting the status quo is the ubiquitous nature of technology and the fast pace in which it is proliferated and innovated (Dobbs et al., 2015). The third force of change is the aging of the world's human population. Dobbs et al. stated that fertility rates are dropping and nearly 60 percent of the planet's population lives in countries with fertility rates far below the rates needed to replace successive generations. Finally, the fourth disruptive trend is the substantial increase in connectedness brought about by technology (Dobbs et al., 2015). Considering that all four forces are occurring simultaneously, it can be surmised that business leaders should re-think the way to navigate this changing global economy to adequately prepare for success.

Friedman (2015) famously stated that the world was "flat," but later modified his metaphor by stating the world is no longer flat, but rather that today's world is fast and

complexity is being removed from everything. Consider the following: Uber is the world's largest taxi company, yet Uber owns no taxis; Facebook is the most well-known media owner, yet Facebook creates no content; and Alibaba is one of the world's most valued retailers, yet Alibaba has no inventory (Friedman, 2015). Friedman contended that being average is no longer accepted, and to survive, every country must stand its ground against global competition and other impacts of globalization.

This study is informed by the realization that globalization has created a new work paradigm, and this paradigm shift has introduced a need for revised leadership styles that can prove successful in an environment that is missing many features of a conventional workplace (Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, & Heelan, 2010; Strobl, & Kohler, 2013). In contrast to Friedman's perspective, Lindgren (2012) posited that global change has caused complexity, and this complexity has significantly lowered businesses' average lifetime. Lindgren (2012) solidified this statement by offering that the average survival rate of Standard & Poor's companies in the 1920s and 1930s was sixty to seventy years. Today, that lifespan is a mere 15 years (Lindgren, 2012). The forces of globalization direct that companies must remain innovative in order to survive, a direct result of an increasingly complex business climate that demands a new approach be taken in order to maintain competitive edge (Lindgren, 2012; Strobl, & Kohler, 2013; Marquardt & Berger, 2003). For managers, the degree of complexity reflects the number of situations dealt with at one time (Lindgren, 2012), and if the level of uncertainty of each situation is low, complexity will only linearly grow with the increasing number of situations.

The phenomenon of leadership encompasses an individual's ability to influence others to help achieve organizational objectives (Naseer, Raja, Syed, & Donia, 2016). The domain of leadership has been romanticized since its inception, emphasizing the beneficial effects of

leaders on followers and organizations. The extensive use of virtual teams (VTs) and outsourced resources has become popular in many corporations around the globe. Owing to the growing demand for faster delivery of products and services and increased competition coupled with a scarcity of talent, businesses are finding it necessary to adopt a virtual team approach in order to access talent otherwise unreachable. Rather than continuing to focus on past business models and leadership strategies, corporate executives would be best served to consider the global organization of the future and implications for leading a virtual workforce (Kanter, 2013). Corporations invest in virtual teams to keep pace with globalization, yet successful leadership strategies have not developed at the same rate (Strobl, & Kohler, 2013). Leaders are facing unforeseen challenges as well as opportunities as they strive to meet their objectives (Snellman, 2013).

This study examined the perceptions of virtual leaders who currently work for a Fortune 500 organization, but who also had significant prior tenure in the traditional work environment. The goal was to gain further insight into the characteristics of effective virtual leaders through their perceptions of and lived experiences leading global virtual teams (Van Manen, 2015), with emphasis on the distinction between leadership of traditional face-to-face work environments and virtual leadership of teams working from geographically dispersed global virtual locations.

The landscape of the global economy has changed drastically over the past 50 years (Davenport & Pursak, 2013; Niblett, 2010). Once a leader in the world market with 53 percent of the Gross Domestic Profit (GDP), the last 5 decades have re-defined the playing field, and the United States of America now accounts for only 18 percent of world GDP (Davenport & Pursak, 2013). According to Davenport and Pursak (2013), advancements in transportation, technology, and communication have enabled a globalized economy that provides an endless selection of

services and products to consumers and increasingly intense worldwide competition between international businesses. They further posited that companies must move away from the practices that historically made them profitable, and discover new ways to quickly and efficiently produce quality goods and services with expedient time to market. The post-industrial global economy has set a new precedent that, in order to gain and maintain competitive advantage, global corporations must differentiate themselves through knowledge and intellectual property (Davenport & Pursak, 2013) and strive to position themselves as a pacesetter in innovation rather than merely settling to maintain the status quo.

Background of the Problem

Early in the 20th century, inventors such as Thomas Edison predicted that even though humans had tremendous potential for developing incredible technology, deciding the best way to utilize their innovations would take considerable more time (Avolio, Sosik, Kahai, & Baker, 2014). Avolio et al. (2014) likened this concept to how the rapid development of advanced information technology (AIT) in the late 1990s transformed organizations with the internet, Skype video and audio conferencing, e-mail, and virtual teams at a much faster pace than the understanding of how this AIT would impact the way people work together, as well as implications for leadership in organizations. While leadership scholars have established that the potential influence of AIT is significant, Avolio et al. (2014) noted that there was very little knowledge about the impact of leadership and AIT. In fact, virtual work is still in its neophyte stages, with corporations only fully implementing it during the most recent decade, exhibiting the most significant growth, with corporations increasing their utilization of virtual workers by 80 percent during 2005 to 2012 (Global Workplace Analytics [GWA], 2015), a figure that does not account for 2.8 million entrepreneurs who work from home.

Many organizations have failed to acknowledge the significant difference between leading in traditional organizations and leading virtually (Clemons & Kroth, 2011). In sync with Edison's suggestion that innovation oftentimes occurs at a much faster pace than the decision process of how best to implement innovations, organizations are still reliant upon techniques and leadership styles for the co-located process and they have not made significant strides in adjusting leadership techniques to meet the demands of virtual teams (Avolio et al., 2014; Soon, 2015).

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FAILURE OF TEAMS

Through recent decades there have been rapid advancements in the development of information and communication technology. The creation of the internet in 1969 led to the production of internet-based communication tools and technologies (Wong, 2009). Internet technology has become both a real and ubiquitous part of everyday life. Internet usage grew from an estimated 360.9 million individuals in 2000 to 2.4 billion in 2012 (Cummings & Worley, 2014), and the world began incorporating its use into every aspect of their lives, both personally and at work. According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), worldwide spending on mobile technologies was $901 billion in 2014 and will reach $1.2 trillion by 2019 (IDC, 2015). With the use of internet tools such as email, smart phones, voice-over internet protocol (VOIP),

and wireless access outside the home and office, the modern individual is able to communicate and work globally as a seamless integration with everyday life.

Goepfert, Chute, Xion, and MacGillivray (2015) claimed that workforce mobility initially evolved from the concept of providing deskbound workers the flexibility for conducting work away from the office. Today mobile technologies are empowering workers across industries to connect, collaborate, and create new ways to operate and do business (Goepfert et al., 2015). IDC estimates that the U.S. mobile workforce will see an upsurge from 96.2 million in 2015 to 105.4 million by 2020. Additionally IDC (IDC, 2015) forecasts that by 2020 mobile workers will comprise 72.3 percent of the total U.S. workforce. Manufacturing, construction, retail and healthcare industries employ the largest proportion of mobile workers, and as such IDC expects these four business sectors to experience the most rapid growth over the next 5 years.

Maitland and Thomson (2011) postulated that, in order to maintain competitive advantage, organizations must quickly adapt to changes in the management of work created by globalization; moving society further away from industry and production of goods in a traditional work environment, and towards a less tangible product of information, knowledge, or services conducted over a virtual platform without geographic, cultural, or temporal restrictions. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2016), the virtual workplace will become prevalent over the next decade in response to increased globalization and advancement in information and communication technology. As organizations transform business models to incorporate e-commerce it is imperative they also give similar attention to creating leadership strategies to meet the needs of virtual workers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Hertel, Geister, and Konradt (2005) defined virtual work as distributed work that is primarily carried out over the internet, away from the existing company site. Virtual teams are comprised of individuals working together to accomplish a task, reporting to the same leader, and seldom, if ever, interacting physically with each other or their supervisor (Hertel et al., 2005). Organizations are taking advantage of an emergent virtual workforce which allows corporations to capitalize on talent existing across geographic and cultural boundaries; which also allows them to cut labor costs by outsourcing jobs (Davenport, Thomas, & Cantrell, 2012; Charlier, Stewart, Greco, & Reeves, 2016). Further, use of globally dispersed teams allows corporations to utilize resources located in countries where pay scales are typically a fraction of U.S. salary requirements.

Leadership is a critical component in team performance (Cascio & Shurygailo, 2003). Many organizations fail to acknowledge the significant differences between leadership in traditional physical work environments and e-leadership of virtual or dispersed teams in terms of temporal or geographic variations. In doing so, leaders and workers are not empowered to transition efficiently from traditional teams to virtual teams. Through self-expansion theory approaches, Dansereau, Seitz, Chiu, Shaughnessy, & Yammarino (2013) posited that leaders may be able to bridge the differences between traditional and contemporary leadership approaches. Effective leadership can vary based on the context of the situation (Carpenter, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2010). While the inputs and outputs of traditional and virtual work arrangements are similar, the leadership challenges inherent with virtual teams increase with geographical disbursement. Organizations planning to include virtual workgroups in their business strategy would benefit from learning best practices of developing and supporting virtual employees and their leaders.

Statement of the Problem

The distinction between moving from an industrial economy to a services economy wanes in comparison to the impact of the global information economy (Davenport & Prusak, 2013). There is a growing need for knowledge workers because increasingly organizations are faced with a need for innovation and strategic positioning (Nelson & McCann, 2010; Priem, Li, & Carr, 2012). A higher portion of knowledge workers in a corporation's workforce means that corporations must increase telework opportunities to sustain their workforce and lower their corporate real estate footprint while driving product and process improvement (Ouye, 2011; Lister & Harnish, 2011).

Organizations in the 21st century have changed dramatically in response to globalization, technological advancements, and the internet (Avolio et al., 2014; Strobl, & Kohler, 2013). In these current hyper-competitive and fast-paced times, many innovations become obsolete before they leave research and development labs (Priem, Li, & Carr, 2012). This calls for constant improvements in organizations' working methodologies (Avolio et al., 2014). In response to the increasing sophistication in information and communication technologies (ICT), growing demand for faster delivery of products and services and increased competition coupled with scarcity of talent, businesses are exploring the virtual team platform in order to access otherwise unreachable diverse talents and expertise (Avolio et al., 2014). Businesses are changing in fundamental ways–structurally, operationally, and culturally (Avolio et al., 2014). There is increased uncertainty in the global economy and decreased trust in leaders of both corporations and the government (Nelson & McCann, 2010). Rather than continuing to focus on past business models and leadership strategies, corporate executives would be best served to consider the global organizations of the future and implications of leading a virtual workforce.

The internet has revolutionized business practices by providing an important and effective channel for communication and has allowed people to work on projects irrespective of their physical location (Stinton, 2015). According to Stinton (2015), virtual workers are employees who work any distance away from their company's headquarters at any rate of frequency, meet with business clients at the clients' locations, work while in transit on some form of transportation, interact with co-workers who work on a different floor or building or another country, and are members of a team that rarely if ever meets face-to-face. One resulting business practice that has been adopted in recent years is virtual teamwork. Cohen and Gibson (2003) defined virtual teams as groups of individuals who work in different locations (i.e., are geographically dispersed), work at interdependent tasks, share responsibilities for outcomes, and rely on technology for much of their communication. A virtual team individual worker may never meet coworkers or supervisors physically, conducting their working life remote from a centralized office (Mulki, Bardhi, Lassk, & Nanavaty-Dahl, 2009). Virtual team communication is almost solely via voice and media via internet technologies. There may be a rare physical meeting for a virtual team to complete a specialized task, but this is the rarity rather than the norm (Mulki, et al., 2009). The use of virtual teams has become widespread in organizations, and its use is expected to grow (Martins, Gilson, & Maynard, 2004; Powell, Piccoli, & Ives, 2004).

For organizations to survive in a global environment, it is imperative they be multicultural, namely that there are adequate resources allocated to improving education and opportunity for a diverse workforce, the necessary linguistic knowledge, and a certain proficiency in interpersonal skills (Martins et al., 2004; Powell et al., 2004). Despite a growing reliance on virtual teams, organizations have not been entirely successful in managing virtual workgroups (Moser & Axtell, 2013). A study of virtual teams by Deloitte showed a 66 percent

failure rate in meeting performance requirements (Wellings, 2015). Rubinstein (2007) produced similar findings, stating that two thirds of virtual projects fail. These results provide evidence of a need to determine and address the causal factors in virtual projects' failure.

Manus and Wood-Harper (2007) conducted a study of 42 virtual projects and found that technical factors accounted for approximately one third of the virtual project failure rate, while two thirds were due to management causal factors (Levasseur, 2010). Levasseur (2010) concluded that leadership that proved effective in traditional workplace settings may not meet the needs of employees working virtually. He further indicated that the inability to review work physically without other interaction, message delivery and interpretation differences, worker skill building and teaching model clarity, lack of trust and rapport between coworker, and leadership all leads to failures in virtual projects. Specifically, leadership communication in a virtual environment lacks many of the required components for successful management skills in a traditional office environment, such as non-verbal cues, face-to-face interactions, and human connection that provide context and helps establish a shared understanding of the setting (Zofi, 2012).

In a traditional workplace setting, communication takes place through several forms. In addition to verbal communication, there are nonverbal cues such as eye contact, body language, facial expressions, and hand gestures; each of which can increase the likelihood that the intended message is successfully received (Lee, 2014). Without nonverbal cues inherent in traditional workplace environments, communication between virtual team members has a greater chance for misinterpretation (Marques, 2010). Researchers suggested that, due to reliance on digital communication, virtual employees often feel isolated from others, leadership becomes less effective, trust diminishes, and roles and expectations become blurred (Marques, 2010).

Effective leadership strategies in both co-located and virtual teams are identified as frequent communication, progress meetings with team members, a collaborative environment that uses technology, and an established group rapport (Boies, Fiset, & Gill, 2015). The business impact aligns with a maximizing of performance by providing best practices for leading virtual teams. Prosocial change will occur when corporate executives gain knowledge of effective virtual leadership characteristics and strategies, which provide opportunities to improve the leadership of virtual teams in the community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of virtual team leaders regarding practices that contribute to virtual team success. Fifteen virtual team leaders from Fortune 500 companies were interviewed to gather their stories about which leadership practices contributed to their success, to determine which of these practices were used, and how they differed from co-located leadership. The study's findings will add to existing knowledge bases of effective e-leaders' proven best practices, as evidenced by performance objectives' attainment of their virtual teams. It will provide the reader with actionable information that can improve upon human resource staff's selection and hiring processes, training, and development of virtual leaders, and will serve as a tool that can improve virtual worker job satisfaction and performance.

One can argue that, due to the ubiquitous presence of the internet and affordable access to technology, working from computer-mediated virtual locations has been increasing and will continue to grow. Illegems and Verbeke (2004) suggested that the adoption of virtual leadership practices will have immediate effects on an organization, although the long-range strategic impact has been given little consideration and requires further analysis.

Research Questions

This study explored the primary research question number 1 and the secondary research questions number 2 through 5.

1. What experiences do virtual leaders describe as important in their transition from leading in a face-to-face environment?

2. What level of technological proficiency is necessary for leading a virtual team?

3. How do virtual leaders describe the difference between leading a co-located versus a virtual team?

4. What challenges and/or opportunities do geographical dispersion, temporal distance, and socio-emotional distance present in a virtual workforce environment that may not exist in traditional co-located work settings?

5. How do leaders address the challenges presented by geographical dispersion, temporal distance, and socio-emotional distance differences?

Significance of the Study

Although leadership is a well-researched topic, existing theories have not kept pace with today's global corporation team environment. This research study is significant because it addressed a gap in current knowledge regarding the lived experiences virtual leaders report as necessary in fulfilling their role leading virtual teams. The 21st century has experienced radical changes in work, the work place, and on employees tasked with performing the work. Globalization has drastically changed the workplace demographic by age, ethnicity, and marital and living arrangements (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projected that during the next 10 years, the workforce will see an increase of workers under the age of 25 and over the age of 45, with less workers aged 25 to 44, a 35 percent increase

in workers 64 to 69 years of age, with a 38 percent increase in people over age 70. BLS predicted there will be shifts in the workforce ethnic composition–less non-Hispanic whites in the workforce, 49 percent compared to 76 percent in 2005 and an increase of Hispanic workers. With the influx of Hispanic workers, the educational base of the labor force may decrease (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016).

Changing marital and living arrangements are projected to increasingly impact unemployment rates (married men and women show lower unemployment and greater workforce participation than unmarried men and women). American families without children will increase eight percent which suggests more negative labor market outcomes than married-couple families with children (DOL, 2016).

Virtual work has gained popularity with global Fortune 500 corporations throughout the past decade (Mohammed, 2009). The U.S. Department of Labor (2016) predicts substantial future growth of virtual work, as businesses adapt to the rapidly changing needs of the global marketplace in order to maintain a competitive advantage. The internet and technology have rapidly changed every aspect of the way people work, although leadership practices used in guiding virtual teams have not yet fully transitioned away from traditional face-to-face styles. Individuals working primarily through means of electronic communication present new challenges to traditional leadership practice (Nelson & McCann, 2010).

Organizations that rely on conducting business through electronic communication are best served by investing time and energy on attracting and developing leaders who can effectively navigate the digital business platform and produce game-changing results (Kane, Palmer, Phillips, & Kiron, 2016). This research will assist organizations with successful planning and implementation of virtual leadership programs. Corporation leaders who are the most

mindful of the leading causal factors impacting this population's success will benefit from this study by being better equipped to plan for and support a virtual leadership program.

Conceptual Framework

Ravitch and Riggan (2009) posited that the conceptual framework serves as a guide for the research study. The authors defined the conceptual framework as an argument supporting the significance of the study, helping to situate the research questions within the existing literature on the topic. The theoretical framework is part of the conceptual framework. Ravitch and Riggan (2009) described the conceptual framework as the entire conceptualization, philosophically and methodologically, for the study; whereas the theoretical framework deals with the formal theories that inform the entire study.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that comprise a theoretical framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2009) are usually found in the scholarly literature. Theoretical frameworks may either be borrowed from other research or shaped by the research for the purposes of the study. In both cases, theoretical frameworks represent a combination of formal theories, which serve to illuminate some aspect of your conceptual framework. There are some overlaps between the conceptual framework and theoretical framework; the distinction is that rather than being about the topic itself, theoretical frameworks are more formal theories that can be applied to the study topic rather than theories that arise from the topic (Ravitch & Riggan, 2009).

