ENHANCING SUCCESS THROUGH LEADERSHIP

by

Wendy T. Jewell

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

This study sought to obtain a better understanding of how leaders influence the culture of the organization to enhance performance. A post-positive qualitative research case study was conducted at a state agency in the Commonwealth of Virginia. During this study, 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with agency employees who participated on a project to implement a smart phone fuel application. This fuel application automated specific manual processes related to their fuel management program. While the fuel application project implementation was finishing, the interviews were conducted. During these interviews, participants provided their perspectives on leadership, communication, empowerment, project outcomes, lessons learned, and suggestions for future agency success. The interview responses of the participants were transcribed and coded. From these codes, five themes emerged during data analysis. These themes include leadership expectations, effective communication, lessons learned, project perspectives, and future agency success. The interpretation of these themes provide feedback to the senior executives of the agency regarding current initiatives and the change readiness of employees. Participants provided their perspectives on how the agency can be more successful in the future. While specifics are relative to the agency, the generalization of these themes have applicability to other organizations. Senior leaders can leverage these themes to initiate internal organizational dialogue. This dialogue can foster a more holistic understanding of the organization as well as identifying areas for improvement. Once identified, further collaboration through a cross-functional group of employees can also develop and implement creative solutions to enhance organizational performance toward the shared goals and objectives.

Keywords: leadership, organizational culture, transformation, communication, empowerment

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The Foundation of the Study section provides the basis for this qualitative case research study on the actions of a leader. Initially, the background and context of the phenomenon is presented prior to identifying the problem. The purpose of the study follows the identification of specific problem being examined. Following the purpose, the nature of the study provides an overview of the methodology used which guided the overall research. The research questions which guided this study are then identified and discussed. This discussion includes how the question aligned with the problem statement as well as the relevant academic disciplines. The conceptual and theoretical framework follows this discussion providing further details regarding the initial research project planning. The framework identifies the primary concepts and relevant theories for this study. A listing of terms and their definition follows the presentation of the framework to facilitate a collective understanding of identified terms.

Section 1 continues by providing additional content which further delineates the boundaries of this research study. These boundaries include the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations which were identified. Following these disclosures, the significance of this study in relation to the field of business administrative leadership as well as the Biblical integration are discussed. The final part of this section provides a brief review of extant academic literature regarding leadership, organizational culture, and organizational performance.

Background of the Problem

In today’s dynamic business environment, an organization must constantly adapt to changing external environmental conditions to achieve the desired goals established by its senior leadership. Leaders intend these desired goals to be strategic in nature and align with the mission and vision of the organization. Oftentimes, the mission and vision seek to be the best in providing products or services to their customers. Yet, the demands or needs of customers change constantly. Thus, organizations need to continuously evolve their products, services, and processes to better leverage limited resources in its operations. This evolution includes what they do and how they do it. The what and the how reflect the values, behaviors, and actions which are prevalent in the organizational culture. In essence, the corporate culture, its values, behaviors, and actions, needs to continually adapt for the organization to have long-term viability (Wu et al., 2019). Yet, the implemented change will more likely focus on the tangible resources rather than the intangible drivers of the productivity.

Senior leaders will oftentimes initiate transformation projects to implement technology. This technology is intended to provide new organizational tools to improve communication and operational performance (Correani et al., 2020). The disclosed expectations focus on the achievement of key performance metrics of productivity. The anticipated benefits can also include higher levels of employee engagement, training, and retention although they may not be explicitly stated (Jones, 2020). These transformation projects oftentimes consume a significant amount of financial and labor resources across the organization. Yet, over two-thirds of digital transformation projects fail to meet their expected benefits. This failure has a long-term financial and operational detriment to the organization (Correani et al., 2020). The costs of digital transformation projects that failed, were delayed, or had a reduction in scope averaged $5.5 million per organization in 2020 (Jones, 2021). Many of these costs were a result of poor organizational change management practices (Jones, 2020). Due to the negative impact of failed projects, leaders seek to prevent or mitigate future failures. Oftentimes initiate a new transformation project. While the transformation project is intended to enhance the effectiveness or efficiency of operational actions of employees, the normal behaviors and values in the culture of the organization may impede the success of the project.