While not all-inclusive, four leadership styles have been prominent among contemporary scholarly literature: (a) transformational leadership, (b) transactional leadership, (c) charismatic leadership, and (d) laissez-faire leadership. Each leadership style evolved from stakeholders' needs. Three of these leadership styles emanated from Bass's (1985) theory of leadership, and

then later evolved to the full-range leadership theory (FRLT) developed with Avolio (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

Kayworth and Leidner (2002) suggested that effective leaders of virtual teams perform certain roles, including addressing behavioral complexity, providing mentorship, acting as an authority, and offering team members the understanding and empathy necessary to achieve high performance. These roles are exemplified in the transformational style of leadership (Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meinecke, Rowold, & Kauffeld, 2015), where effective leaders have the capability of (a) performing multiple leadership roles, or behavioral complexity; (b) acting as mentors or coaches to followers; (c) using authority wisely by trusting followers; and (d) individually considering followers by understanding them and empathizing with them (Zhang, Wang, & Pearce, 2014). Bass & Avolio, 1997). Authors (Bass & Avolio, 1997; Pearson, 2012) believed the transformational style of leadership would be effective with teams, including global virtual teams. The current study was based on the assumption that the transformational style of leadership would be effective with virtual teams, as viewed through the perceptions of effective virtual leaders who had previously been successful in a co-located environment.

The relationship between learning through experience and leadership is central to understanding how virtual leaders develop the virtual leadership competencies they determine to be important to their role. The constructs of experience and leadership provide the foundational concepts within this framework. It is through learning, "a process by which behavior changes as a result of experiences" (Maples & Webster, 1980, p. 21), that leaders are able to adapt and change to survive and thrive in a complex business environment that involves continuous

change. According to Bennis (1989), "the basis for leadership is learning, and principally learning from experience" (p. 181).

As organizations and leaders confront environments that are increasingly characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty, they engage in sense-making to establish some degree of certainty (Weick, 1995). Leaders learn how to be effective leaders by processing their experiences and adapting their behavior to facilitate achievement of their goals. Many scholars hold that "most learning occurs on the job" (Keys & Wolfe, 1988, p. 216) through both "planned and unplanned on-the-job experiences" (Wexley & Baldwin, 1986, p. 278). Learning is an essential skill for leaders, through which they experience phenomena, reflect on and analyze experience, create meaning from the experience, decide what (if anything) to do differently in the future, and ultimately implement new, changed behavior (Barnett, 1989; Lussier & Achua, 2013). Brown and Posner (2001) investigated the relationship between learning and leadership, and found that individuals who were more active and flexible self-reported that they are more frequently engaged in leadership behaviors. Simply having an experience does not guarantee that one learns from that experience (Fiedler, 1970); therefore, the ability to learn is one of the most important competencies for successful leadership (Argyris, 1991; Dechant, 1989).

The ability to learn involves "learning how to learn, which is the ability to analyze your own cognitive processes . . . and to find ways to improve them. It also involves self-awareness, which is an understanding of your own strengths and limitations" (Yukl, 2006, p. 204). Clearly, learning, and specifically the ability to learn, exerts a strong influence on leaders' ability to adapt to and thrive within the turbulent business environment in which they must operate and is a critical component of the conceptual framework for this research study.

Thus, the specific relationship that this study seeks to understand is the relationship between leadership development through experience and virtual leadership. Experience enhances and develops leadership skills and, through a reciprocal relationship, virtual leadership both seeks and produces experience. It also appears that a similar relationship exists between development through experience and virtual leadership. Development through experience is described in the literature as being essential to the development of virtual leadership competencies (Marquardt, 2000; Mendenhall, 2006; Oddou & Mendenhall, 2008). Virtual leaders face significantly greater complexity, environmental turbulence, and ambiguity and uncertainty, than do co-located leaders, leading to a strong need for adaptability and the ability to learn from experience. This suggests that the competencies required of virtual leaders are significantly different from those required of co-located leaders: competencies that prepare virtual leaders to effectively respond to the challenges they face (Marquardt, 2000). If that is true, it may follow that the developmental experiences that virtual leaders should participate in would also be significantly different than those provided to develop non-global leaders, in order to provide them with more relevant development.

Transformational leadership conceptual theory fits the purpose of the study. Many researchers identified that transformational leaders possess numerous behaviors and leadership strategies necessary to lead virtual teams effectively (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Kahai, Huang, & Jestice, 2012; Li, Tan, & Teo, 2012; Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, & Billing, 2012; Wang & Howell, 2012; Zhang et al., 2011). Transformational leadership has proven especially effective in reducing employee stress and improving performance (Dennis, Meola, & Hall, 2013; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011). Virtual team leaders with transformational leadership attributes may mitigate project failure rates with improvements in employee job satisfaction, and overall

team performance (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011; Amundsen, & Martinsen, 2014; Warrick, 2011).

For these reasons, transformational leadership may have implications for corporate policies with regards to improving success rates of virtual teams (Dennis et al., 2013; Warrick, 2011).

Definition of Terms

Co-locate: Existing in the same location.

e-leaders: Individuals who lead virtual teams.

Effective leadership: Leadership that produces results that meet or exceed an organization's goals. Ulrich (2014) believed effective leaders inspire loyalty and good will in their followers by modeling their own actions with integrity. Further, Ulrich (2014) posited that effective leaders are both decisive and passionate, exuding self-confidence in their ability to navigate uncertainty. Effective leaders are skilled communicators, trustworthy, motivated, and visionary (Ulrich, 2014). According to Banutu-Gomez (2011), effective leaders communicate through their behavior more than through their words.

Fortune 500: An annual list of the 500 largest companies in the United States as compiled by Fortune magazine. The list uses the most recent figures for revenue and includes both public and private companies with publicly available revenue data. To be a Fortune 500 company is widely considered to be a mark of prestige.

Geographic dispersion (in work teams): Employees working collaboratively in physically separate locations.

Globalization: The concept of international integration of products, ideas, and culture brought about by advancements in technology, transportation, and the internet. Globalization results in greater interdependence of economics and cultural activities (Strobl, & Kohler, 2013).

Job satisfaction: The level of contentment employees have with their work, especially that which can impact performance (Amundsen, & Martinsen, 2014).

Knowledge worker: An employee who has a high level of education, expertise, or experience in a specialized area, and whose function is to further the creation, innovation, and sharing of knowledge within an organization (Lubica, Sajgalikova, Wojcak, & Polakova, 2013).

Leadership: A "mutual influence process" rather than a unidirectional influence process. To be effective, leaders must be able to adapt to change in the environment in which they lead (Tucker, 2014). According to Hackman and Johnson (2013), leadership is a human communication that modifies the behaviors and attitudes of others in order to meet shared team goals.

Virtual distance: The perceived distance that exists between individuals or groups who communicate through the use of computer-mediated technology and the internet.

Virtual team: Geographically dispersed teams that work across different time zones and rarely if ever meet face-to-face. They collaborate primarily through electronic communication to achieve organizational goals. Virtual teams make it possible for companies to maintain competitive advantage in the globalized marketplace by facilitating network-based collaboration, which provides alternatives to work carried out in the traditional hierarchical business structure.

Virtual workplaces: Workplaces that exist over the internet, and whose business is most often conducted through electronic communication (Cascio, 2000).

<center>**Assumptions and Limitations**</center>

The assumptions associated with this study are that technology, organizational support, and employee personal traits may be predictors of the major contributing factors impacting the success of virtual leaders (Kane et al., 2016; Nichols & Cottrell, 2014; DeRue, Nahrgang,

Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). Evidence suggests that these traits are crucial to effectively lead virtual employees (Garrett & Danziger, 2007; Dennis, Meola, & Hall, 2013). The researcher has found very few studies that focus on virtual leaders with the purpose of studying factors specific to virtual work settings, in contrast to traditional work platforms, attributed to this population's success.

Creswell (2015) advises qualitative researchers to consider internal validity and credibility, consistency, and external validity and transferability of findings. From Creswell's perspective, the limitations of this study include:

1. Participants in this study represented a sampling from three business sectors. Therefore, it could be argued that research findings may not be applicable to industries other than those researched. Since results reflect opinions of this population, they may or may not reflect this phenomenon outside of this population.

2. Fifteen mid-level leadership employees participated in this study. Small sample size can limit transference of the findings to a larger population. For this reason, one might argue external validity (Morse, 2000).

3. The sample represented mid-level managers. More data would be needed to gain the overall picture of this topic in all leadership levels.

The intent of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of virtual team leaders regarding practices that contribute to virtual team success. Virtual team leaders from Fortune 500 companies were interviewed to gather their stories about what leadership practices contribute to virtual team success, to determine how these practices differ from co-located leadership. The findings from the study could provide virtual leaders with a greater understanding of what behaviors and strategies are practiced by effective virtual leaders.

Additionally, CEOs and human resource managers can utilize the findings to inform future selection of and development of virtual team leaders.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the qualitative phenomenological study by describing an overview of the problem, purpose, and structure of the study. Current literature suggests that virtual organizations are becoming more popular, and that, although traditional leadership theories remain relevant, the new virtual setting of business operation creates opportunities, challenges, and ambiguity with regard to the identification of leadership attributes that contribute to success in virtual workforces (Morganson et al., 2010). Knowledge gleaned from this study may improve virtual leaders' success rates by providing insight into the best methods of recruiting, developing, and training virtual leaders to be effective. Chapter 2 will review the literature relevant to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews published literature regarding virtual teams and various leadership styles. Organizations are dependent upon strong leadership to succeed (Hogan, 2016), and increasingly organizations are using virtual teams to carry out operations. Virtual teams offer corporations numerous benefits like cost savings in areas such as real estate and transportation, and much of the literature suggested that virtual teams are here to stay, as businesses trend increasingly towards utilization of global virtual teams (GVTs) to maintain competitive advantage in today's global marketplace (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cohen, 2012). However, the success rate of virtual teams is not impressive (Mancini, 2010; Mompo & Redoli, 2009; Panteli & Tucker, 2009), and numerous researchers credit this failure with a lack of effective leadership (Wise, 2016). Moreover, several researchers have posited that leaders of virtual teams often fail because they implement the same strategies and techniques used in conventional face-to-face teams (Berry, 2011; Eissa, Fox, Webster, & Kim, 2012; Nelson & McCann, 2010; Powell et al., 2004).

There are leadership pundits who believe that the uncertainties inherent in today's global economy require managers to demonstrate flexibility in the way they respond to economic and political unrest (Sugerman, Scullard, & Wilhelm, 2011). Sugerman et al. (2011) authored a book detailing strategies managers can implement to improve their leadership capacity. The authors wrote that, to be effective, managers must step outside their comfort zone and broaden their leadership approach to include more than one style, because in the authors' informed opinion, multidimensional leaders are best equipped to respond to rapidly changing circumstances (Sugerman et al., 2011). Based on their research, Sugerman et al. (2011) described three primary

ways that leaders develop. First, leaders develop through trial and error. Secondly, some leaders learn through experiencing an epiphany, where they realize something they previously had not been made aware. Lastly and most importantly, leaders develop through the influence of role models (Sugerman et al., 2011).

Literature Relevant to the Study

MIT researchers found that automation disrupts workplace harmony and brings about inequity (Satell, 2016). Yet the discord has moved away from blue versus white-collar employees, to routine versus non-routine work (Satell, 2016). Satell (2016) asserted that, in order to better prepare children for future careers, this tension translates into a requirement to re-think the way children are educated, shifting focus away from basic phonics and math to improved critical thinking. Satell (2016) further stated that workplace teamwork has overshadowed individual contributions, and that cognitive skills are now less sought after than employees with social skills.

As technology grew more advanced and organizations faced greater economic pressures, organizations adapted by changing work from focusing on individual work to team-based structures with the flexibility needed to quickly adapt to the organization's changing needs (Scott & Wildman, 2015). Much of the literature suggested that the global economy and the nature of marketplace competition have fundamentally changed since the 1980s (Bozionelos, 2008). Eaton, Kortum, Neiman, and Romalis (2011) likened this to what they deem as 'forces acting on the global economy during the Great Recession and ensuing recovery" (p. 26). Indeed, Eaton et al. (2015) conducted a 2011 study on twenty-one countries by focusing specifically on trade, production, investment, and relative gross domestic product (GDP). Much as they expected, the largest contributor to the collapse of world trade was the tremendous drop in cost-effective

investing in durables, resulting in a twenty-nine percent decline in world trade from 2008 to 2009 (Eaton et al., 2015). Significant organizational structure changes have taken place since the 1980s, and employers are learning that a motivated and skilled workforce is more advantageous than cost-minimization schemes (Bozionelos, 2008; Eissa et al., 2012).

There are notable findings that inform different perspectives on what influences employee job satisfaction and workplace commitment (Amundsen, & Martinsen, 2014). With the advent of technologies ranging from the cell phone to social media, the world's interconnectedness has experienced limitless potential (Pierson, Schneider, & Bugental, 2015). This global connectivity can bring together people from different belief systems and cultures (Pierson et al., 2015). Indeed, with a continual blurring of geographic and temporal boundaries, this connectivity can serve as a way of guaranteeing that an employee stays inside the corporation's sphere of influence (Pierson et al., 2015). Pierson et al. (2015) argued that, from an employer's perspective, this translates into the potential for a worker to be on call 24/7. For the employee, work-life balance can be more easily maintained because they do not need to abandon their home and family to perform their job duties (Zhu, 2013).

The Changing Needs of Employees

Sapprasert and Clausen (2012) studied how leadership relates to employee job satisfaction, while Frey, Bayou, and Totzek (2013) studied customer satisfaction and related it to employee satisfaction. Global Workplace Analytics (2015) found that sixty-seven percent of people would like to work from home. The primary reason virtual work is so appealing is because people seek balance in their lives and flexible work arrangements allow them more control (GWA, 2015).

In the same vein, Hall and Atkinson (2006) suggested, that to maintain the work-life balance, employees are increasingly seeking flexibility in their working lives. Hall and Atkinson (2006) argued that employees place a high value on flexibility and that leaders need to improve communication of flexibility options to their employees. In sync with present-day Global Workplace Analytics, Hall and Atkinson (2006) suggested that flexibility of work and an increase in employees' control over their jobs would improve the work-life balance. Studies conducted nearly a decade later (GWA, 2015) revealed that more than one third of people would choose working from home over a substantial salary increase (GWA, 2015). In fact, when 1,500 technology employees were surveyed, thirty-seven percent were willing to take a ten percent salary reduction in exchange for working from their home (GWA, 2015). Fifty-six percent of human resource hiring professionals revealed that they are finding Gen Y'ers challenging to recruit while sixty-four percent of human resource hiring professionals reported that Gen Y'ers are difficult to retain. However, Gen Y'ers considered virtual work opportunities to positively contribute to job satisfaction (GWA, 2015).

Effective Leaders

Much of the scholarly literature on leadership reaches congruency on the point that the ultimate critical factor in a work team's success is the effectiveness of the team's leader. Hogan (2016) stated that organizations guided by strong leadership increase the likelihood of outperforming their competition by 13 times. Vaculik, Proachzka, & Smutney (2014) conducted a study revealing the perceptions of subordinates on the competencies that predict a leader's effectiveness. While the study's application was very specific and thus limited in scope, it highlighted task-based, self-based, and people skills as being prominent predictors of leadership effectiveness (Hansbrough, Lord, & Schyns, 2015; Dóci &Hofmans, 2015). The researchers

(Vaculik, Proachzka, & Smutney, 2014) concluded that their study could be useful to short-term projects where team members rarely work face-to-face.

Effective leadership of virtual teams contributed to an increase in employee personal productivity and effectiveness on the job (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2014). Through a self-efficacy study of executive level managers, Anderson et al., (2014) found a strong correlation between leader self-efficacy and leadership effectiveness. Research suggested that when employees are successfully motivated by and pleased with their leader, they are more likely to be motivated to contribute to the overall success of their team (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2014).

It has been said that employees do not leave bad companies; employees leave bad bosses (Meinert, 2014). Hogan (2016) noted that organizations with strong leadership are 3 times more apt to retain employees than their competition. Helpert (2006) detailed the impact of high turnover, reviewed possible causes of turnover, and then offered insight into possible solutions. Helpert (2006) drew upon findings from the study conducted with Fortune 500 companies and emphasized the importance of career development programs as a method of increasing employees' job satisfaction and improving retention. One company in particular focused on developing leaders to achieve their full potential (Helpert, 2006). Other factors contributing to increased retention were continuous learning opportunities for employees, management making themselves available to employees, career growth for employees, recruitment of quality employees into the company, and giving employees increased responsibilities (Helpert, 2006; Scroggins, 2008).

Job Value for Growth Opportunities

Leaders of virtual teams should be skilled at adding value to their workers' jobs, given the limitations of communication and absence of face-to-face interactions (Sheridan, 2012). Recognizing and responding appropriately to employee concerns is vital. When a company loses an employee, it can incur costs of $10,000 to $30,000 (GWA, 2015).

Employees are more likely to stay with an organization that adds value to jobs so that employees have growth opportunities (Frey et al., 2013). Frey et al. (2013) conducted two different types of studies, drawing on Heider's balance theory and Herzberg's motivational theory to test their hypotheses. Herzberg posited that the factors responsible for job satisfaction are the factors involved in doing the work; whereas the factors responsible for job dissatisfaction are the factors created by the job's context (Monk-Turner, O'Leary, & Sumter, 2016). It was Herzberg's notion that employers could charge and re-charge their employee's metaphorical battery, but until the employee has their own generator, there will be no motivation, as motivation stems from an internal rather than external source (Ennis, 2016). These theories are distinct from other material found in this literature review (Amundsen, & Martinsen, 2014). Notably, Frey et al. (2013) suggested the customer plays a significant role in an employee's overall job satisfaction, and ultimately employee retention. The purpose of Frey et al.'s studies was to form a preliminary understanding of the reasons for the attitudinal transfer from customer satisfaction to translate to employee satisfaction.

Flexibility for Work-Life Balance

According to GWA (2015), seventy-eight percent of workers who call out sick are not really sick. Unscheduled absences attribute to a cost of $1,800 per employee per year, which amounts to $300 billion per year for United States corporations (GWA, 2015). To maintain

work-life balance, employees are increasingly seeking flexibility in their working lives (Moen, Kelly, & Hill, 2011). Hall and Atkinson (2006) argued that employees place a high value on flexibility and that leaders need to improve communication of flexibility options to their employees. The authors suggested that flexibility of work and an increase in employees' control over their jobs improves the work-life balance and results in reduced absence and lower turnover (Hall & Atkins, 2006; Moen, Kelly, & Hill, 2011). This ultimately increases an organization's overall effectiveness.

Challenges Faced by Virtual Teams

Many post-recession global enterprises depend on virtual teams to carry out their organizational goals (Wildman & Griffith, 2015). These types of Global Virtual Work teams (GVW) are becoming more prevalent and the problems they face are multilayered in complexity (Mukherjee et al., 2012; Zhou & Shi, 2011; Mayo, Pastor, Gomez-Mejia, & Cruz, 2009). As more and more developing nations adopt virtual communication, e-commerce is quickly growing more competitive, and global virtual teams must overcome many challenges to be effective (Zhou & Shi, 2011). Global enterprises are now geographically dispersed, multicultural, self-managed, multinational, and multi-organizational (Wildman & Griffith, 2015; Zander et al., 2012). Additionally, leaders of GVTs must have competency in communicating through technology to effectively share knowledge and information with their teams (Eissa et al., 2012).

There is no shortage of literature on the study of conflict within traditional teams in the workplace. However, considering the tremendous differences between co-located traditional teams and virtual teams, the amount of literature that focuses on conflict within virtual teams is ambiguous (Dittman. Hawkes, Deokar, & Sarnikar, 2010; Scott & Wildman, 2015). Hinds and Mortensen (2005) and Paul, Seetharaman, Samarah, and Mykytyn (2004) found one common

precursor to conflict in GVTs to be geographical dispersion. Kankanhalli, Tan, and Wei (2007) found virtual team member diversity to be a factor contributing to conflict.

In contrast, Hinds and Bailey (2003) believed the two main antecedents to conflict within virtual teams to be technological mediation and distance. They argued that geographic distance creates conflict by reducing familiarity and shared context among teammates, relational bonds, and team uniformity. Technological mediation lessens the team's feeling of social presence, increases feelings of isolation, reduces social cues, and changes the type of team communication and progress (Hinds & Bailey, 2003; Kurtzberg, 2014). Collins & Jackson (2015) added that, as a leader's task becomes more difficult and negative emotions demand their attention, their ability to multi-task and focus their attention on subordinates may diminish, resulting in destructive leadership actions.

Another notable virtual leadership challenge is coordinating meetings with team members located in different time zones (Reed & Knight, 2010; Terzakis, 2011). Muethl and Hoegl (2010) posited that leaders of GVTs lose their ability to influence team behavior as dispersement of team members increases. None of these challenges are insurmountable; not when virtual global team leaders are equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to exploit their team's diversity (Wildman & Griffith, 2015).

This trend, coupled with the fact that technological advancements are essentially erasing the borders between organizations and their employees and customers, increases the business's need to successfully performance manage its employees. Social media, global computing, smart phones, and other technological innovations have enabled employees to conduct business digitally (Cascio, 2014). As a result, employees' expectations have also risen, and it has become crucial for companies to ensure that their technology is updated and dependable.

Another interesting finding was that hiring supervisory level employees from outside the organizations did not have good results, mainly because these employees lacked loyalty and were slow to adapt to the call center environment (Cascio, 2014). Cascio emphasized that knowing and updating the employer's brand is a way to attract and retain talented employees. Employee turnover has increased in recent years, attributing this to the global economy's recovery from recession. In an attempt to mitigate increasing employee turnover, employers are developing talent from within their business. In keeping with this notion, Fleig-Palmer (2009) suggested that developing a mentoring relationship between supervisors and employees can help organizations mitigate the loss of key employees. The author inferred that even though knowledge transfer improves an employee's skill set and also their marketability, the mentoring relationship fosters trust between the mentor and the employee and improves retention. An important factor for retention is the trust built between the mentor and the employee (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Meinecke, Rowold, & Kauffeld, 2015).

Pierre's (2011) study of call centers attempted to determine the causation of high turnover, initially looking through a socio-economic lens. It was a qualitative study and the data collection was conducted through interviews with call center leaders, agents, and customers. Through a synthesis of the participants' responses, Pierre (2011) identified ten sources of perceived problems with involvement and retention of agents. These problem sources are "choice of recruited population, difficult relations with clients, bad material conditions at work, difficult rhythm and schedule, lack of interest and diversity of tasks, tight managerial control, lack of future prospects, low salary of the agents, lack of appreciation of work, and bad image of call centers" (Pierre, 2011, p. 57). Ultimately, Pierre (2011) concluded that most of the call

centers acknowledged that a change of management practice would vastly improve employee retention, although many were not taking action to make such changes.

Ramlall (2004) explored the reasons companies need to focus their efforts on retaining critical employees. The author believed that many companies have employee retention programs in place, but he argued that these programs could be strengthened by relating these programs to specific motivational theories (Ramlall, 2004). However, the literature has expanded since this article was written. For instance, Basford and Offermann (2012) offered a new perspective on employee motivation stemming from the relationships between co-workers, rather than between leaders and subordinates. Researchers Ramlall (2004), and Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) supported the recommendation that companies and researchers should focus their attention on retaining employees. Scroggins (2008) presented an additional concept, that job-fit perception affects employees' level of commitment to their workplace, and employees who perceive little to no meaning or emotional fulfillment in their jobs will be more likely to leave.

Virtual Work

Both challenges and opportunities exist when conducting business over an e-platform or in a face-to-face environment (Avolio & Kahai, 2003). Technological advancements are essentially erasing the borders between organizations and their employees and customers, increasing the organization's need to successfully performance manage its employees (Cascio, 2014). One notable challenge was that virtual employees can access information at the same time, if not more quickly, as their leader (Avolio & Kahai, 2003). This presents the leader with the burden of being prepared to justify their decisions more quickly than in the past, when much of this same information was once held exclusively by leaders. Additionally, dissatisfied employees can air their complaints instantly online, reaching literally millions of other viewers.

Geographically dispersed work teams are increasingly common in every business sector today (Daim et al., 2012; Hart, McLeod, 2003). According to Daim et al., 2012, this development is largely due to the expansion of the internet, electronic mail, and improved efficiencies in telecommunications. They further suggested that virtual workforce programs can be difficult to adopt, even for organizations most suited to them. In their study of communication breakdown in global virtual teams, Daim et al. (2012) identified five criteria that contribute to communication breakdown: cultural differences, trust, technology, interpersonal relationships, and leadership.

Ingrained behaviors and practical hurdles are sometimes hard to overcome. Challenges of managing cultural changes and systems improvements required by a virtual workforce initiative are substantial (Biermeier-Hanson, Liu, & Dickson, 2015). Studies suggested that businesses have not satisfactorily addressed the needs of traditional employees and leaders that allow them to effectively function and perform across a virtual platform (Eissa et al., 2012).

How Virtual Teams Benefit Organizations

Nearly half of the corporations that implement virtual work groups report that this has significantly lowered their overall attrition (GWA, 2015). Chemical, Best Buy, and British Telecom among numerous other global conglomerates reported that virtual workers are approximately forty percent more productive than co-located workers (GWA, 2015). Sun Microsystems' virtual employees spent sixty percent of the time saved by not commuting to and from work doing work for their employer (GWA, 2015). Along similar lines, AT&T virtual workers performed five more hours of work than their co-located employees, JD Edwards' virtual employees produced twenty to twenty-five percent more than conventional face-to-face employees, American Express's virtual workers were forty-three percent more productive than

co-located employees, and Compaq's productivity increased fifteen to forty-five percent when virtual workers were established (GWA, 2015).

At the web-based network America's Army On-line, which includes an intranet chat room, U.S. Army's Chief of Staff discussed issues with his officers and received advice on key decisions, often within hours (Reimer, 2010). The author professed to being more productive and better positioned to stay current with operations, regardless of his location. He further stressed that this provided cost savings on travel and also enabled collaborative teamwork without organizational and geographic boundaries (Reimer, 2010).

Virtual workers can work from the privacy of their own homes. This frees up cash flow by eliminating office space and related overhead expenses (Sobel-Lojeski, 2008). One significant example is IBM's Mobility Initiative program, which allows IBM to realize a savings of more than $100 million annually in its North America sales and distribution unit alone. Even more startling, GWA (2015) reported that global corporations lost $600 billion annually, owing to distractions in face-to-face workplaces.

Virtual Leaders

Limited research exists about virtual leaders of work teams, or the characteristics and strategies employed by effective virtual leaders (Scott & Wildman, 2015). Wise (2010) asserted that results from research of virtual employees emphasize the importance for employers to broaden their understanding of the virtual workforce dynamic, and the impact it has on employees. Further, it is important for organizations to realize that success in a virtual environment is largely reliant upon the effective management of the business over a virtual platform (Hortensia, 2008).

The presence of virtual teams has grown significantly over the last decade (Stinton, 2013). This presents numerous opportunities for businesses to capitalize on cost savings from doing away with expenses of real estate, office space, utilities, travel, and maintaining a global footprint (Barelka, 2007). Additionally, Barelka believed that virtual teams enable employers to leverage talent from around the globe, organizing them in teams working in different time zones, which can shorten a product's time to market. Zofi (2012, p. 215) emphasized that among the many complexities involved in leading virtual teams, global team leaders are frequently tasked with getting consistent performance from culturally diverse employees.

Despite the challenges unique to working in a technologically linked environment, there are studies that show that team leaders can be more effective with virtual teams than traditional teams (Zofi, 2012). Holger, Hoegl, and Siebdrat (2009) conducted a study of eighty software development teams, to determine to what extent the level of dispersion played in impacting performance. All eighty teams had varying levels of geographical dispersion, including team members located in different cities and countries. Holger et al. (2009) found that, although the virtual team leadership requirements were more complex than those of traditional team leadership, the virtual software development teams significantly outperformed their conventional team counterparts. Similarly, Wildman and Griffith (2015) concluded that, with the right people, the right tools, and proper work design, virtual team leaders could exploit their team's diversity to outperform traditional face-to-face work teams.

Ferrazzi (2012) offered various explanations behind the reason virtual teams outperform traditional face-to-face (FTF) teams. The author noted that virtual teams can access the best talent without regard to location. Also, virtual teams can reduce product time to market by employing a follow-the-sun schedule, wherein employees working in different time zones can

keep productivity active around the clock (Ferrazzi, 2012). Lastly, Ferrazzi (2012) offered that virtual teams have the ability to access diverse customer input, which can assist in improving products for increased customer satisfaction. All things considered, Ferrazzi (2012) emphasized that virtual teams outperform co-located teams *only* when they are properly managed.

Leadership Theories

Until recently, the most frequently studied leadership theories for application to virtual teams were transformational, directive, and participative (Thomas & Bostrom, 2008). Pierre (2011) and Purvanovo and Bono (2009) are the prominent authors whose research was driven by the transformational leadership theory. Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, and Spangler (2004) conducted a study on how a leader can impact employee performance. They specifically mention transformational leadership theory as the framework of their research. Zigurs (2003), and Purvanovo and Bono (2009) share many of the same concepts presented by Dionne et al., and the transformational leadership theory most closely relates to their work.

Dispersed Leadership Theory

The dispersed leadership theory suggests that three types of leadership influence employee behavior. These leadership types are interactional leadership, team leadership, and structural leadership (Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012). Interactional leadership is leadership initiated by leaders; team leadership refers to leadership functions that are carried out by multiple team members; and structural leadership deals with the management style determined by the organization, its mission, and its customer base (Andressen et al., 2012).

Bass (1990) stated that the study of leadership theories included examining communication behaviors as a measurement of leadership. Leadership of virtual teams is heavily reliant on the leader's effective communication (Bass, 1990). Given the geographically dispersed

nature of virtual teams, successful teams will rely largely on internal communication, and effective emergent leadership behaviors will increase the likelihood of (Wellington, 2012; Ye, 2012; Salisbury, Carte, & Chidambaram, 2006; Charlier, Stewart, Greco, & Reeves, 2016).

Stinton (2013) asserted that an aspect integral to being an effective leader is having a two-way rather than unidirectional, conversation with the employee, in regard to their commitments at home and at work. Stinton (2013) believed that this is largely due to the fact that there are many two-income families, and striking a satisfactory work-life balance significantly impacts an employee's performance as well as job satisfaction (Amundsen, & Martinsen, 2014).

As the workforce becomes more diverse there is an increasing need for organizations to recognize and respect cultural differences amongst employees (Stinton, 2013). Gaining a better understanding of an employee's culture can be an effective way to adapt one's leadership style to meet individual needs (Eisler & Carter, 2010).

Servant Leadership Theory

Not uncommon among leadership theories, researchers (Van Dierendonck, Daan Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, 2014; Liden, Wayne, Meuser, Hu, Wu, & Liao, 2015) purported that servant leadership lacks a clear definition among academics. Winston and Fields (2015) utilized evaluations from 23 researchers to discern the 10 behaviors deemed essential to servant leadership. Chiniara & Bentein (2015) emphasized the link between performance improvement and servant leadership. Among other competencies, authors noted servant leadership traits relevant to transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and a leader's overwhelming propensity to serve those who they follow (Youssef, 2013; Winston & Fields, 2015; Hernandez, 2012; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Especially significant to this study, Winston and Fields' study

may give relevance to servant leadership as a predictor of effective leadership in long-term work teams.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership Theories

In 1978, Burns studied transactional and transformational leadership. He believed the two constructs to be distinct from one another, most notably that transactional leaders direct the behavior of their subordinates by exchanging something of value. For example, a transactional leader might initiate communication with their employee to offer a reward for performance or successful completion of a transaction (Burns, 1978). In contrast, Burns (1978) believed that transformational leadership existed when leaders transformed their subordinates by engaging with them in such a way that both leaders and followers are elevated to higher motivation and ethical behavior.

Bass (1997) & Bass, Avolio, and Goodheim (1987) saw transactional and transformational leadership styles as complementing one another, and posited that a leader can be both transactional and transformational. Burns (1978) believed both leadership styles to be linked to the achievement of goals, and recognizing the complementary aspects, he noted that the transformational leadership style is likely to be ineffective in situations where there is no existing transactional relationship between leader and follower.

Transformational leadership. Mawanda (2012) argued that there is a correlation between transformational leadership, extrinsic motivation, and employee satisfaction in virtual teams. Purvanovo and Bono (2009) experimented with transformational leadership in the context of traditional teams (using face-to-face communication) and virtual teams (using computer-mediated communication). Thirty-nine leaders led the teams, and leader rank varied between teams. The most effective leaders, as evaluated by their teams, ended up being those who

increased their transformational leadership style in the virtual teams. Most notably, the authors

concluded that virtual leaders who enhance their transformational leadership styles achieve

greater levels of team performance (Jin, Seo, & Shapiro, 2016).

Transformative leadership. According to Shields (2013), transformative leadership is a

critical and adaptive approach to leadership "rather than technical or mechanistic, one that

focuses on both intellectual achievement and social justice" (Shields, 2013, Loc 96). Caldwell,

Dixon, Atkins, & Dowdell (2011) defined transformative leadership as an ethically-based

leadership model that integrates a commitment to values and outcomes by optimizing the long-

term interests of stakeholders and society and honoring the moral duties owed by organizations

to their stakeholders. Caldwell (2012) asserted that leadership effectiveness is dependent upon

the leader's moral behavior. Caldwell, McConkie, & Licona (2014) likened today's emergent

transformative leadership to Apostle Peter's leadership model, placing great significance on the

leader's role as an ethical steward owing covenantal duties to his followers.

Ultimately, leadership is about ethics and excellence (Hosmer, 2007; Kouzes & Posner,

2010; Solomon, 1992). When leaders demonstrate the highest standards of moral leadership, they

merit the trust and followership of others (Ciulla, Price, & Murphy, 2005; Neider & Schriesheim,

2014; Lennick & Kiel, 2007). Ethical leadership reduces the transaction costs associated with

low trust (Hoffman & Lord, 2013; Caldwell, Hayes, Karri, & Bernal, 2008; Brown & Trevino,

2006; Lennick & Kiel, 2008; Puranam & Vanneste, 2009; Zheng, Witt, Waite, David, Van Driel,

McDonald, Callison, & Crepeau, 2015), and increases follower commitment (Caldwell &

Hayes, 2007; Caldwell, Hayes, Karri, & Bernal, 2008; Senge, 2006).

Leadership credibility is earned by leaders who combine character and competence; both

qualities are essential and neither standing alone is sufficient (Covey, 2004; Loehr, 2012). A

leader's commitment to integrity has been universally identified by extensive leadership research as the most important element possessed by leaders in establishing their personal credibility (Kouzes, Posner, & Bozarth, 2011).

In calling for a higher standard of leadership conduct, Bennis and Nanus (2007) postulated that a new type of transformative leader is needed, one who motivates followers to action, who develops followers, into leaders, and who may inspire leaders to become change agents. Cameron (2011, 2012, 2013), Cameron & Winn (2012), and Pfeffer (1998) asserted that transformative leaders pursue virtuous outcomes that sustain and support organizational values.

The implication for virtual team leaders rests in the consideration of the increasingly complex context faced by today's leaders, with emphasis on the shift from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society (Shields, 2011). This new type of work lends itself to ethical implications, as the focus of work has moved away from individuals completing well-defined tasks, to intellectual work focused on complex problem-solving that requires autonomy. In summation, this type of management style requires the leader be ethical (Zhu, Hongwei, Treviño, Chao, & Wang, 2015; Van Gils, Van Quaquebeke, Van Knippenberg, Van Dijke, & De Cremer, 2015). Transformative leadership, as defined by Shields (2011), is most fitting here because transformative leadership accounts for the need for knowledge frameworks to be deconstructed, critically reflected upon, and then reconstructed and then carried out in an ethical fashion.