The culture of the organization is significantly influenced by the values, behaviors, and actions of the senior leader (Hughes, 2016; Kim, 2020). An understanding of how the actions of the leader influence the performance of the organization is necessary to better diagnose their current situation and determine a path forward. In seeking this understanding or guidance, a search of extant literature was performed. While there are significant articles pertaining to relevant theories, there is a gap in academic literature examining the actions of a leader during a transformation effort (Canterino et al., 2018).

Problem Statement

The general problem being addressed was the inability of leaders to effectively change the culture of the organization during a transformation project resulting in lower-than-expected results. The culture of the organization influences the work, which is performed, both how and what is accomplished (Martinez et al., 2015). This influence includes short and long-term projects which are strategic in nature. These projects can significantly change the products, services, and processes in the organization. These changes oftentimes involve transforming processes within the organization to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. Surprisingly, the majority of transformation projects initiated do not fully achieve their planned expected benefits (Tursunbayeva et al., 2020). The underachievement could be attributed to the culture of the organization. Transformation projects often fail when a lack of trust permeates the culture across the entire organization (Hughes, 2016). In addition, the competition for power and control of resources, often prevalent in the culture of bureaucratic organizations, can foster decreased performance of their goals and initiatives (Faik et al., 2019). Leaders and their actions have an impact on the culture which impacts the ability of the organization to change.

A recent case study identified the positive outcomes as a result of an organizational transformation. After the leader made some positive changes in his actions, the employees correspondingly responded resulting in an enhancement in their overall organizational effectiveness (Canterino et al., 2018). Since actions of a leader can have a positive effect, they could also have a negative effect. This negative effect could be hindering the organization from achieving their goals and objectives. Therefore, the specific problem being addressed was the inability of leaders to change the organizational culture during a governmental agency transformation project located in Virginia resulting in lower-than-expected results.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine actions of a leader on the culture of the organization during a transformational project. Transformational projects seek to implement change in organizational behaviors and actions to better achieve desired results. These desired results oftentimes align with higher levels of performance against the shared strategic goals and objectives of the organization (Hughes, 2016). While other public administration projects may seek to improve efficiency and effectiveness, transformation projects do not involve changes in policies, building construction investments, or implementing new public programs. These transformational projects are management led efforts to address internal activities (Fred & Hall, 2017). Transforming how things are done, however, creates change which is often received with significant employee resistance (Hughes, 2016). Oftentimes, higher levels of employee resistance to change are observed in public sector organizations. Additional research on transformation efforts is needed in the public sector to better understand how leaders can successfully guide their organizations through change (de Gennaro, 2019). This examination was intended to add to the existing body of academic literature by providing a case study of the phenomenon as it occurs in a public sector organization. This case study sought to examine the actions of a leader during a transformation project in a governmental agency located in Virginia.

Research Questions

The research questions guide the research performed in case studies by asking questions that pertain to the problem statement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To examine the actions of a leader and their impact on transformation initiatives, three main questions were identified. These questions are listed below with any identified subsequent questions. Following this list, a brief overview provides a further explanation of each question as well as identifies the academic disciplines addressing facets of the problem statement.

RQ1 – How are leaders ineffective in changing the culture of their organization during a transformation project?

RQ1a. What are the effective actions or behaviors of organizational leaders?

RQ1b. What are the ineffective actions or behaviors of organizational leaders?

RQ2 – How can organizations successfully improve performance to obtain expected results?

RQ2a. What determines organizational success?

RQ2b. What determines an improvement in performance?

RQ3 – What are critical success factors in organizational culture that impact success in achieving organizational initiatives?

Research question 1 sought to identify how leaders are ineffective in changing the culture of their organization during a transformation project? With this question, there were two subsequent questions identified. What were the effective actions or behaviors of organizational leaders? What were the ineffective actions or behaviors of organizational leaders? These qualitative research questions sought to examine what factors determined the effectiveness of a leader to guide their organization through change. The data obtained during the research study sought to provide an understanding of leadership. From this understanding, an examination of the actions of a leader and the corresponding influence over the culture of their organization could emerge. Extant literature provided the initial foundation for this understanding. Relevant academic support was obtained from multiple disciplines in extant literature. These disciplines included, but was not limited to, business, psychology, organizational change, and sociology. The extant literature also provided the definition of corporate culture and its influence on the organization used in this study. The literature review also examined leadership theories and models. This reviews also included the Biblical Worldview regarding the actions of a leader prescribed by God in His Word.

Research question 2 sought to foster an understanding on how organizations can successfully improve performance. This research question contained two subsequent questions. What determined organizational success? What determined an improvement in performance? These questions sought to examine how organizations can be successful in their strategic initiatives. The literature review sought to identify those factors that impact the level of performance from current academic literature. These factors could also explain why organizations underperform against expected results. The presentation drew from the extant literature in the quality management, organizational change, and strategic management disciplines. This literature review examined theories as well as prevalent models. The factors of effective change as well as critical success factors for improving performance were also examined.

Research question 3 sought to identify the critical success factors in organizational culture impacting the successful achievement of organizational initiatives. This question sought to gain insight from current academic literature to define the critical factors necessary in a culture of the organization to make it successful in adapting to change. The ensuing review examined academic literature from multiple disciplines including, but not limited to, organizational change, quality management, psychology, and strategic management. The extant literature provided an understanding of why change is necessary for the long-term success of the organization. The review also examined the necessity of change as an on-going process rather than a singular incident. The literature review also presented extant theories and models reflecting the importance of cultural influences on organizational outcomes.

Nature of the Study

The Nature of the Study section presents the framework used in this study. This framework guided how data were gathered to answer these research questions. The identification of the appropriate research framework was derived by determining the research paradigm, design, and methodology. An overview of each framework element is provided prior to identifying the appropriate selection for this study. Initially, the presentation begins with the types of research paradigms. Next, the discussion transitions to the potential research designs for the study. After identifying the appropriate design, the corresponding research methodologies are discussed. The last section provides an overview of the role and importance of triangulation in conducting research.

Discussion of Research Paradigms

Determining the appropriate research paradigm was a crucial step early in the planning process of this research study. Social science research fosters the need to clearly define a paradigm. The paradigm provides an underlying perspective in which the research is intended to be viewed (Kankam, 2019). A research paradigm has three main components. The first component is the worldview of the researcher. This worldview advises the perspective or lens of the researcher through which they interpret the phenomenon. The second component is the depth of the relationship between the researcher and the subject. The nature of this relationship can impact the level of independence or bias the researcher has. The third component includes the methods the researcher will use to obtain the necessary data or knowledge. Once the paradigm is determined, the design, methodology, and appropriate triangulation strategies can be better selected and implemented (Cox & Hassard, 2005; Iofrida et al., 2018).

Although their differences often appear subtle, there are four types of research paradigms (Iofrida et al., 2018). Each paradigm has value and should be represented in the literature for a more holistic view of phenomenon (Patel, 2018). The four paradigms include pragmatism, interpretivism, positivism, and post-positivism. Pragmatism promotes shared meanings and actions. This paradigm believes that truth can be textual, but its generalization can foster application(s) to other situations. Pragmatism can be used with all types of research designs and multiple research methods. Interpretivism paradigm postulates that reality is understood in the context of the society or environment in which it occurs. Therefore, reality changes as the underlying social constructs evolve over time. The use of qualitative, or flexible, methods is necessary to understand the phenomenon and its context.

The contrasting paradigm is positivism. Positivism assumes that universal truths or laws exist. These truths are reality and can be proven regardless of the situation. This paradigm requires the use of scientific or quantitative methods to prove the validity (Kankam, 2019). The final paradigm is post-positivism. Post-positivism is a blend of interpretivism and positivism. This paradigm seeks to provide a broader understanding of a phenomenon as the absolute truth cannot be found. As a result, the post-positivist paradigm necessitates a flexible or mixed design method. This paradigm also fosters the use of triangulation of multiple data sources to mitigate potential biases during the study. The data triangulated can be quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of the two (Panhwar et al., 2017).