There is a real need for further research of leadership practices in virtual workplaces (Olivia, Sterman, & Giese, 2003). The literature builds a strong case for implementing transformational and transformative leadership to strengthen the connection between leadership and organizational commitment in a virtual workplace (Olivia et al., 2003; Glanz, 2007). There are numerous factors that have the potential to affect employee job satisfaction (Amundsen, &

Martinsen, 2014), workplace commitment, and ultimately their intention to stay with their

employer (Maruyama, & Tietze, 2012). In response to the lingering problem of poor employee

retention rates in virtual teams, some companies have implemented transformative leadership

techniques and transformational leadership. Leadership theorist Burns (1978) introduced the

notion that real transformative change will happen when there is a partnership between leader

and follower (Drenkard, 2012). Previous theorists did not make this distinction, connecting

leader and follower traits and behaviors.

Among the many positive attributes of effective leaders, one outstanding quality that can

make or break a leader's effectiveness is the leader's ethical framework and personal

accountability (Caldwell et al., 2011; Van Gils, Van Quaquebeke, Van Knippenberg, Van Dijke,

& De Cremer, 2015). Caldwell et al. (2011) conducted a study whose findings suggested that a

significant issue challenging modern organizations is the lack of ethical behavior. They made

compelling arguments supporting the relationship of repentance and continuous improvement

through a lens of transformative leadership in an organizational setting (Caldwell et al., 2011).

Conducting one's self in an ethical fashion is a significant factor in accountability and individual

development, and the authors submit that this behavior extends to build and strengthen

relationships within the organization.

Transformative leadership involves a developing of the individual as well as helping

others grow; which ultimately also extends to benefit the good of the community or society

(Sapprasert & Clausen, 2012; Tobak, 2015). Sapprasert and Clausen (2012) inferred that

companies need to focus human resource management around improving the relationship

between leaders and their subordinates. Her study led to the premise that an employee's

perception of their organization's support is framed by how the employee perceives they are

being treated by their direct supervisor (Sapprasert & Clausen, 2012). Sapprasert and Clausen (2012) emphasized the importance of leaders forging a meaningful and lasting relationship with their employees. This research indicated that the employees' perceptions of how greatly their employer supports their success may lead to improved performance and organizational commitment. Sapprasert and Clausen (2012) suggested that more research is needed to determine a cause and effect relationship between the way leaders lead and employees' voluntary turnover.

Avolio et al. (2014) explored the relationship between advanced information technology (AIT) and leadership. They built on research conducted in 2001, and presented insights into how each variable would impact the way organizations function. Avolio et al. (2014) highlighted current thinking about the concept of leading virtual employees, and essentially redefined the previous definition of organization. They shared significant insights into leadership over a virtual platform and what shape it may take in the next decade. The authors argued that the need for transformative leadership over a virtual platform is at least as important as leadership conducted in a brick and mortar facility.

Mohammed (2009) presented a conceptual framework for leadership occurring in a virtual organization, discussing how information technology has passed through distinct stages as it evolved in organizations. The author indicated that the basic responsibilities of a leader have not changed, and emphasized the need for virtual leaders to show competency in using the internet and other digital technologies in a way that meets their employees' needs. In Zigurs' article (2003) discussing the idea that leadership in virtual teams is a social system, it was found that much like a social system, leadership in virtual teams can be functional or dysfunctional. Lastly, the author stressed the importance of a virtual leader to be flexible and ready to adapt their leadership style to the organization's environment (Zigurs, 2003).

Situational Leadership Theory

As Blanchard (2007) asserted, there is not one most effective method to lead effectively. Effective leaders manage people depending on follower's needs, abilities, and styles (Zaccaro, 2007). Empirical research validated that leadership is a dynamic process dependent upon changes in leaders, followers, and the specific situation (Benson, 2008; Vartanian, 2006). The situational leadership theory recognizes a need for balance between directive and supportive behaviors (Blanchard, 2007). Directive leadership provides followers with clear, understandable direction, and oversees productivity (Benson, 2008). Supportive leaders embrace encouragement, active listening, and praise to nurture the development of followers (Benson, 2008; Blanchard, 2007; Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006).

The four styles of situational leadership outlined by Blanchard (2007) include directive, coaching, supporting, and delegating styles. Each style promotes needs-specific attention, while providing direction, support, and motivation. The Hersey-Blanchard situational model draws from other task-relationship models and follower's readiness (Aleksic, 2016; Marchiondo, Myers, & Kopelman, 2015). The induction of situational leadership theory recognized effective leadership as the relationship between leaders and followers, specific to situations, rather than solely on the leader's style (Benson, 2008).

Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1977) posited that, through reciprocal determinism, an individual's behavior, psychological processes, and environment create a foundation for cognitive expansion. Bandura's social learning theory refers to self-efficacy, or the ability to successfully deliver courses of action necessary to process future circumstances concerning unpredictable, ambiguous, and taxing situations (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). Measurement of identification and

social learning theory are processes through which an individual patterns behavior, feelings, and thoughts after a person who serves as a role model (Bandura, 1969). While attention has been devoted to familial conditions that support learning, basic response patterns are attained through the exposure of social behavioral models (Bandura, 1969).

Social learning theory supports the acquisition of observational learned behaviors and long term retention of previously learned behaviors via social settings (Bandura, 1969). Through observation, people are capable of learning new behavior by exposure to social environments. A human drive exists to create meaning and order through experience (Freeman, 2004). Through reciprocal determinism, cognitive, behavioral, and personal factors interrelate and affect an individual bi-directionally (Freeman, 2004). Hence, behavioral competencies are influenced by social persuasion and modeling (Ziek, & Smulowitz, 2014). Social learning theory provides a foundation, as measuring leadership offers sustained effective efforts.

Leadership Measurement Behavior

According to Denning (2005), "if leaders consistently use narrative tools, in combination with shrewd analysis, courage, passion, and imagination, they can show their organization how to tackle the most difficult challenges facing management today-transformational innovation" (p. 12). Furthermore, Kanungo (2001) described transformational leaders striving towards a "consensus on ends not by imposing one's personal vision on the followers by coercion, but rather by creating an environment in which the followers can choose for themselves to subscribe to the vision" (p. 262). Encouraging employees to have their own vision might also encourage exceptional quality of work, and strong team spirit (Nahavandi, 2006; Reicher, Haslam, & Platow, 2007; To, Tse, & Ashkanasy, 2015).

Likewise, Ryska (2002) cited Burke, Bachaufeli, Maslach and Marek in separate reports, recognizing fatigue, turnover, and low productivity as signs of burnout due to stress. These are the same signs displayed by the employees in question. Furthermore, McCauley (2005) noted that absenteeism and turnover are products of a situation where employees experience low job satisfaction (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Schultz & Edington, 2007, Amundsen, & Martinsen, 2014).

According to McCauley (2005), pressure brought on by ambiguity leads to corrosive stress. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) noted that increased complexity in work environments has given rise to higher-level stress. According to McCauley (2005) psychological stress is a relationship between an individual and the environment that is appraised as difficult. In measuring effective leadership, theorists agree that considerate, supportive behaviors are closely related to job performance (Nahavandi, 2006).

Individuals who participate in strategic decision making will improve understanding and therefore support commitment to implement those decisions (Sy, Tram, & O'Hara, 2006; Yukl, 2006). The most recently developed assessment is the Leader Action Profile (LAP) by Ken Blanchard Companies that directly measures meta-categories (Benson, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2012). Directive and supportive behaviors used in the Ken Blanchard study supported the common theme throughout the study of emotional intelligence and leadership (Jordan, Dirk, & Lindebaum, 2015). Other forms of measurement are the Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI) developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Morrman, and Fetter (CITE); the Multi-Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) by Bass and Avolio (1997); the Managerial Behavior Survey and Managerial Practice Survey (MBS and MPS) developed by Yukl, O'Donnell, & Taber (2009); the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) by Kouzes and Posner; the Leader Behavior

Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) by Rodriquez (2012); and the Conger-Kanungo scale (C-K) by Conger and Kanungo (Benson, 2009; Stogdill, 1948).

Kouzes and Posner (2003, 2011) identified five common practices of exceptional leadership experiences. Through extensive surveys, qualities and characteristics were consolidated and categorized, and five leadership practices were deemed most effective in defining the actions necessary to convey exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The authors determined that there were ten commitments of exemplary leadership: encouraging the heart to recognize contributions, modeling the way, setting an example, strengthening others, enlisting others, encouraging a united vision, enabling others to act, envisioning the future, fostering collaboration, and celebrating values and victories (Gebert, Heinitz, Buengeler, 2015).

Leadership Strategies

Soft Skills

To be effective, leaders in today's global corporations must possess the willingness and skills necessary to paradoxically change the method through which they manage and direct employees (Gibson, 2014). Gibson (2014) asserted that leaders are tasked with being personable and coupling soft skills with an innate ability to adjust their leadership style to meet the needs of each employee. Further, the author asserted that the global virtual workplace presents the distinct challenge of imposing upon virtual leaders to be personable through a non-human platform, since the message's successful delivery is dependent on the receiver's perceived intentions. Further, Gibson (2014) advised that organizations must transform their business models to accommodate a complex and diversified workforce.

Use of New Technologies

In recent years, certain global Fortune 500 corporations like Microsoft, IBM, Sodexo, and Omnicare, have utilized gamification to increase employee engagement, retention, and productivity (Gibson, 2014). By utilizing game-based mechanics, gamification immerses users in a real-world model to experience actual work-related situations and experience the impact of their real-time decisions through a controlled medium. Gibson (2014) submitted that the intention of gamification is to teach the user to use critical thinking and problem-solving techniques that will ultimately change the user's behavior in the real world, and improve their skillset. It is ideal for teaching basic skills that must be used repeatedly by employees.

Gamification combines brain science with game mechanics to teach and improve learning retention. It is a good fit for training material that is not engaging, and learner resistance to the training is high (Leaman, 2014), such as the virtual call center environment. Existing training material can be modified to a gamified environment to make it fresh and enjoyable. Gamified learning is well-suited to a global workforce, where there are a wide range of cultures, languages, and generations. It applies game elements that create learning that are attractive to all employees (Leaman, 2014). In addition to providing a learning platform for virtual organizations, games also serve as a lens for studying human activites such as virtual leadership (Robinson, 2016).

It has been said that one major flaw associated with American schools, is that they punish students for making mistakes (Kiyosaki, 2016). In a somewhat unconventional discussion on the United States' current economic situation, Kiyosaki (2016) described how school systems teach our youth that, in order to be successful, they should aspire to obtain a post-collegiate job earning a good salary and save money for retirement. Kiyosaki (2016) discussed how quantitative easing explains why the United States' financial system has deteriorated, much because middle class

incomes have gone down and Americans are becoming increasingly dependent. One of

Kiyosaki's early mentors, Buckminster Fuller, wrote a book, The Grunch of Giants, wherein it

was presaged that the rich will continue exerting increasing control over every aspect of daily

life(Kiyosaki, 2016). In an effort to inform, Kiyosaki (2016) emphasized the importance of

engaging in simulated activities through games, to learn important principles on money. To

apply this concept to virtual leadership, it is important to note that games can be used as a lens

through which systems can be tested and mistakes can be made without causing degradation to

the whole. Professor Edgar Dale's Cone of Learning (Figure 1) illustrates this point by

demonstrating that reading is the least effective method of learning; whereas simulation is the

second most effective way human beings learn.

Cone of Learning

After 2 weeks we tend to remember		Nature of Involvement
90% of what we say and do	Doing the Real Thing	Active
	Simulating the Real Experience	
	Doing a Dramatic Presentation	
70% of what we say	Giving a Talk	
	Participating in a Discussion	
50% of what we hear and see	Seeing it Done on Location	Passive
	Watching a Demonstration	
	Looking at an Exhibit Watching a Demonstration	
	Watching a Movie	
30% of what we see	Looking at Pictures	
20% of what we hear	Hearing Words	
10% of what we read	Reading	

Figure 1. Dale's Cone of Learning

Robinson (2016) conducted a study using virtual game participants to understand whether real world theories are applicable to virtual teams. The study findings supported the notion that the better leadership practices are intrinsically linked to successful virtual teams (Robinson, 2016), albeit face-to-face leadership theory operates differently in virtual teams. Specifically, the four-factor behavior complexity theory reduced to seminal two-factor leadership theory, supporting socio-emotional and task-based factors (Robinson, 2016).

Trust Development

Global virtual teams are defined as groups that are recognized by their organization as teams that utilize technology-based communication more frequently than face-to-face collaboration, and which live and work in different locations (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Thomas, & Bostrom, 2008). Global virtual teams (GVT) are typically made up of people who have never worked together and who likely have no knowledge of their teammates' previous performance (Zakaria & Yusof, 2015). Leading GVTs is complicated and Stinton (2013) stressed the importance of trust between leaders and team members in a virtual work environment. Due to the nature of many GVTs, where their expertise is obtained from around the globe, and projects tend to be temporary with very tight deadlines, it becomes essential for GVTs to develop swift trust (Zakaria & Yusof, 2015).

According to Stinton (2013), a survey of Fortune 500 senior leaders from global organizations found that half of these leaders believed that trust was their biggest challenge, and the remaining half of the leaders scored communication as the biggest challenge. When trust is missing, Stinton (2013) suggested that workers have trouble meeting mutual expectations, task delegation loses its effectiveness, and employees display self-protection behavior. Further, when a leader provides feedback or news of upcoming changes to an untrusting employee, Stinton

(2013) believed the worker will question the leader's truthfulness and motives. Lastly, it was stated that waning trust results in less sharing of information, decreased motivation, all of which ultimately impact performance (Maynard, Mathieu, Rapp, & Gibson, 2012). London, Sobel-Lojeski, and Reilly (2012) underscored Stinton's notion that trust is a necessary component of effective leadership of groups. Work team members must have trust of one another and their leader (London et al., 2012).

To promote trust among virtual workers, Stinton (2013) stated that leaders should meet frequently as a team, make expectations clear, build a culture that fosters independence, clearly define virtual workers' roles, and immediately address any instances of distrust. Leading by example through instilling trust in virtual team members and displaying their own trustworthiness are additional steps virtual leaders can take (Stinton, 2013). To lead by example, the researcher suggested that virtual team leaders must follow through on commitments, be consistent, and be proactive in including every team member in activities and keeping them informed. Active listening helps compensate for lack of visual cues in a virtual workplace (Stinton, 2013), and maintaining an open virtual door policy through email, answering phone calls, and utilizing video conferencing are all essential trust-building techniques for virtual leaders.

Stinton (2013) also encouraged virtual leaders to increase their virtual presence by making themselves visible to virtual workers across all time zones. Additionally, leaders can help their team learn their individual roles, how to utilize the available technologies in their roles, and how to best implement these technologies to accomplish the team's goals (London et al., 2012). This helps team members increase trust in the leader and teammates by learning

productive methods of interacting, and they come to realize they can depend on one another (London et al., 2012).

Communication Approaches

Communication is perhaps the most vital element in successfully leading a virtual team (Stinton, 2013; Thill, & Bovée, 2015). London et al. (2012) asserted that virtual team leaders should be aware of e-communication barriers created by working in a technology-based setting, and how to overcome those barriers through developing their team's metacognitive ability. Stinton (2013) posited that effective communication for a virtual leader involves choosing to communicate and doing so more often than in a traditional face-to-face (ftf) work environment. It is also important to replace facial expressions and gestures that occur in a traditional work space with some form of virtual communication (Stinton, 2013). Virtual team leaders should become very familiar with the available technology and utilize it to increase the team's virtual connectivity (Stinton, 2013), and to overcome any psychological distance created by e-communication (London et al., 2012; Leonardi, Treem, & Jackson, 2010).

Avolio and Kahai (2003), Gill, Matur, Sharma, and Bhutani (2011), and Mawanda (2012), posited that transformational leadership is a critical element in gaining an employee's commitment to their organization. This realization is a significant strength, in that it provides substance to the idea that corporations need to change their style of management to match the challenges presented with a changing global economy (Apgar, 2016). To be effective through a computer-mediated platform, leaders of virtual workers must adapt to the changing needs of employees. In a recent study, Kane et al. (2016) found that employees who believed their organization did not provide the opportunity needed to advance their technological ability, had a six times greater chance of leaving the organization in one year than employees whose employer

provided technological training opportunities. Equally important are factors such as cultural diversity, demographics, increased work-life expectancy, multigenerational workforces, i.e. before 2020, a projection of five generations working together (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014) and work-family balance are elements that need to be given consideration when creating value for each employee (Tarique & Schuler, 2010).

Summary

Virtual team leaders face challenges that are distinct from conventional co-located team leaders (Mahler, 2012). Virtual team leaders are dependent on technology to perform their jobs leading global virtual teams in dispersed geographic locations, across different time zones, with employees they may never meet face-to-face. To properly respond to the increased complexities inherent in leading over a virtual platform, it is essential for organizations to become better educated on the strategies and behaviors of team leaders with proven success leading virtual teams.

The literature review presented a brief historical perspective of the progression of work over the past 5 decades, as well as a brief historical perspective of the origin of teams and the transition from managing to leadership. The literature review presented key characteristics of virtual teams, notable challenges, benefits, and gaps in research (Lari, 2012). As it relates to leadership aspects, the literature review revealed key characteristics and strategies that address the complexities of leading virtual teams. Additionally, the literature review covered key practices relating to the conceptual framework of transformative and transformational leadership.

Chapter 2 presented an overview of the literature on virtual leadership, virtual teams, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, transformative leadership, situational leadership, emotional intelligence, and leadership measurement. This chapter illustrated a review

of literature that supported the study and identified the gap in research needed to fully support this specific topic. Seminal and traditional research did not fully address critical aspects of virtual leadership of permanent work settings and more often stressed factors relating to finite projects. Effective virtual leadership involves understanding one's self, one's epistemology, and realizing the factors critical to managing others in the virtual workplace (Avolio & Kahai, 2003).

Literature supported the fact that leadership is an important part of all organizations. As Clawson (2006) asserted, a leader's goals, values, and beliefs are central to ensuring organizational development. Various theories of leadership were illustrated to support the ongoing research in the field of organizational behavior. Historical leadership theories impact organizational structure and behavior as strongly as contemporary philosophies. Scientific and behavioral leadership theory, strategic leadership theory, and theory X and theory Y provide a sound basis for theoretical understanding (Carson, 2005; Mintzberg, 2009; Wren, 2007). In addition, transactional and transformational leadership styles were appropriate to this study (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Bass, 1985; Kanungo, 2001; Yukl, 2006; Antonakis & House, 2014). The discussion of measuring leadership was expressed as a means to further support this research study.

The philosophical and historical literature available supported existing knowledge, but explained the lack of sufficient knowledge necessary to fill the gap. Chapter 3 will present the methodology of this research study. A description of the population sample, sampling methods, data collection instrument, and data analysis will follow. Additionally, an explanation of the reliability and validity of this research study will be presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative research method with a phenomenological research design was used in this study (Brinkmann, 2012), focused on the critical factors of effective virtual leadership based on the perceptions and lived experiences of virtual team leaders. Studying phenomena through the interpretation of lived experiences and perceptions is most effective with qualitative research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Van Manen, 2015). Such studies are built on social phenomena whereby subjectivity, meaning, and participants' interpretations exist (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007; Ivankova & Creswell, 2008). Hodgson and Fulford (2016) stressed the importance of the researcher being mindful of their own perceptions of the phenomenon they will study, so that they will be more open to experience any new meanings of the phenomenon that might appear. Relevant to this study, the authors illustrated their point through an application to technology studies.

In today's world, the word 'technology' is typically associated with electronic devices and digital processes (Hodgson & Fulford, 2016). However, any device used can be thought of as a type of technology, considering that when technology becomes ubiquitous it changes the way people live, and in doing so changes the meaning of each practice it affects (Hodgson & Fulford, 2016). The authors draw the conclusion that the phenomenological approach would be useful in examining what a specific technology does and how it alters the meaning of practice, instead of making advanced assumptions regarding its meaning (Lilly & Durr, 2012).

Researchers (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2015) posited that phenomenology examines the participants' perception of their lived experiences with regard to the phenomenon in their environment. Phenomenologists refer to this as the *life world*, where objects and experiences

appear as meaningful prior to the theories we may develop about them (Giorgi, 2009). The intent

of this study was to explore the traits and leadership strategies employed by successful leaders of

virtual teams, from the perspective of the virtual leaders themselves (Joseph, Dhanani, Shen,

McHugh, & McCord, 2015). A qualitative research study represents a phenomenon via

recollection of the lived experiences of study participants (Ivankova & Creswell, 2008; Richards

& Morse, 2012; Van Manen, 2015).

According to Yin (2009), what, why, and how questions reveal explanatory results and

are best suited for qualitative studies. These types of questions should be tracked over a period of

time rather than measured numerically at a single point in time, which would be more suitable

for a quantitative study. In the same vein, Creswell (2013) stated that exploratory research

questions ideally use a qualitative study to assess a phenomenon. Since the purpose of this study

was more general in nature, being broadly on the examination of the lived experiences of

participants (Creswell, 2015; Van Manen, 2015), the qualitative method was suitable.

The phenomenological approach uses theories as tools that surface what is overlooked in

everyday life. In this sense theories are epistemologically necessary for the production of

knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Taking interest in how people gain knowledge about their

everyday lives is called qualitative inquiry (Giorgi, 2009). Qualitative human inquiry considers

the 'how' of human beings' lived experience in the world, and sheds insight into the qualities of

the lived experience, actions and emotions (Van Manen, 2015). Phenomenology is researching

everyday life with the goal of describing human experience in a way that makes the obvious

obvious (Van Manen, 2015). Colloquially, phenomenology helps us see trees as a forest and the

forest as a group of trees (Moustakas, 1994). Pelias (2004) argued that a phenomenological

stance is essentially the stance of poetry: "Science is the act of looking at a tree and seeing lumber. Poetry is the act of looking at a tree and seeing a tree" (Pelias, 2004, p. 9).

This phenomenological study explored the phenomenon of leadership that succeeds in a virtual environment. A review of virtual team work as potentially more complex than working in a traditional co-located team was explored with specific focus on working geographically, temporally, and socio-emotionally apart (Symons & Stenzel, 2007; Tee, 2015). Leaders of virtual teams are charged with providing a prosocial context for their team members that fosters trust, collaboration, real-time communication, accountability, and ownership. 'Successful leadership' is determined by the team members' performance in achieving the organization's goals (Shriberg, & Shriberg, 2011). The overall objective of this study was to explore best practices of successful leaders in several major global Fortune 500 corporations, and to provide further insight into what skills and resources are necessary for successfully leading a virtual team.

The phenomenology research method was utilized to appropriately respond to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 includes the setting, participants, data, data analysis used, informed consent, and potential limitations of the study.

Design Appropriateness

Appropriateness of design and research method was given significant consideration. The research design was a qualitative phenomenological study, which used Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method. Phenomenological approaches are based upon a personal paradigm of subjectivity and knowledge (Wheat, 2007). This method emphasized the critical aspects of the lived experiences and perceptions of the subjects (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

According to Moustakas (1994), "the challenge facing the human science researcher is to describe things in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection" (p. 27). Husserl, sometimes called the father of phenomenology, stated that the idea existing in the consciousness melds with the natural process, so meaning is derived and knowledge is extended (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, one's consciousness is absolute reality; whereas, what appears in the world is a result of learning (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental science failed to take into account the connection with lived experiences and perceptions. The emphasis on phenomenology was the impetus for experience as a means to gain knowledge (Moustakas, 1994).

The rationale for design appropriateness for this research study was to evoke knowledge through the study of lived and perceived experiences. Creswell (2008) posited that phenomenological research involves the essence of human experiences as a result of a phenomenon. The research design included data collection, assessment, and a presentation of the conclusion, in alignment with Moustakas' (1994) eight-step model. Interviews were digitally recorded and NVivo 11 software was used to sort the data for themes and patterns. Data analysis was based on Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis. The eight-step model involves:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping,

2. Reduction and elimination,

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents,

4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes,

5. Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, constructed for each co-researcher an individual textural description of the experience,

6. Construct for each co-researcher an individual structural description, and

7. Construction for each co-research participant a textural structural description of the experience,

8. Composite description of all participants of the essence and meaning of the experience, representing the group as a whole (pp. 120-121).

Modified van Kaam Methodology

As Moustakas (1994) asserted, "in accordance with phenomenological principles, scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the meanings and essences of experience" (p. 84). The modified van Kaam method was a qualitative phenomenological methodology appropriate for this study because of the value of knowledge and meaning of lived experiences and individual perceptions. As van Kaam (1969) asserted, this methodology supported the quest to disclose and elucidate some phenomena of lived experiences, behaviors, and perceptions as literally perceived.

As Husserl (1931) provided a justification for the conscious experience through epistemology, transcendental phenomenology was the basis of this study. Moustakas (1994) supported the transcendental phenomenological approach in humanistic psychology. This study used transcendental phenomenology as a foundation for the study of the dimensions of participants' lived experiences. As this study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants, Moustakas (1994) cited Husserl (1931) by sustaining subjective openness throughout the study, whereby supporting the need for a transcendental phenomenological approach.

The process known as the *epoche* describes the unmitigated position that no effort be given to single out any one phrase, sentence, or statement. No preconceived notions are conferred, so that what enters one's mind is unbiased, embracing only reality and truth. The epoche is a fundamental root of phenomenological research, as it removes all personal predilection, personal beliefs, or commonly referenced beliefs. All data exists in itself and of itself. Moustakas (1994) described the epoche as rich descriptors provided by the participant as a phenomenon void of personal interpretations. The researcher permitted participants' experiences and perceptions to be unique in order to allow the phenomenon to unfold in a consistent way.

Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling is confined to a small number of potential participants (Ivankova & Creswell, 2008; Salkind, 2008) and was the primary selection method for establishing subjects for this research study. Through various networking and connections, the researcher made phone calls to secure volunteers that were willing to share their experiences and perceptions for this study. The selection of participants needed for this sampling frame was based on self-selection (Ruben, 2007; Guetterman, 2015). In addition, participants' leadership status within Fortune 500 companies was confirmed to ensure commonality among participants. Moustakas (1994) stated that while it may appear as a bias sample, the nature of the phenomenological inquiry of the modified van Kaam methodology includes co-participants with like-minded experiences.

The sample for this study was 15 virtual leaders of various Fortune 500 industries. In qualitative research, data is collected to the point of saturation and data saturation was achieved at 15 participants (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Morse, 2000). The leaders resided in Utah, Canada, New York, Kentucky, Texas, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Ohio. No consideration was given to ethnicity, gender, religion, or level of education. The sample was comprised of leaders who have

managed other employees for Fortune 500 corporations, in both a co-located and virtual setting, for at least 1 year per setting. This sample size was deemed valuable for this qualitative phenomenological study as in compliance with Creswell's (2007) rubric indicating an appropriate sample size is 5 to 25 individuals who have had direct and applicable experiences and perceptions with the phenomenon being studied.

Setting

The setting for this study was global virtual Fortune 500 corporations, where participants carry out the requirements of their work from a location remote from the organization's brick and mortar headquarters? Virtual team members and virtual leaders work together over an internet-based platform, and rarely, if ever, are physically situated in proximity to one another. As of the date of the study, the subjects had never met any other employees (from the time of their own interview as potential hires to the company, onward) face-to-face.

Participants / Sample

In a phenomenological study, it is imperative that each of the participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2015). Purposive sampling is a sampling technique wherein the researcher selects the units to be studied (Creswell, 2003). Snowball sampling is a technique whereby study participants recruit future participants from their acquaintances (Creswell, 2003). This study used both the purposive sampling technique as well as the snowball sampling technique (Guetterman, 2015).

This researcher selected 15 participants through a combination of networking and recruitment. Once identified, the participants were contacted via telephone, instant message, or email to explain the purpose of the study, and determine a time, place, and date for an interview to be conducted. Volunteers were asked to read and sign a letter of informed consent (Appendix

C) and return it electronically before they were interviewed (Creswell et al., 2007; Leedy &
Ormrod, 2010).

Data Collection

As phenomenological research explores human experiences to ascertain comprehensive
descriptions of lived experiences and perceptions, a basis was created to describe the essence of
the investigated phenomenon (Simon, 2006). As Simon (2006) stated, phenomenological
investigations include in-depth interviews, observations, written discussions, and digital
transcriptions. The data collection process involved the activities, perceptions, and responses to
inquiries about daily experiences related to the phenomenon being studied (Leedy & Ormrod,
2010).

The preparation stage of the interview process is a critical aspect of successful
interviewing to ascertain means for probing for meaningful insight to the problem (Harris &
Brown, 2010). A semi-structured interview questionnaire was deemed most useful to capture the
essence of meaningful information in this phenomenological study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A
review of studies on organizational leadership (Shriberg, & Shriberg, 2011), global virtual teams
and leadership, leadership theories, and communication supported the question selection and
development process.

Interviews were recorded with a Sony micro-digital recording device with consent of the
participants. Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions to encourage rich
description of their phenomenon of virtual leadership. Data collection involved conducting in-
depth interviews with participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Upon scheduling, conducting, and
transcription of the interviews, a follow-up email or phone call ensued to ensure accuracy from

the participants' collected data. As Moustakas (1994) illustrated, the four-step process used to collect data for the phenomenological research interview must include the following steps:

1. Formulate the research question.

2. Conduct literature review to determine the nature of study.

3. Develop criteria for selecting participants by establishing contract, obtaining informed consent, insure confidentiality, agree to interview location and time commitments, and obtain permission to record and publish.

4. Develop guiding questions needed for the phenomenological research interview.

The semi-structured interview instrument was constructed to include questions pertaining to specific experiences, rather than hypothetical situations. The researcher sought to develop questions that were not leading or conjectural, but instead were clear and concise, and directly related to the research problem and research questions (Goldblatt, Karniele-Miller, & Neumann, 2011). As Leedy and Ormrod (2010) asserted, interview question construction presupposes a certain extent of knowledge about the participants that is useful when exploring topics. Additional questions included personal experiences and opinions.

Data was collected from leaders who now manage virtual teams but who had previously managed employees in a face-to-face environment. The open-ended questions elicited information addressing the questions presented in Chapter 1. To explore the perceptions and lived experiences and to develop a rich content of response from virtual leaders, open-ended questions were given to the participants after obtaining a signed Informed Consent (see Appendix C).

The researcher assumed a crucial role in the qualitative investigation process (Wheatley, 2009). As inquiry is generally conducted in the natural setting of the phenomenon being assessed, the human as research instrument is critical in ensuring indeterminate quandaries. Since

the researcher was the instrument, the validity of the investigation was highly reliant on rigor, competence, and skill of the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

The primary source of data collection for this qualitative, phenomenological study was interviews with leaders in a virtual working environment. Interviews were conducted based on qualitative data collection where the researcher posed general and broad questions, allowing participants to share views unconstrained by the researcher's perspective (Creswell, 2005). The open-ended questions were not influenced by any perspectives of the researcher or findings of past research (Creswell, 2013). Data was collected over a 6-week period using the semi-structured interview process detailed in the Interview Protocol (Appendix B). Qualitative interviews occur "when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers. The researcher transcribes and types the data into a computer file for analysis" (Creswell, 2005, p. 214). Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions in order to optimally elaborate perceptions and experiences (Creswell, 2013) related to the complexities of leading virtual teams.

Interviews took place over multiple platforms. Primarily interviews were conducted over the phone although time constraints and scheduling conflicts required some participants to provide follow-up feedback through email, and instant messaging. These modalities were selected because they mimicked the managers' actual working environment and to accommodate managers residing in different regions than the researcher. A 45-minute time period was scheduled for each interview. However, there was some variability in actual duration. While the average interview duration was calculated at 42 minutes, the interviews lasted from 32 minutes to 86 minutes. After signing the consent form and agreeing to the recording of the interview,

participants were asked to describe perceptions of their personal lived experience with managing employees virtually, with emphasis on the areas that differ from managing in traditional face-to-face environment. Lastly, managers were asked to discuss perceptions of virtual work and the attributes they found essential for leading virtual teams. This approach supported the ultimate goal of this study which was to capture insights from the virtual leaders' perspectives.

In addition to recording, this researcher took notes during the interviews in an effort to capture additional context such as voice intonation, dead air/uninformed silence, volume, and speaking pace. Once completed, the recorded interview transcripts were reviewed by this researcher before being shared with the participants as part of the member check process. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) defined member checks as a strategy to support the internal validity of a study (p. 217). Multiple member checks were conducted throughout data collection and analysis to verify accuracy. During all of the member checks, participants were encouraged to suggest changes, make additions, and/or request exclusion from the findings as needed to better represent their lived experiences.

The researcher maintained and stored the informed consent and study data in a password-protected file. All information will be stored for a period of five years following the completion of the study. After 5 years, all electronic data will be deleted and paper files will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), one of the most arduous tasks associated with qualitative research is that of data analysis. This researcher used NVivo 11 to assist with coding and data analysis of the participants' responses. Phenomenological analysis is dependent upon the researchers' ability to withhold assumptions about the phenomenon being assessed; to suspend preconceptions to better understand the subjects' experience and perceptions; and to not

impose a priori hypothesis on the individual's experience (Ivankova & Creswell, 2008). Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding, then condensing the code, and, finally, representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2013). The semi-structured interview questions proved a useful instrument to capture the essence of this phenomenological study and derived meaningful information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

As Creswell (2007) posited, phenomenological data analysis is a complex process; it goes beyond a basic understanding; and strives to answer each research question. "Phenomenological analysis is multifaceted and data rich requiring a high degree of data organization and synthesis to connect interrelated themes" (Harris & Brown, 2010, p. 105). All data, including the names of the virtual organizations and participants, were coded in order to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

The data analysis procedure was as follows. Step 1 was to think of data as inductive, going from detailed data to general codes and themes (Creswell, 2013). Step 2 was a simultaneous process of analysis and data collection. While collecting data, the researcher also analyzed other information previously collected, looking for major ideas (Creswell, 2013). All phases were iterative, allowing the researcher to cycle back and forth between data collection and analysis. Qualifying this researchers' actions as outlined above, Creswell (2013) asserted that research may be collected from stories of individuals, and as the researcher's analysis through the stories proceeds, the researcher may return for more information to fill in the gaps of the stories (Creswell, 2013). During Step 3, data was analyzed by reading it several times, and each reading allowed this researcher to develop a broader understanding of the information supplied (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) believed that although there are guidelines available

that exist to direct the approach to analyze the data, there is no single process. Data analysis was an eclectic process, Step 4. Step 5 was interpretive where the researcher shared interviewees' perspectives and made a description that fit the situation or themes capturing the major categories of information (Creswell, 2013).

This researcher began analysis of the data by transcribing the digital recordings taken during the interviews. Digital recordings were transcribed verbatim, with the exception of removing any text that would violate the participant's confidentiality. Information collected from the participants was analyzed to identify common themes (Creswell, 2013). Participants' responses were carefully read through multiple times and as a result the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the information supplied (Creswell, 2013). This researcher identified statements that related to the topic by analyzing information collected from the participants and identified which responses provided relevant information, then reduced the relevant information into small segments (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Cooper and Schindler (2006) suggested data results must be reduced to a manageable size, in order to determine their accuracy. This researcher grouped statements into meaningful units that reflected how the participants were experiencing the study topic. Lastly, this researcher constructed a composite by using the various meanings identified as final results to develop an overall outcome of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These statements were organized into computer files, and then grouped into key concepts and recurring themes. The next step was coding, or categorizing the data into themes, using codes drawn from the exact words of the participants.

Interpretation in qualitative research involves extracting the meaning of data from the codes and overall themes (Creswell, 2013). The final phase of data analysis was a schematic representation of the information, illustrating that inductive analysis starts with raw data from

multiple sources, is expanded into more specific themes, and describes the essence of the experience. NVivo 11 was utilized throughout the analytical process to code and identify major themes.