Discussion of Design

The type of data to be collected and triangulated also corresponds to one of three types of research designs. These designs include fixed, flexible, and mixed methods. Fixed methods are also referred to as quantitative studies. Quantitative studies use data collection instruments in their research to test theories. The collected data are examined statistically to objectively explain relationships between the identified variables. These studies are often conducted in an environment which is controlled by the researcher. Flexible, or qualitative studies, seek to find meaning from the descriptive data obtained and the themes that emerge. These studies are often conducted in the environment of the participants and incorporate the contextual environment into the interpretations. The final design is mixed methods. This method includes the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. This intermingling of data can provide a more holistic perspective of the phenomenon or problem being examined (Creswell, 2014; Tobi & Kampen, 2018).

Discussion of Method

This research study followed a post-positivism paradigm and a qualitative single case study methodology. The single case study was selected as this methodology fosters examining the actions of leaders within their organizational context to better understanding of the events. The case study method fostered themes to emerge from the data. These themes can have broader application (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The post-positivism paradigm aligned with case study research as the purpose sought to examine the phenomenon in its natural environment without external manipulation (Kankam, 2019; Yin, 2018). The following section explores the justification for the selected paradigm, design, and methodology.

Qualitative research enables the use of descriptors. These descriptors enable a more robust understanding of the experience. In contrast, quantitative research focuses on the testing of relationships to determine correlations or cause and effect relationships. While the examination of causation is beneficial, analyzing quantitative data does not always provide a holistic view of the complexities of a phenomenon or shared experience as in qualitative research. These complexities are often dependent upon the relationships between the participants and their environment. In addition, the study of these complexities often enables the emergence of themes and lessons from which others can learn. These learnings can generate new theories or understandings of the issues faced and the environments in which they transpire (Baškarada & Koronios, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

These learnings are derived from observations, interviews, and artifacts that are obtained during the data collection and analysis phases of the study. The selected research methodology guides and informs these phases. The predominant methods in qualitative research include narrative, ethnology, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. While having different approaches and focuses, each of these methods are beneficial in obtaining the rich descriptions necessary to provide a holistic perspective of the phenomenon and its contextual environment. The narrative method focuses on an individual and their experience. The final report provides a vehicle in which the researcher can tell the story of an individual. Because this research study explored the shared experiences of multiple stakeholder groups over one individual, this method was not selected. The appropriate method should facilitate the study phenomenon as it pertains to groups. The employees being observed in the research study form a group that shares a common corporate culture.

As ethnology examines its culture in depth, this methodology was considered for this study. This design was not selected because the actions of leaders to influence culture were being examined rather than the behavioral patterns of the organizational culture. A point could be argued that the process of transformation was a shared experience which could be examined. The examination of a shared experience could promote the use of phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mohajan, 2018). This method, however, was not selected because the focus was not on the shared experience, but the performance of expected outcomes. The influence of actions of a leader on the organizational culture to improve performance within the context of the transformation project was being examined. In addition, this research study sought to add to existing academic support for relevant theories as well as filling an identified gap in the literature (Canterino et al., 2018).

Since grounded theory focuses on theory development, this methodology was determined to be inappropriate for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mohajan, 2018). This research study was based on examining a dedicated transformational project which was intended to benefit the entire organization. The performance outcomes of the selected transformation project impacted internal and external stakeholders. The study examined a transformation project as it was implemented in its natural environment. In addition, the transformation project created a natural boundary in the organization from which to examine the phenomenon. Examining an activity or phenomenon within a natural boundary that cannot be manipulated by the researcher is indicative of case study research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Mohajan, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Consequently, the ability to focus on a single case enabled more robust details of the phenomenon to be obtained. These details included the descriptive perceptions and feelings of the participants in addition to other data and artifacts being collected. The diversity of the sources provided a more robust view of the phenomenon (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Case studies can be used for exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive types of research. Overall, this case study sought to gain an understanding of the identified problem and the context from which it occurred. This methodology examines how and why the event(s) occur in its natural environment. In this study, the natural environment reflected the daily business practices of the agency without being controlled or manipulated by the researcher. The data collection and analysis in a case study enabled themes or lessons to emerge through triangulating evidence gathered though observations, analysis of artifacts (e.g., reports, communications, training materials, etc.), and interviews. These themes and lessons provided additional evidence for existing theories as well as best practice applications (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kankam, 2019; Yin, 2018). Consequently, the single case study methodology was chosen.