Participant Rights

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described four essential measures that must be taken when conducting research. First, the researcher must obtain informed consent establishing that the participants are at least 18 years old and have acknowledged, usually through a signed statement, their willingness to participate. Second, the researcher must ensure that a mechanism is in place to protect the participants' confidentiality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)). A third measure is for the researcher to determine which data is public and which is private. Lastly, the researcher must implement debriefing procedures that allow participants to ask questions or make comments, and to establish that no harm was done. The researcher followed Merriam and Tisdell's four steps as noted here.

Potential Limitations of the Study

Regardless of how carefully a study is planned, there are always some inherent limitations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012), and the researcher must acknowledge these as well as develop a process to control for these limitations. The nature of research methodology, whether it be qualitative or quantitative, requires articulation of potential bias and bounding of the case. The researcher has taken steps to minimize their influence. Data analysis involves contemplation and decision-making of the researcher, which presents a limitation by researcher subjectivity and potential bias (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Summary

Chapter 3 included a detailed discussion of the research methodology used for this qualitative phenomenological study. As the modified van Kaam methodology has been illustrated through Moustakas's process, data was collected and themes emerged. The research questions were in alignment with the participant population. The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the key elements of leading virtual teams by examining the perceptions of virtual leaders lived experiences. Chapter 4 will include a discussion of the findings and offer an analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand the skills and attributes needed to successfully lead a virtual team. The study explored perceptions of 15 midlevel virtual leaders working for a Fortune 500 company belonging to one of three industries. This chapter includes an overview of the data collection process, a description of the study participants, and the data analysis process.

Qualitative research consultants Bazeley and Jackson (2013) stated that qualitative research software was historically concerned with coding; whereas today, the focus has shifted to providing tools that facilitate independent thinking, data modelling, graphing, and data linking that expanded the ways data can be visualized and interpretted. This made NVivo 11 a good fit for use by this novice researcher.

Figure 2 is a depiction of the main elements of the NVivo 11 workspace. The researcher can customize this workspace to allow more productivity by allowing the researcher to visualize numerous amounts of information in the same place. One of the first steps in utilizing NVivo 11 was to use the NVivo 11 Modeller to create a concept map, identify any assumptions the researcher has about the study, as well as any relationships or patterns the researcher expected to uncover (Maxwell, 2013).

Figure 2. The NVivo 11 Workspace

Data Collection Overview

Participants were presented with 15 open-ended questions through semi-structured interviews, providing an opportunity to share rich descriptions through first-person accounts in informal conversations (Moustakas, 1994). It should be noted that the phenomenological interviews sought to address the following four research questions during the course of this study:

1. What level of technological proficiency is necessary for leading a virtual team?

2. How do virtual leaders describe the difference between leading a co-located versus a virtual team?

3. What challenges do geographical dispersion, temporal distance, and socio-emotional distance present in a virtual workforce environment that may not exist in traditional co-located work settings?

4. How do leaders address the challenges presented by geographical dispersion, temporal distance, and socio-emotional distance differences?

Description of the Population and Sample

Mid-level leaders in a virtual Fortune 500 work environment comprised the sample population of this study. Each participant selected met the following criteria: at least 18 years of age, have previously served as a leader in a face-to-face environment for at least 1 year, are currently a leader in a virtual environment and have served in this role for at least 1 year. Participant Outreach Electronic Mail invitations were presented to potential candidates resulting from profile searches of two social media websites, a social networking site for business people, and through the snowball technique, wherein potential candidates shared the Participant Outreach Electronic Mail with colleagues and/or acquaintances who possessed the necessary qualifications. The outreach emails yielded 15 candidates, all of whom were mid-level managers currently working as a virtual team leader in a Fortune 500 company.

Participants were asked to provide information about their demographic data, including their gender, ethnicity, and age. Both women and men participated in the study. Participants ranged between 23 and 61 years of age. The participants were asked to provide information regarding their professional background, such as employment, length of time working in a managerial capacity for organizations in both traditional and virtual settings, size of company, and age of company.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	# Years Managing in B & M	Current Position	# Years in Current Position	Industry	Size of Company
2001	F	31-35	7 years	Team leader	4 years	eCommerce	>100,000
2002	F	61-65	10 years	Team leader	16 years	Online Retail	>100,000
2003	M	41-45	12 years	Team leader	14 years	CATV	>100,000
2004	M	26-30	6 years	Team leader	2 years	CATV	>100,000
2005	F	51-55	7 years	Team leader	5 years	CATV	>100,000
2006	M	31-35	8 years	Team leader	2 years	Online Retail	>100,000
2007	F	41-45	1 year	Team leader	9 years	CATV	>100,000
2008	M	31-35	7 years	Team leader	2 years	CATV	>100,000
2009	F	26-30	2 years	Team leader	2 years	eCommerce	>100,000
2010	F	51-55	7 years	Team leader	5 years	eCommerce	>100,000
2011	F	36-40	3 years	Team leader	9 years	eCommerce	>100,000
2012	F	56-60	12 years	Team leader	8 years	CATV	>100,000
2013	M	61-65	25 years	Team leader	15 years	CATV	>100,000
2014	F	31-35	6 years	Team leader	4 years	Online Retail	>100,000
2015	F	31-35	1 year	Team leader	2 years	CATV	>100,000

Data Collection Process

Rimando et al. (2015) wrote that data collection is the first step in conducting a research study. Qualitative data collection is the systematic gathering of information for a specific purpose from relevant sources, including observation, interviews, focus groups, document reviews, and electronic devices (Rimando et al., 2015). The study included various data collection methods occurring in two phases. The first phase was a literature review, which included books, ebooks, peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles, and websites. The second phase consisted of participant interviews.

Scheduling and completion of participant interviews took place after receiving IRB approval. After contacting potential participants, and explaining the study and its relevance to leadership in the virtual environment, this researcher provided each participant with a Participant

Consent Form (Appendix C). The rights of each participant were explained in detail. Each

participant contacted agreed to participate in the study; participants contacted did not withdraw

from the study at any time. Prior to starting each interview, signed informed consent forms were

collected by email. The participants were provided an opportunity to peruse questions, and the

rights and anonymity of the participants were reiterated. The phenomenological interviews began

with a brief social conversation to create a relaxed atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994, p. 115). All

participants answered the same interview questions. Interviews were digitally recorded, and at

the conclusion of each interview, participants were thanked for their time and insight;

additionally, a thank you note was emailed to each participant.

The information contained in the literature review provided the basis for development of

the interview questions. Themes identified by the literature review included leadership styles,

theories, and best practices. These themes served as the concepts for investigation by the study.

Analysis and Results

After completion of the interviews, the raw data retrieved from the digital recordings was

transcribed and coded by the researcher before being imported into the NVivo 11 software for

content analysis. To preserve anonymity, while transcribing the raw data into a Microsoft Word

document, the researcher assigned each participant a numerical code. Transcribed data was then

categorized according to question number and imported into NVivo 11.

NVivo 11 uses algorithms to perform content analysis on transcribed text to explore

themes and patterns (QSR International, 2016). NVivo 11 features qualitative analysis tools that

can identify themes, patterns, and relationships among non-numerical, unstructured qualitative

data. One such tool is called the word frequency query, which lists the most frequently used

words, and identifies themes (QSR International, 2016). Each of the non-demographic questions

was queried for word frequency, and the results provided keywords to create nodes. Figure 3

depicts a word cloud created from a word frequency query of the interview transcripts. NVivo 11

uses nodes to help researchers identify evolving themes in the participants' responses.

Figure 3. NVivo 11 Word Cloud

Presentation of the Themes

The responses most frequently generated were best practices followed by participants: (a)

technological proficiency, (b) frequent and concise communication–establishing effective virtual

communication systems and workflow processes; (c) monitoring and assessing individual

performance and adhering to consistent follow-up when performance issues are observed; and

(d) people skills and sincere interest–establishing and maintaining rapport with subordinates in the absence of physical cues.

The following excerpts from the transcribed interviews provide a good example of the range of responses for the first primary theme involving technological proficiency:

Participant 2001. It's necessary to have more than just a basic understanding of computers. You must understand networks and how to troubleshoot issues without always relying on an IT guy. There isn't another "station" to move to and work from for the duration of your shift, so it's necessary to be able to solve problems to get back to work quickly.

Participant 2002. Considering we are completely dependent on technology, we need to have tech-savvy to know how to use hardware and software to facilitate meetings, coach employees, discipline employees, troubleshoot any problems they may have. Technical proficiency with all virtual communication software, ability to mentor and coach employees through setting up their workstation without the ability to physically see them.

Participant 2006. I believe human resource personnel should screen for tech-savvy before offering an interview. When I was interviewed by a previous virtual workplace, the HR rep had me search for information on the internet, using multiple websites, and she was amazed at how quickly I found answers to her questions. If 50 percent of my agents had been given this same screening, they would not have been offered their jobs because their lack of tech-savvy would've been obvious. The same applies to virtual team leaders, in my opinion at least.

Participant 2007. One must have a medium-high to high technical proficiency. This level of proficiency helps the team lead easily understand issues arising from using

agent's home internet service provider with a VPN. Knowing the challenges of how information is transmitted and how to explain challenges to your direct reports in a language easily understood is critical.

Participant 2008. Midlevel understanding of computer, able to update java, flash, IE, how to change settings like volume etc. Since you are virtual you can't just ask for help, you must be able to figure things out on your own.

Participant 2013. I would say you need to be on the better than average side. This is me personally. I can give you an example–look at our 35 time–it's ridiculous. Most of the 35 time is because people in management don't know how to tell the people what to do and what's going on. Too many times they say do a netgauge test or do a reboot or this and that. When all they really need to do is turn around and one of the things is clear your cookies. The other thing is, you can tell when there's a hiccup in the ISP. If there's dropped packets, the issue is caused by their ISP. If there is packet loss, their Citrix is gonna freeze. Because Citrix is a very touchy system, where when the pings are going back and forth, they don't allow a lot of failures in the ping request. Our servers are always asking the agent that's logged in to provide credentials and if the ping pings back and it says here's who I am and it goes back and forth. Well when the packet gets lost, Citrix says it didn't get an answer. Usually it'll let you go 2 or 3 times. Citrix–you can have one pretty good, maybe about 5-10 millisecond packet drop and it's gonna freeze on you. So, it's good to know that stuff because then when the agent says 'Well the company's system is doing this and that.' . . . You're losing revenue when you're paying them for not working when it's their fault. That and you have to be savvy enough to use all the tools that we just mentioned. We have IEX, CRDB, we've got LMNOP you name

it, we have it. You've got to be able to turn around and tell them how to use the stuff

otherwise they're not going to get online. So that's why I said you have to be a little more

tech-savvy than the average person just because we use a technical environment.

The second primary theme, frequent and concise communication, originated through

participants' responses like the following:

Participant 2007. Written communication is definitely the most important skill.

Effective written communication with a clear message that allows for few inferences is

key to maintaining a well-balanced team atmosphere.

Participant 2014. We definitely need to have proficiency in using virtual communication

tools. More than 90 percent of our communication with our agents is through chat, so it's

critical that our typing is clear and concise and that we provide communication that

doesn't leave room for interpretation.

Participant 2009. Virtual managers need to have much better communication than in

brick and mortar, and we need to communicate more frequently because we are never

physically around our employees – the most successful virtual leaders consistently send

out lots of email so everyone is informed at all times.

Participant 2012. You have to ensure you are communicating effectively via email and

chat as you can't just go down the aisle to catch up on something you may have missed.

Following up with each individual to make sure they got the communication and if they

hadn't read it yet, have them do it while you're speaking with them/chatting with them.

When you're virtual you have to rely on how they communicate in chat to indicate if they

are having a bad day or a difficult call. Body language can't be read in a phone coaching

so listening to the tone of voice is very important.

The third primary theme was monitoring and assessing individual performance and adhering to consistent follow-up when performance issues are observed, and the following participants' responses are a good representation of the collective group:

Participant 2013. In a virtual world, you don't see them. What you learn to do is listen to them. You know, anywhere from the silence you may be getting from them. The silence speaks a lot. A lot of times if you're hearing a lot of silence, that's the deer in the headlights. They don't understand what the heck you're telling them. Because they aren't interacting with you, they're just sitting there in silence. Process confirming with them, right after you have a challenging conversation about their poor performance, is about the best way to know they really are understanding what you're coaching. You have to be consistent and follow the company's coaching process, which means you are going to let the agent know you'll be following up with them within a few hours of the coaching session, and then again periodically throughout the next week, to ensure their behavior on the job reflects the commitment they made to improve or change their behavior.

Participant 2003. You have to be very observant on the vocal thing. First you have to forget everything you did in the brick and mortar site when it comes to talking one on one with someone because in a b and m site when you're talking to someone f to f, you can see their eyes. Are their eyes looking at you when they're trying to tell you something–like why they were late, or why they're not hitting their metrics. When you're teaching them, do they have that deer-in-the headlight look? Well then you know you need to go over something.

Participant 2004. We have the tools in the virtual environment to tell if our employees have left their workspace. You know we can spy on . . . um I mean observe., (laughs) . . .

we're not supposed to say spy. We can observe whether or not there's movement on their

computer. We can see what's on their screen. So there are ways to tell basically from the

way it was in the (former workplace) brick and mortar site, you can actually have better

control virtually than you could over there(in the brick and mortar site) because they had

no assigned seats. They used to have people that would log in in the morning and leave,

and come back in the night and it looked like they were working all day and their team

leaders never caught 'em. You can tell what I would've done with those team leaders if I

were the site leader, but still. So the observation for us, is the tools that we get for work at

home and those tools are effective. Basically we have the ability to judge them on their

productivity. In other words, if one agent only take three calls while everybody else has

taken 10 calls in a certain time period then you find out why and if their average handle

time is lower than the others, then you know you need to delve into the tool and figure

out why is this person doing this–what are they doing? Are they in after call work

(ACW)? Are they logged off of the systems? Are they having system issues? Did their

computer crash? So there are a lot of tools we have, and they're universal, they're not just

at our company. (Previous employer) had the same stuff that we have. You can tell if

agents aren't at their workstation. We have our little Hot Pops in chat, where we can

instantly 'pop' a message on their screen on top of everything they're looking at . We can

say "Hey I need you to answer me" Plus, like other companies with virtual employees,

we have CRDB and IEX, where we can tell when they aren't logged in. I use the IEX

Agent Activity report every day to try and make them people crazy, and I show them the

report during their weekly coaching session. When they say "I didn't take a 25 minute

break, I didn't do that, I show them, "Well here it is, right here. You're gone 25 minutes

when you clocked break. She wasn't happy but hey I caught her." (Prior employer) was different. At (previous employer) you had to work at least a year in the (previous employer) main building. Then you had to work 2 months downstairs in the basement all by yourself. Once you could prove that you wouldn't go nuts, which a lot of them would turn around and say 'I don't wanna work at home now' and then, it was a different discipline, and then we could tell by the amounts of calls, what were you doing, depending on what your position was. In our case, we were employee benefits so we only talked to certain people. It was pretty easy to track. If they weren't doing their job, their phone would ring and nobody would answer it. So that was a pretty good indication they're not sitting where they're supposed to be. Because when you logged in, you didn't log out until you took lunch and your two 10 minute breaks and that was it.

Participant 2015. Working virtually from home makes it very easy to feel isolated, hence giving employees much opportunity to slack off, to feel as if no one is watching, to feel as if they are all on their own. The ability to use tools such as phone and remote monitoring are great resources. Being able to remotely control and share screens for training and coaching is a great tool. Also the ability to listen in on live calls and quality control calls and instant message real time in chatrooms really helps new agents resolve issues or make sales. Once you coach them, you have to follow up consistently and immediately if there is a performance problem that continues.

The fourth primary theme focused on the importance of virtual leaders having innate people skills and a sincere interest in the people they are leading, which includes establishing and maintaining rapport with subordinates in the absence of physical cues. The following responses

reflected the related collective thoughts of the participants. It is important to note that some of

the responses contained overlapping themes.

Participant 2003. We are only allowed a short time frame in which you have to learn so

much about an agent. You miss the opportunity of sitting in a cafeteria over a break to

learn about them. The time in a virtual world is mostly spent on coaching and developing

and just a short amount of time to learn about the personal side. You need to fit that in to

drive success and to find out what makes each agent click for working purposes. Virtual

leaders need to learn how to read their employees' emotion, to read more into what an

agent is saying, or what they aren't saying, and over the time with you "how they are

saying it" to understand there is more going on than you can see. In a traditional face-to-

face workplace you can see emotion visibly but for a virtual world you miss all of the

nonverbal cues and have to try and identify them in other ways.

Participant 2015. To remotely manage employees, you have to be very proactive about

reaching out at least once a week to talk voice to voice. Ask them how things are going.

You have to listen to their feedback on how things could be better for them and adapt to

each agent in the way that resonates with them or you will fail miserably.

I enjoyed the virtual embodiment, but if you are not a bubbly personality that

cares about others you won't be able to do your job effectively (Deinert, Homan, Boer,

Voelpel, & Gutermann, 2015). You literally have to put your team first ahead of all else,

give them the tools they need and push them to be their best. You have to be honest about

deficiencies and then show them how to correct it, practice with them, be there step by

step. Creative ways to build morale, constant reassurance and giving accolades aligned

the team for doing a great job, open encouragement and making your team feel like you are in the trenches with them.

Participant 2004. Virtual environments are very rigid, there is no leniency on attendance and metrics. It's easier to fire virtual employees because the human element is missing. It seems crazy that we will not give them paid bereavement unless they provide proof that their relative is dead. At the same time, it's equally crazy that we have employees filing for work comp from injuries from working at home. I've never seen so many employees taking advantage of FMLA ever before. It's the taxpayer who is being taken advantage of. In a face-to-face environment a person has time to tell you a cute story about their dog, or kid, or something funny happened on the way to work. When text is your primary medium coworkers don't share cute stories because it takes too long to type it out. You have limited time to coach people, while you want to build that connection with them the short story is that you don't have time. The non-human factor kicks in, you find yourself making notes about these people's lives, if they planted a garden, if they're moving, do they have grandkids, pets, you have to keep a humanity cheat sheet.

Cheat sheets, have to have cheat sheets, email reminders, to inform me about my people to remind me about them and make them human again, I had to force myself to care about these people, and their lives. Disciplining virtual employees is more mechanical, it's about numbers, you don't care if this person has been here 10 years, is pregnant, single parent, just had a death in the family. In the real world people are more emotional when disciplining their employees. FMLA agents need signed medical form, saying they can have extra 3 minutes to go to the bathroom, and human resource department gets involved in setting an exception on the agents' schedules to

accommodate for extra breaks. Communication without body language, emotional control, time management, you must find the pattern to your day, and stick with it, you must coach people every week. In a virtual world everything is based on numbers, and reports, you have to find time to do those, and talk to your people, be a positive role model, and to geniunely care about people.

Participant 2006. We have HAGPS software to confirm that agents are really working from the location they claim they are working from. This also allows us to check weather conditions to confirm whether or not there is inclement weather when an agent misses work and claims it was because there was an outage caused by a storm. We are given very little time to get to know our agents. Most 1:1 time is spent coaching, developing, and disciplining them, and only a fraction of this time is given to learning about their personal side, even though it is imperative that you know them well and you show sincerity in interacting with them to drive success and to learn how to motivate each one of them. If you aren't a people person, you must learn how to become one. You have fewer methods of communication but you still are required to motivate and inspire a team of diverse employees to perform well. You must lead by example and be responsive and present "in the moment." You must acknowledge your employees and reach out to them within the first few hours they are placed onto your team so that they know they are not on an island.

Summary

Comparing the most frequent responses with the themes identified by the literature triangulated the study findings and enhanced internal validity. Themes identified by NVivo 11 but not indicated by the literature review represented areas of further study.

NVivo 11 contains coding matrices that allow the comparison of coded material across datasets. Identification of numerous new codes resulted from comparing the set of codes identified by the literature review against the codes identified in the data collection. The use of NVivo 11 significantly assisted the study because the NVivo 11 analysis identified new themes not identified in the literature review. The themes identified in the literature review represented the initial set of codes used in transcribing the interviews. The NVivo 11 analysis identified the initial set of codes and identified new themes emerging from the interview data collection. Figure 4 depicts a word tree created by running a text search query of the data in NVivo 11.

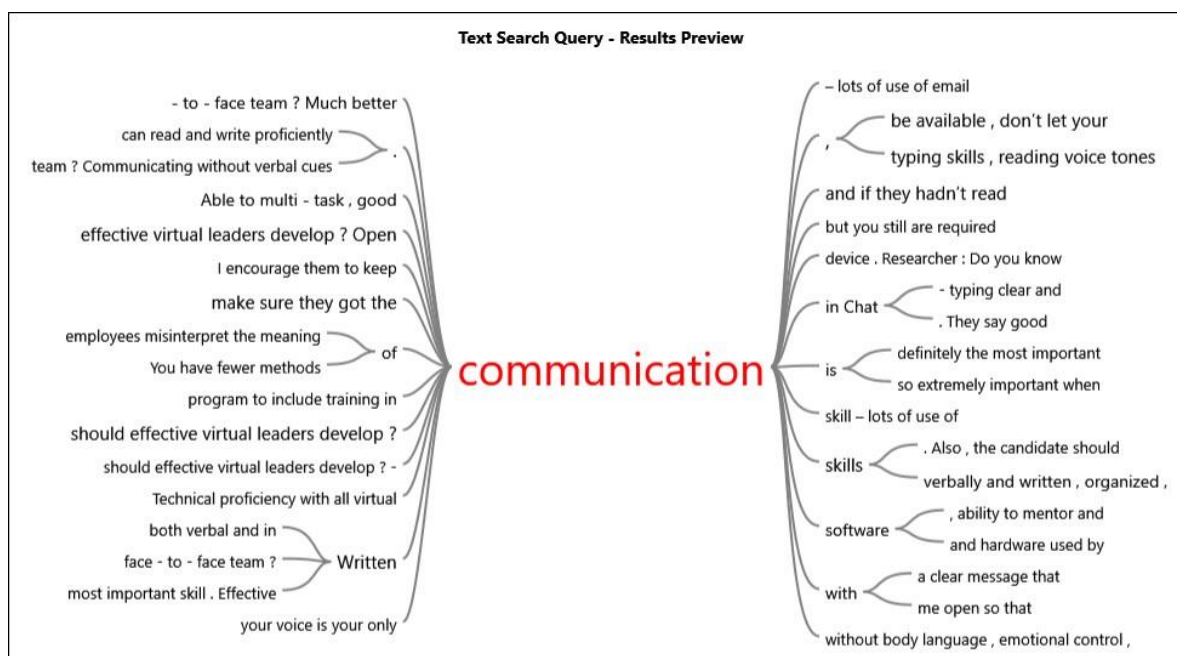*Figure 4*. NVivo 11 Word Tree.

Participants shared lived experiences indicating several thematic categories with behavior characteristics, leadership strategies, and challenges. The participants identified several benefits associated with leading virtual teams. The results from the study included the participants' supporting statements from their lived experiences as virtual team leaders to determine the

emerging themes associated with leading virtual teams. The major thematic categories included: (a) establishing and maintaining rapport with subordinates in the absence of physical cues; (b) monitoring and assessing individual performance and the importance of follow-up on observed performance issues; (c) having inherent people skills to bridge the distance created by working over a virtual platform and across different time zones and geographic locations; and (d) establishing effective virtual communications systems and workflow processes.

Nydegger and Nydegger (2010) reported that virtual teams face challenges with cultural differences, geographic differences, communication, and building trust. The study findings may provide corporate executives with additional perspectives from the lived experiences of virtual team leaders. The participants identified numerous leadership strategies that organizational leaders should put in place for virtual team leaders to lead effectively. Marrewjik (2010) reported effective virtual team leaders should include the following leadership strategies: establish team operating procedures, set goals that require teamwork, communicate often with the team, develop an information exchange protocol, model the desired team behaviors, track team's progress, provide constructive feedback, balance challenges, regularly review communication and performance of the team, and recognize and reward team members.

The study results may provide business leaders with leadership strategies they could practice when leading virtual teams (Settle-Murphy, 2013). DeRue, Barnes, and Morgeson (2010) reported similar results regarding the recommended leadership strategies for virtual team leaders. In addition, Kuruppuarachchi (2009) suggested specific problems virtual leaders experience from technologies and communication regarding collaborative technologies that support the function of a virtual leader. However, researchers suggested virtual teams create unique challenges that an effective leader can overcome with leadership strategies, applications

of training, and technology protocols (Marrewjik, 2010; Settle-Murphy, 2013). In summary, the results of this study suggested behavioral characteristics and leadership strategies to mitigate challenges associated with leading virtual teams successfully (Settle-Murphy, 2013).

The results of this study exemplified the best practices and leadership strategies indicated by effective virtual team leaders. The participants identified the strategies to minimize challenges and project failure rates. Van Marrewijk (2010) suggested that corporate executives measure leadership effectiveness by the performance of their virtual teams. Best practices for virtual team leaders would include assessing their virtual team's success rates as a precursor to meeting the needs and expectations of the corporate executives. Assessment practices certainly could affect future virtual teams' leadership strategies by identifying the virtual teams' project success rates (Settle-Murphy, 2013).

Similarly, Li et al. (2012) advised virtual team leaders to consider leadership characteristics key to motivating team members when implementing and developing virtual teams. Virtual team leaders' characteristics, coupled with an understanding of what motivates team members, is an opportunity for the virtual team leaders to understand effective leadership practices. For example, the researchers collected data from participants who indicated the four categories for transformational leadership include intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, idealized behavior, and inspirational motivation (Li et al., 2012). Research findings confirmed that motivation methods utilized by effective leaders successfully deliver a product. The next section considers the applications of research findings to professional practice.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As corporate executives attempt to stay competitive, the implementation of virtual teams may assist organizations in expanding their capabilities worldwide (Settle-Murphy, 2013). This study supports previous scholarship touting that leadership and success are intrinsically linked (Caya, Mortensen, & Pinsonneault, 2009). The objective of this study was to develop a better understanding of leadership processes for virtual workers / teams in Fortune 500 corporations.

Knowledge of the best practice behaviors and leadership strategies are critical to the overall success of virtual teams (Settle-Murphy, 2013). Understanding how to improve project failure rates is vital, considering that 71 percent of virtual teams fail (Gelbard & Carmeli, 2009). Of relevance is the increased implementation of virtual teams and the minimal progress by corporate executives regarding establishment of virtual team leadership strategies (Settle-Murphy, 2013). Virtual team leaders could benefit by incorporating best practices to improve team performance (Mukherjee et al., 2012). The popularity of virtual teams is increasing and organizations continue to grow into global operations and perform tasks through the advancements of technology (Mukherjee et al., 2012; Settle-Murphy, 2013). Additionally, CEOs and human resource managers could utilize the findings to inform future selection and development of virtual team leaders Richard, Holton III, & Katsioloudes, 2014).

This study examined perceptions of virtual team leaders' lived experiences. The interview instrument contained open-ended questions meant to solicit free and unencumbered thought, with the intent to increase richness of data. Furthermore, findings were based on the perceptions of the leaders who had experienced the same phenomenon of previously managing traditional co-located employees and currently leading virtual teams.

Bass and Avolio (1997) proposed that transformational leaders monitor procedures and develop new procedures to enhance the performance of their operations and teams. Virtual team leaders' behaviors and leadership strategies are key factors in ensuring these teams successfully meet the standards set by business leaders (Settle-Murphy, 2013); therefore, understanding behaviors and leadership strategies can assist corporate executives in selecting the appropriate personnel to lead virtual teams.

A significant number of scholars have argued that transformational leadership is the best leadership style for leading virtual teams (Mukherjee et al., 2012; Madlock, 2012). Mukherjee et al. (2012) proposed that transformational leaders have the attributes to succeed with leading virtual teams because of their ability to motivate team members and develop strategies for virtual team members to follow.

The results from the study may further inform corporate executives and virtual team leaders about the importance of the aforementioned leadership theory when implementing virtual teams. Characteristics, leadership strategies, and challenges associated with virtual teams are the key themes discussed in this section.

Findings

Data analysis of the 15 interview transcripts using keyword frequency queries revealed emergent themes for each study question. The transcribed data were analyzed using the following steps: (a) highlight words and phrases that reflect the essence of experience related to the question topic; (b) extract words and phrases into meaning units; (c) categorize the meaning units into themes; (d) construct individual descriptors of experiences for each study participant; (e) construct general descriptors of experiences to represent the group, which resulted in primary and secondary themes.

Interview Questions 1 to 3

Questions 1 through 3 asked, "What is your age, gender, and race?" Ten females and five males participated in the interviews. Two participants were in the age range of 16 to 30 years of age; five participants were ages 31 to 35; one participant was in the age range of 36 to 40 years of age; two participants were ages 41 to 45; two participants were ages 51 to 55; one participant was in the age range of 56 to 60 years of age; and two participants were 61 to 65 years of age.

Interview Question 4

Question 4 asked, "What amount of time have you spent managing in a face-to-face environment, what was your title, and how many direct reports did you lead?" All 15 respondents had served as mid-level managers for at least 1 year, with 2 to 20 direct reports. Two participants were face-to-face managers for 1 year; nine participants served as face-to-face managers for 2 to 8 years; two were face-to-face managers from 10 to 12 years; and one participant managed in a face-to-face environment for 25 years.

Interview Question 5

Questions 5 asked, "What amount of time have you spent managing a virtual team, what is your title, and how many direct reports do you lead?" All 15 respondents were mid-level managers, and had served in this role for at least one year, with anywhere from 3 to 24 direct reports.

Interview Question 6

Question 6 asked, "What type of company do you currently work for, how many employees are there, and how long has the company been in business?" All 15 respondents worked for a Fortune 500 company in one of three sectors. The companies are ecommerce, online retail, and CATV, and have been in business more than 10 years.

Interview Question 7

Question 7 asked participants to describe their experience transitioning from managing in a brick and mortar environment to leading a virtual team, and asked what challenges and/or opportunities were presented. Responses were coded into four primary themes of communication, monitoring, technological proficiency, and people skills.

The results indicated the importance of having a balance of tech-savvy and people skills to facilitate the leader's experience of transitioning from managing in a traditional environment, to managing in a virtual environment. This finding supported Zaccaro and Bader's (2003) position regarding the creation of effective leadership through the syngerstic interaction of numerous traits. Fifteen respondents emphasized the importance of virtual team leaders having effective communication skills. Twelve respondents stated synchronous communication facilitated immediate feedback and created a better platform for team meetings as well as for one-on-one coachings.

Interview Question 8

Question 8 asked, "What level of technological proficiency is necessary for leading a virtual team?" Fourteen respondents stated that virtual team leaders must have more than a basic understanding of computers, and it is essential to have the ability to understand technology and how to face challenges when technology does not work. One respondent believed a basic understanding of technology was sufficient.

Interview Question 9

Question 9 asked, "How did you address any opportunities/challenges with geographical dispersion?" All 15 respondents saw geographical dispersion as an opportunity to interact with others from different regions with varying backgrounds and experiences.

Interview Question 10

Question 10 asked participants to describe their experience related to working with employees living in different time zones. All 15 respondents stated that they work with employees living in at least three different time zones; but the corporation used a central time zone as EST, so the virtual team leader mainly needed to be mindful of the different time zones when scheduling coachings, team meetings, and when editing employees' timecards.

Interview Question 11

Question 11 asked participants to relate their experience with meeting employees' social and emotional needs in the absence of face-to-face interaction. Thirteen respondents saw this as the greatest issue facing virtual team leaders, and stressed the importance of being readily available to their employees to reduce feelings of isolation, increase morale, company loyalty, and work quality. One respondent believed that socio-emotional needs could be met by providing reassurance in chat rooms. One respondent did not see the importance of handling subordinates' socio-emotional needs, because the job was task-based, and there was not time allotted to properly care for socio-emotional needs.

Interview Question 12

Question 12 asked, "What practices do you believe were essential to you to effectively lead a virtual team that you did not necessarily need to effectively lead your face-to-face team?" One respondent stated they created cheat sheets and email reminders to establish a sense of humanness to each virtual employee. Five respondents shared the notion that disciplining virtual employees was more mechanical because the human element was missing and it was all about numbers. Fifteen respondents emphasized the need for concise verbal and written communication, and the importance of ensuring that one's message was not misinterpreted.

Interview Question 13

Question 13 asked, "If you were the human resource manager in charge of recruitment and hiring, how would you screen for someone to replace you?" Ten respondents suggested screening for a strong ability to multitask, and a person who was able to portray excitement and motivate using only a chat platform. Two respondents suggested screening for candidates who could see the big picture and balance metrics and people. One respondent stated that they would screen for tech-savvy before offering an interview. Five respondents suggested screening for someone who reads and writes well, and who is personable.

Interview Question 14

Question 14 asked, "What behaviors should effective virtual leaders develop?" Fifteen respondents emphasized the following behaviors: self-motivated, articulate, able to multitask well, patient, behavior oriented, open communication, be responsive, be present and in the moment, creative ways to build morale, constant reassurance and giving accolades, open encouragement, any behaviors that drive consistency. Effective leaders should spend the time it takes to lead effectively and consistently, display emotional control, demonstrate time management, coach people every week, be a positive role model, talk to their people, bridge the virtual distance, and sincerely care about their people (Leonardi, Treem, & Jackson, 2010).

Interview Question 15

Question 15 asked, " What additional information would you like to share?" One respondent stated they love working virtually. One respondent stated

It's great not having to get ready for work of a day, working in your pajamas, not fighting

traffic, not having to physically be around the same people in the office day after day.

While it seems that we are making about 30 percent less than others working in brick and

mortar settings, I'm not sure if that happens in other companies. Since we are saving the

company money, I think they should compensate us for that and at least share a portion of

the money we save them. It doesn't seem right that they pay brick and mortar employees

more than us. We do more work than the ftf employees because our work is always

available to us and we put in about sixty to seventy hours each week compared to their

forty-hour work week. One respondent stated " I enjoyed the virtual embodiment, but if

you are not a bubbly personality (Hogan, 2016) that cares about others you won't be able

to do your job effectively. You literally have to put your team first ahead of all else, give

them the tools they need and push them to be their best. You have to be honest about

deficiencies and then show them how to correct it, practice with them, be there step by

step." One respondent stated "One thing that surprised me when I left brick and mortar

and started working virtually, was the amount of drama that goes on when you work

virtually. There is just as much office politics and melodrama in the virtual workplace as

in traditional workplaces.

Eleven respondents did not have additional information to share.

Conclusions

The results of this study included several thematic categories regarding the

characteristics, leadership strategies, and challenges related to effectively leading virtual teams.

Corporate executives may benefit from selecting virtual team leaders with a transformational

leadership style when managing teams, training and developing their personnel, and building

their team chemistry (Zhang, Cao, & Tjosvold, 2011; Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, &

Gutermann, 2015). Transformational leadership encompasses the leadership characteristics that

effective virtual team leaders possess, including attributes such as developing a common identity,

successfully navigating integrated roles, skillfully developing personal relationships, and performance acknowledgement that reinforces cooperative goals (Zhang et al., 2011). Given this description, these leadership strategies could vary between virtual team leaders; however, several study participants identified behaviors as successful that fall within transformational leadership characteristics. Mulla and Krishnan (2011) posited that virtual team leaders with transformational leadership attributes mitigate opportunities to minimize failure rates with improvements in performance, which supports the findings of this study.

This study utilized Kouzes and Posner (2011)'s five key behavioral variables associated with exemplary leadership: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) enable others to act, (d) challenge the process, and (e) encourage the heart. Given the practical application of the key behavioral variables identified by Kouzes and Posner (2011), and the solid correlation this study identified from the perspective of the leaders, it is reasonable to conclude that effective virtual leadership may contain elements of transactional, transformational, and situational leadership (Deichmann & Stam, 2015).

Implications and Recommendations

The research study's findings support much of the previous literature on transformational leadership as being the leadership style proven most effective in virtual teams. Work by Caldwell et al. (2012), Jones and Rudd (2008), Walumba, Mayer, Wang, Wanh, Workman, & Christensen (2011), Groves & LaRocca (2011), and Kouzes and Posner (2012) are all examples of research supported by data that connects effective leadership to leadership style and ethical behavior. By examining virtual team leaders' perceptions of key differences between leading co-located and virtually, this study's findings determined that there was a correlation between effectively

leading virtual teams and transformational leadership. This provides the basis for further investigation and expansion in the field of study on virtual team leadership.