Discussion of Triangulation

Triangulation is a process in research which seeks to increase the validity and reliability of the study. This process is prevalent in research with a positivism or post-positivism paradigm. From a validity perspective, triangulation is used in qualitative research to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the data and the study results. There are eight primary strategies which can be incorporated into the planning and execution of a research study. These strategies include using multiple sources of data, having participants review data and the final report, providing detailed descriptions, being transparent on biases, including contradictory information, ensuring the study has the appropriate duration in the field to gather adequate data, incorporating a peer review process, and having an independent third party examine the study. Research costs or time constraints may prohibit the researcher from using all these methods during a study. Using a combination of these strategies throughout the study enhances the validity of the study and replicability of the data and findings (Cox & Hassard, 2005; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

From a reliability perspective, triangulation promotes the disclosure of the steps used in the research process. A code book is often initiated during the planning process and modified as needed throughout the research study. The code book assists in maintaining consistency in how the collected data are categorized to facilitate the analysis. An audit of the code book and the coding used in the data should be performed periodically to ensure consistency throughout the process. This audit gains more importance as additional codes are added and themes begin to emerge in the data. The audit promotes accuracy and consistency in the data. When there are changes made in the data or new codes created, the audit can ensure the updates were made correctly. As such, this triangulation process is important to the research planning and execution processes (Cox & Hassard, 2005; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In addition to the periodic codebook audit, other triangulation strategies were employed in this study. This research study gathered diverse types of artifacts from multiple sources. These artifacts include, but are not limited to training materials, reports, and project management documents. In addition, transcripts from interviews were included to provide the perspectives and feelings of the participants. These transcripts and the final report were reviewed by the participants to validate the accuracy of the information. In addition, the transcripts were validated against other artifacts collected as part of the analysis. This data collected in the study as well as the discovered these were also compared against extant literature. This literature provided complimentary as well as contrarian evidence. The comparing and contrasting of this literature to the data collected fostered a more robust discussion as well as a method of validation through triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

These triangulation methods were an important aspect of the planning and execution of this research study. Prior to identifying the triangulation strategies, the planning process began by determining the appropriate framework for the study. This framework sought to ensure that the appropriate data are collected and analyzed to address the problem statement and the research questions. To determine the appropriate framework, the available research paradigms, designs, and methodologies were evaluated. This study sought to examine the actions of a leader on the culture of the organization and performance. A post-positivism paradigm fostered the understanding of the phenomenon in its context. This paradigm promoted the utilization of a qualitative or flexible research design. The transformational project enabled a natural boundary for a single case study.

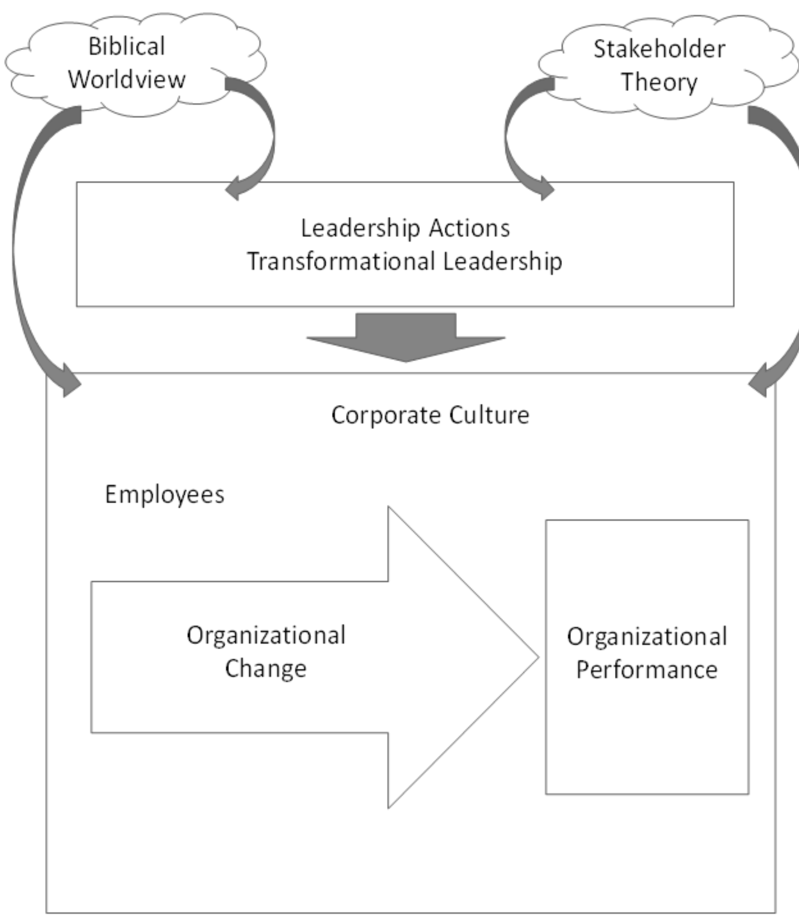
Conceptual Framework

Following the determination of the research methodology, the designing of the conceptual framework was initiated. This framework provided content guidance for the planning and execution of the research project. The use of this framework facilitated answering the research questions identified earlier in this section as well as addressing the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The conceptual framework is initially depicted graphically. This diagram is followed by a narrative explanation containing additional supporting details. The framework includes relevant academic theories, actors, and variables which were foundational to this research study as well as their relationships with each other. The framework did not mature and further develop during the study. The narrative depiction includes academic literature from multiple disciplines. This extant literature added justification and validation relating to the purpose of this research study.

The following diagram provides a visual depiction of the proposed research study.

Figure 1

Relationships Between Concepts



As depicted in the diagram above, the following research study sought to examine actions of a leader which influence the culture of the organization. This culture impacts ability of the organization to achieve performance goals. The following sections provide additional details regarding the specific elements identified in the graphic. These elements include the concepts, relevant theories, actors, and variables that have been identified for this proposed research study.

Concepts

There were three primary concepts identified for this research study. These concepts include leader actions, corporate culture, and organizational performance. The following sections provide a brief overview of each concept derived from extant literature. A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature section provides a more robust explanation of each concept.

Leadership Actions. Leadership actions examines the decisions and behaviors a leader performs as they direct the organization. These actions also reflect how a leader manages relationships with stakeholders as well as performs the prescribed responsibilities in their role. Trust and integrity are crucial factors in the quality of the relationships. The personal values of the leader are also important. These values drive their behaviors. How and what a leader does in the organization sets the example for the employees to follow. Consequently, these internal values influence the standards of behavior which are reflected in the organizational culture whether positive or negative (Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Accordingly, actions of the leader can promote collaboration and conducting business in an ethical and responsible manner. In contrast, the actions of a leader can create chaos and unethical business practices (Wittmer & Hopkins, 2018). Of the many actions a leader performs in their duty, this research study sought to focus on communication and empowerment.

Organizational Culture. Organizational culture, as noted earlier, reflects the internal values and beliefs of an organization. The organizational culture influences how and what work is performed in the organization. Culture is the intangible asset which can often be challenging to quantify. Culture influences the depth of communication, collaboration, and engagement levels across the organization. This organizational engagement is the sum of the effort and success provided by each individual employee. Their level of engagement impacts the level of success an organization can achieve against their stated goals and objectives (Mikkelsen et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2018). Thus, quality management and process improvement models often begin change efforts with assessing the state of the organizational culture. In many of these models, employee-based cross-functional teams are actively engaged and empowered to identify issues and solutions. As part of these efforts, employee teams can create cultures which are innovative, collaborative, learning, and continuously improving. These characteristics are important for the long-term viability and performance of the organization (Dorval et al., 2019; Kelly & Hines, 2019).