Although some corporations have been slow to embrace the concept of virtual work, it is anticipated that this work model will increase in popularity as more leaders recognize the associated benefits (Scott, Dam, Páez, & Wilton, 2012). It is important to provide a deeper understanding of virtual work, as Green and Roberts (2010) maintained that the virtual organization is one of the most significant innovations affecting the structure of organizations in the 21st century. The decision to implement virtual work arrangements is a business management decision and business management decisions directly impact employee performance (Nebl & Schroeder, 2011). It is essential that business executives have adequate information to help with business decisions related to virtual work and to sustain leadership effectiveness to meet corporate objectives (Santos, Caetano, & Tavares, 2015).

Corporate executives and virtual team leaders may benefit from the results of this study by applying identified best practices. Understanding the best practices leadership strategies provides corporate executives additional ways to mitigate the challenges unique to virtual teams. The impact on business occurs through assisting corporate executives in identifying the leadership strategies needed to develop successful virtual teams.

Use of virtual teams is expanding across the globe and increasing in organizations with offshore operations. An increase in virtual team leaders' effectiveness may provide virtual teams the ability to reduce the extensive project failures (Gelbard & Carmeli, 2009). In response to project failure rates, organizations are seeking the correct individuals to successfully lead virtual teams (Earnhardt, 2009). Brandt, England, and Ward (2011) reported that virtual teams could lessen the failure rates and have a better opportunity for success with improved knowledge in

communication skills, advanced technology, and cultural differences. Advancements in technology allow corporate executives the ability to access talent across the globe. The results of the study could assist corporate executives in utilizing appropriate advancements in technology and implementing leadership strategies to be more effective to alleviate project failures.

Findings from this research study have several aspects beneficial to corporate executives and virtual team leaders. This study may add to the existing body of knowledge on characteristics and leadership strategies of virtual team leaders. Initiating practices and strategies of effective virtual team leaders may contribute to the determination of which practices and strategies are necessary to competently manage team members across dispersed locations. Moreover, corporate executives could gather this information to increase their knowledge of screening and selecting personnel to fit these roles, which in turn could improve chances for success.

Corporate executives realize the benefits of implementing virtual teams by lowering the costs of rental space for offices and the associated facility expenses. By having a better understanding of the behaviors and leadership strategies of effective virtual leaders, there is a greater chance for corporate executives to assign personnel who could succeed, which in turn would lower or eliminate the risks of project failures.

The study is pertinent to organizations across multiple sectors; therefore, numerous organizations could gain value from the findings because of the financial implications. Corporations that incorporate virtual teams could improve their knowledge regarding the behaviors and leadership strategies of effective virtual leaders, which would enhance their efficiencies and project success rates (Eissa et al., 2012).

Recommendations for Action

Stakeholders pressure their enterprises to become more efficient (D'Souza & Colarelli, 2011). Under pressure to increase efficiency while expanding business operations, many corporate executives have implemented virtual teams to collaborate on these tasks (Quisenberry, 2011). Organizations that incorporate virtual teams have the ability to expand operations across geographic regions, which bridges the gap between business structures throughout the country.

Despite the various advantages and popularity of virtual teams, Gelbard and Carmeli (2009) reported that virtual team projects fail 71 percent of the time. This is a primary reason that it is essential for corporate executives to gain a better understanding of the attributes necessary for virtual team leaders to lead these operations. Also, business executives could gain knowledge from the findings from this study to develop processes that incorporate these desired leadership strategies to mitigate project failures. In order to address the failure rates of virtual teams, it is recommended that corporate executives review the findings from the study and consider implementing recommendations to support their organization.

1. Corporations could evaluate prospective virtual team leaders to make sure they have the desired characteristics and attributes to accomplish the goals and prove successful in a virtual setting.

2. Corporations could evaluate prospective candidates' leadership strategies to make sure the identified characteristics support their chances of being successful in a virtual setting.

3. Corporations could provide training to assist virtual team leaders with leading teams in a virtual setting and increase their knowledge of the desired characteristics to lead a

team in a virtual setting and improve on their leadership strategies to be effective with

assisting virtual team members to succeed on team projects.

4. Corporations could identify veteran virtual team leaders to establish a mentoring

program that could assist other virtual team leaders with less tenure leading virtual

teams.

5. Corporations could use the findings from the study as a resource to recruit and select

prospective virtual team leaders.

6. Corporations could use the findings from the study to develop strategic plans when

preparing to implement a virtual team, such as communication and technological

strategies to assist with the challenges that accompany teams in a virtual setting.

7. Various corporations and corporate executives could benefit from the findings of the

study to help them improve their business operations, development, expansions, and

implementation of virtual teams.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study explored the perceptions of virtual team leaders' lived experiences to identify

distinctions between face-to-face team leadership and virtual leadership. After collecting the data

and identifying the emerging themes, there are several possibilities to build upon this qualitative

study regarding the practices and strategies of effective virtual team leaders.

The first recommendation consists of a follow-up study that uses the phenomenological

approach, but includes participants from a wide array of organizations, rather than solely

focusing on Fortune 500 companies existing in three business sectors, to establish whether or not

the findings are applicable. Additionally, a follow-up study that uses a phenomenological

approach that includes the management theories of transformative or servant leadership, could provide a different outlook to the interview questions (Keith, 2008; King, 2012; Glanz, 2007).

A major gap in research concerned the lack of guidance for screening, selecting, developing and training leaders for future virtual teams (Santos, Caetano, & Tavares, 2015). A researcher could conduct a study similar to this study, with a focus on similarities and differences between training programs for co-located and virtual team leaders.

Two additional considerations are: (a) soon (by 2020) there will be five generations working together in organizations, and the youngest generation will have vastly different technological savvy in comparison to the most senior generation; and (b) work-life expectancy is increasing, and employees may find themselves still working at age 75, which will expand the overlap of generations. There could potentially be seven generations at work at the same time. To date, there is exiguous research available on this topic; although the topic will become increasingly important with the boomers' exodus out of, and Gen Z's entrance into, the workforce. A study of the generational divide's impact to leadership could assist enterprise executives in preparing leaders to integrate each generation with others.

The researcher served as a manager in a number of co-located settings between seven to ten years ago, and in the recent past six years led numerous virtual teams. Prior to receiving IRB approval and collecting data for the study, the researcher had predetermined thoughts that the behaviors and practices of virtual team leaders were significantly different from the behaviors and leadership practices in traditional face-to-face teams. For the line of business the researcher had directed in a virtual environment, the transactional leadership model was best suited. This is because the work followed a top-down hierarchical structure.

After researching numerous articles, it was determined that the appropriate leadership method for a virtual team, or at least for a virtual team belonging to a corporation with little to no experience with virtual employees, was transactional leadership. During the doctoral study process, the researcher reviewed scholarly articles that recommended additional leadership approaches, such as transformational leadership. Even after reviewing the literature for the topic, the researcher was unsure that the findings from the study would demonstrate the same results by the responses of the participants when they expressed their lived experiences and perceptions.

Various study participants believed that virtual teams were dynamic due to their dispersion across different geographic regions. Several participants expressed that the transformational leadership approach was their company's *professed* method for managing dispersed teams; although they contended that their company's *actual* management practices more closely resembled authoritarian (De Hoogh, Lindred, Greer, Den, & Hartog, 2015) and transactional leadership styles because managers were required to give orders to employees and ensure the successful performance. Numerous researchers viewed transformational leadership as the appropriate leadership approach for leading virtual teams. However, some of the participants identified other management approaches that would be effective, such as charismatic, transformative and servant leadership. These perspectives provided inspiration to develop another perspective towards the leadership approach while researching the phenomenon of leadership practices of effective virtual team leaders.

Additionally, little research has focused on the unguided perspectives of leaders nor on virtual work teams that exist for undefined time periods. Instead, the focus has previously been on perspectives gathered from surveys with a set number of responses, and from the perspectives

of employees working on geographically dispersed virtual teams created for projects that lasted only until the conclusion of the project. This study addressed that gap in the research.

An added strength of the study was its context in a real-world setting (Yukl, 2013). Much of the current literature involves leadership studies with the geographically dispersed team context being educational settings with student subjects not truly experiencing the same phenomenon of real employees performing against time and resource constraints (Al-Ani, Horspool, & Bligh, 2011).

Finally, this study was unique in the fact that it examined leaders' perceptions of leadership techniques from the leader's self-assessment as opposed to examining effective leadership components from the viewpoint of the subordinate. This represents a departure from previous research allowing greater insight into what qualities are essential to lead virtual teams, from an additional perspective (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). The findings from this study may add to the body of knowledge by providing a greater understanding of what behaviors and strategies are practiced by effective virtual leaders.

Summary

This study began with the simple argument that virtual leadership has been largely understudied despite its growing prevalence in today's global industries, failing to be significantly distinguished from traditional or face-to-face (ftf) leadership. The researcher then sought to shed light on virtual leadership, creating a historical perspective that actually revealed virtual leadership as a phenomenon far from new to enterprises. Through qualitative phenomenological research into the lived experiences of fifteen Fortune 500 virtual team leaders, this dissertation explored the behaviors of virtual leaders that contribute to the success of virtual organizations.

To respond to the dearth of knowledge on successful translation of face-to-face leadership models into equally successful leadership of virtual teams, the researcher deemed it necessary to utilize participants with rich experience in both traditional and virtual environments as an approach to best inform the study. By selecting participants who had previous experience managing employees in traditional environments, it provided a real-world implication from which to derive the primary areas for future study into the field of virtual leadership. The study emphasized the need for leadership training specific to leaders of virtual employees. The findings from the study could assist corporate executives in shortening the learning curve for the development of effective virtual team leaders.

The study's results revealed several challenges that virtual team leaders must work through in order to succeed. The main advantages were building rapport among physically separate team members and leaders, and instantly monitoring virtual team members. Leadership best practices identified from the research include (a) responsiveness, (b) tech-savvy, (c) social aptitude, (d) open-mindedness, (e) clear and direct communication skills, and (f) flexibility. Also, the research showed that virtual team leaders should use transformational leadership and under certain scenarios a hybrid managerial strategy with the incorporation of transactional and servant leadership.

In summary, successfully leading a virtual workforce requires leadership actions that reflect a deep and genuine interest in the virtual employees, as well as an effective level of communication across all types of media. It requires trust and a willingness to provide virtual employees with meaningful work (Mackenzie, 2010). Virtual leaders with a flexible leadership style, well-established interpersonal, conceptual, and technical skills, and a sense of contextual intelligence possess the attributes needed to successfully lead a virtual work group (Yukl, 2013).

Enterprises need to invest time and resources in training those who manage virtual employees to lead more and employ behaviors that ignite a spirit of commitment, and performance on the part of virtual employees.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT OUTREACH ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear (Name Here):

I am reaching out to you today in hopes that you will consider participating in my new academic research study about people like you who provide leadership over a virtual platform.

I am currently a doctoral student in educational leadership at the University of New England and I also currently work for a Fortune 500 company, leading a virtual team. I respectfully seek your knowledge and perspectives as my study explores leadership of virtual teams in Fortune 500 companies. It is my sincere hope by your generous contribution to this research that you will also learn much about yourself through sharing of best practices and insights.

Please know that my research study is completely voluntary and participants may opt-out any time. It is absolutely confidential and involves qualitative data collection via interviews. It will be conducted with great care for you, your time and your organization, and has been approved to proceed by my research advisor and the Institutional Review Board at my university.

I am seeking a hand-selected, exclusive group for this study and need to have participants in place ASAP as data is being collected over the next few weeks. Please contact me to express your interest, refer other virtual team leader colleagues, or for more information or questions, at dchriestenson@une.edu or 620-249-0595. Thanks so much for your consideration.

Best Regards-

DeAnn Chriestenson

Candidate, Doctor of Education, University of New England

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

1. Age?

2. Gender?

3. Race?

4. Amount of time spent managing in a face to face environment?

4a) What is/was your position and title?

4b) Number of direct reports?

5. Amount of time spent managing a virtual team?

5a) What is/was your position and title?

5b) Number of direct reports?

6. Describe the business industry you currently work for.
    6a) Number of employees?
    6b) How long has the company been in business?

7. Describe your experience in moving from your role as a leader of a face-to-face team to leading a virtual team? What opportunities and/or challenges were presented?

8. What level of technological proficiency is necessary for leading a virtual team?

9. Describe your experience related to geographical dispersion? How did you address any opportunities and/or challenges?

10. Describe your experience related to working with employees living in different time zones?

11. Describe your experience related to socio-emotional distance by which I mean meeting employees' social and emotional needs at work in the absence of face-to-face interaction?

12. What practices do you believe were essential to you to effectively lead a virtual team that you did not necessarily need to effectively lead your face-to-face team?

13. If you were the human resource manager in charge of recruitment and hiring, how would you screen for someone to replace you?

14. What behaviors should effective virtual leaders develop?

15. What additional information would you like to share?

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Perceptions of E-Leaders on Virtual Team
Leadership
Principal Investigator(s): DeAnn Chriestenson
                                University of New England
                                dchriestenson@une.edu
                                (620)249-0595
Faculty Advisor: Carol Holmquist, EdD
                        cholmquist@une.edu
                        (804)305-5570
Introduction

Please read this form, you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of
this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose
to participate, document your decision.
You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during
or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether
you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of leading virtual teams.

Who will be in this study?

You have been identified as a potential participant because you currently lead a virtual
team, you are employed by a Fortune 500 company, and you have previously managed a
team in a traditional setting.
You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.
Approximately 15 participants will be involved.

What will I be asked to do?

You are being asked to participate in a telephone interview. During the interview you will
be asked questions about your day-to-day experience as a leader of a virtual team. The
interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon date and time and will take about 30
minutes.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There may be a benefit to others, the organization, etc..

What will it cost me?

There are no costs incurred by participants.

How will my privacy be protected?

The telephone interview will take place in a private locked office behind a closed door. The results of the project will be published in a dissertation that will be accessible through ProQuest Central. your results, please disclose this information to the participants.

How will my data be kept confidential?

This study is designed to be anonymous, this means that no one can link the data you provide to you, or identify you as a participant.
  - o *NOTE: Anonymity means that records will not include any personal identifiers or code numbers that may link a participant to specific information*
Your identity will be kept private.
The data will be stored in a fireproof locked file cabinet in the locked office of the principal investigator.
Data will be stored on a password protected computer and on a secure server at UNE that is only accessible from UNE owned computers. All computers that will be used to access research data will have their own hard drive encrypted.
Data will be coded.
Data will be encrypted using industry standards
No individually identifiable information will be collected
Please note the Institutional Review Board of University of New England may review the research records.
A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least 3 years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only the principal investigator and her faculty advisor will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.
Audio recordings will be stored on a micro SD card that only the principal by investigator and her faculty advisor will have access to. After recorded information has been transcribed, the micro SD card will be physically destroyed by snapping it into 2 pieces, then disposing of each piece through a garbage disposal.
The results of this research will be used for a doctoral research study at the University of New England. It may be submitted for further publication as a journal article or as a presentation.
You can request research findings by contacting my faculty advisor Carol Holmquist, EdD, at (804)305-5570, cholmquist@une.edu

What are my rights as a research participant?

> Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England.
> You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
> If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

What other options do I have?

> You may select a different platform to conduct the interview, e.g. Skype, IM.
> You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

> The researcher conducting this study is DeAnn Chriestenson, dchriestenson@une.edu, (620)249-0595.

For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact my faculty advisor

Carol Holmquist, EdD, at (804)305-5570 or cholmquist@une.edu.

If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research

related injury, please contact Carol Holmquist, EdD, at (804)305-5570 or cholmquist@une.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call

Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or

irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Statement

I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant's signature or	Date
Legally authorized representative	

Printed name

Researcher's Statement

The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.
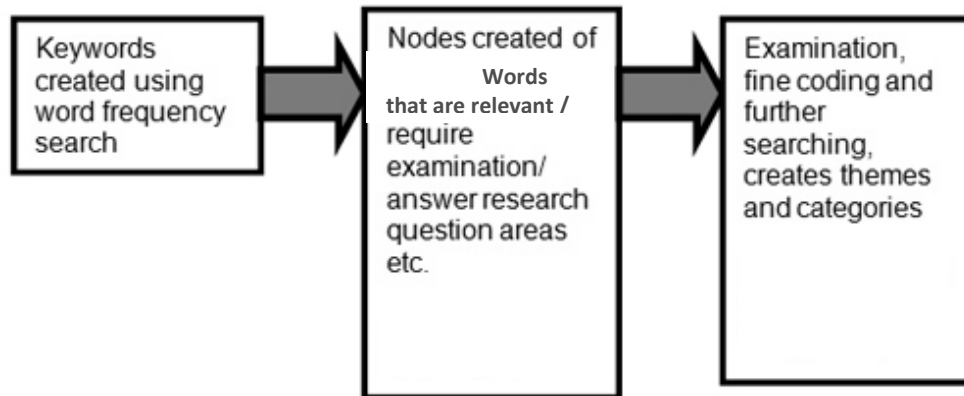
Researcher's signature	Date

Printed name

APPENDIX D

NVIVO 11 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

APPENDIX E

NVIVO 11 CODING PROCESS

| Keywords created using word frequency search | Nodes created of **Words** **that are relevant /** require examination/ answer research question areas etc. | Examination, fine coding and further searching, creates themes and categories |

1. Identify relevant information

2. Assign a word or phrase (a concept) that best represents the relevant information, making sure it is consistent with the research question

3. Document why the information or node is important by making note using the NVivo 11 memo option

APPENDIX F

NVIVO 11 FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

	Theme A	Theme B	Theme C
Case 1	Summary	Summary	Summary
Case 2	Summary	Summary	Summary
Case 3	Summary	Summary	Summary

 NVivo 11 framework matrix:

Each case node represents an interview participant

Each cell in the grid represents the intersection of a case and a theme

The researcher enters text into each cell to summarize the source content relevant to each case

and theme

Summarizing source content allows large volumes of interview data to be condensed into more

manageable sizes which assists in gaining insight and becoming more familiar with data

Benefits:

- See everything about a theme by glancing down a column

- See how themes relate to each other for each participant by glancing across a row

- Compare experiences of participants by comparing one row to another