Organizational Performance. Organizational performance is the sum of the personal contributions of each individual employee. Employees who are valued, heard, and respected have higher levels of engagement. As a result, these employees oftentimes will achieve higher levels of performance. In environments where there is open communication, trust, and respect, employees oftentimes work more collaboratively to find creative solutions to organizational issues (Mikkelsen et al., 2017). Many organizations are increasingly building more cross-functional teams to leverage expertise across the organization. These teams can be tasked to identify and resolve immediate problems, but some are leveraged to identify to greater efficiencies and higher levels of organizational performance (Kelly & Hines, 2019). These levels of performance are measured against the defined metrics which align with their respective strategic goals and objectives. These goals oftentimes relate to the production of goods and services desired by their customers and other stakeholders. Providing high-quality and responsible sourcing are increasingly being included in these goals. Those organizations which can operate more efficiently and effectively while achieving their operational goals in an ethical manner may also be more sustainable for the long-term (Tomita, 2020).

Theories

Theories pertaining to each of the concepts were derived from extant academic literature. The academic support leveraged throughout this study provided background, support, and validation of conclusions. For a more robust presentation, this study required theories and knowledge from multiple social science disciplines including, but not limited to, business, leadership, psychology, sociology, organizational design, organizational change, strategic management, and quality management. There were three primary theories identified relevant to the research problem and questions. As reflected in the Conceptual Framework diagram, transformational leadership, organizational change, and stakeholder theory were identified. The following sections provide an overview of each theory and additional explanations for its selection.

Transformational Leadership. Transformational leadership was the first theory being examined. This theory focuses on the positive actions and behaviors of leaders as they seek to implement organizational change. This style of leadership fosters a mutual trust relationship between leaders and followers to achieve shared goals. Transformational leaders provide the necessary resources and empower their employees to successful complete assigned responsibilities instead of dictating how individual work tasks are performed. This leadership reflects an investment in people to foster the use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their best. This investment fosters their on-going individual success toward organizational success. This success comes through creative and innovative ideas/solutions related to the new and existing products, services, and processes of the organization. These innovations enable the achievement of the shared organizational goals as well as identifying the appropriate responses to dynamic changes in the external environment. This ability to continuously respond and adapt appropriately to external environmental factors can be a competitive advantage in a dynamic and highly competitive global market (Bass, 1995; Burns, 2003; Phaneuf et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2019).

Organizational Change. Organizational change reflects a modification in the beliefs or behaviors of organizations. These beliefs and behaviors influence the efforts of the organization to achieve its goals and objectives, which evolve over time. The ability of organizations to adapt and change is reflective of organizational change theory. Organizational change theory examines the impact of change on the roles and behaviors of employees in the organization. This theory also identifies the critical success factors necessary for effective change. These factors include the characteristics of the culture of the organization which determine the level of change readiness. These characteristics identify positive as well as negative behaviors which influence the level of organizational success (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). These dynamics are reflective in the corresponding organizational change models. The Lewin’s Change Model (Lewin & American Psychological Association, 1997; Spector, 2013) and Kotter’s Eight Stage Model to

Manage Organizational Change (Kotter, 2012; Pollack & Pollack, 2015) are relevant for this study.

Stakeholder Theory. The third and final theory is stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory reflects the study of groups impacting the organization. As an influence for organizational change, this theory defines the relationship between an organization and their stakeholder groups as well as the level of influence or power each party has. These groups have a stake or level of interest in the activities of the organization. The interest of groups can include but are not limited to values, products, employment, taxes, societal contributions, or environmental impacts. The expectations of these groups often change over time. Oftentimes, these expectations and demands conflict with one another. With enough power, those groups can influence the environment of the organization (Rose et al., 2018). Thus, the need for organizational change is oftentimes precipitated by external stakeholders, although some change can be initiated by internal stakeholders. Currently, stakeholders are increasingly adding to the demands on organizations and their leaders. In addition, customer demands for products and services can fluctuate greatly in a dynamic global market. Governments levy taxes and regulations which impact resources and organizational operations. Also, multiple societal groups are exerting more pressure on organizations to be more socially responsible in its operations and products.

This social responsibility expectation includes the organization providing additional resources to support social and environmental issues. This expectation is increasing while the organizational resources continue to become more constrained. As a result, the ability of the leader to effectively manage these expectations of stakeholders impacts the long-term viability of the organization. To successfully meet these constantly changing demands, organizations are often forced to continuously improve performance by modifying its operations while continuing to develop innovative products and services (Freeman, 1994; Lartey et al., 2019; Saling, 2017).

Actors

There were three primary groups of actors identified as participants in this case study. The first actor was the leader of the organization. The leader sets the tone and the priorities for the organization. These priorities are reflected in the mission, vision, and goals of the organization (Paraschivescu & Stoica, 2018). In addition, leaders are responsible for guiding the corporate culture by stating its shared values and work ethic desired for the achievement of the shared goals by the employees. The employees were the second group of actors for this study. The actions and behaviors of the employees encompass the culture of the organization. This culture influences how and what work is accomplished (Edgeman, 2018; Pasricha et al., 2018). The final group consisted of external stakeholders. These stakeholders included customers, suppliers, government entities, and other organizations. These stakeholders influenced the products and services supplied by the organization, societal expectations, and resources available to the organization. These external organizations impacted the need for organizations to continually change and evolve (Freeman, 1994; Lartey et al., 2019; Saling, 2017).

Constructs

Constructs in research provide a focus for the phenomenon being examined (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this research study, two constructs were identified and depicted in the conceptual framework diagram. The actions of the leader were the first construct for this study. These actions influence the corporate culture which were reflected in the conduct and behaviors of the employees of the organization. These actions and behaviors influence the levels of performance by the organization (Thoroughgood et al., 2018). The level of performance against the expected goal(s) was the second construct examined in this study.

Relationships Between Concepts, Theories, Actors, and Constructs

As depicted in the Conceptual Framework diagram and in the above narrative, there were relationships between the concepts, theories, actors, and constructs. The actions of a leader were both a concept and a construct for this study. These actions reflected the behaviors and decisions made by an actor in the role of senior leader. These behaviors and decisions were influenced by their Biblical Worldview and Stakeholder Theory. These theories influenced the values, products, practices, and behaviors of organizations. The behaviors and actions of the leader also influenced the behavior and actions of the employees. The values, beliefs, and behaviors constituted the organizational culture and reflected how work is performed. This culture can continue to evolve with the needs of the organization. The processes by which a leader can influence the employee actors, actively engage in changing behaviors, and increase performance (construct) pertain to the transformational leadership and organizational change theories.

Summary of the Research Framework.

These constructs and the other concepts identified in this Research Framework section guided the planning and execution of this qualitative case study in leadership. This study examined the impact of the actions of a leader on organizational culture. This culture then impacted the level of individual and organizational performance against the desired goals. In examining the environment of the organization, three groups of actors were identified including leaders, employees, and other external stakeholders. The behaviors of these groups can be explained through transformational leadership theory, stakeholder theory, organizational change, and the Biblical worldview. Through the lens of these theories, this study sought to provide an understanding of the impact of the actions of a leader on organizational culture and performance during a public sector project. A review of the extant academic literature provided the initial basis for this understanding. This literature was also triangulated and analyzed against the data collected as part of this qualitative case study.

Definition of Terms

To ensure a collective understanding of some terms, the following section provides several terms and their definition for this research study.

Bureaucratic organization: An organization that finds efficiency through a centralized hierarchy enabling the control of processes, people, information, and decision-making from the top-down (Racko, 2017).

Empowerment: The leader enables the employee to influence what and how the work they are responsible for is performed (Chhotray et al., 2018).

Innovation: A new idea, process, product, service, structure, or technology that is created, introduced, and implemented into an organization (Vaziri & Beheshtinia, 2016).

Organizational/corporate culture: An accepted pattern of actions, beliefs, and behaviors for a group of people which determine internal methods of coping with their external environment (Martinez et al., 2015).

Organizational performance: The ability of an organization to satisfy the demands of multiple stakeholders by creating value through leveraging limited resources to fulfill those needs (Edgeman, 2018).

Pseudotransformational leadership: A negative form of transformational leadership whereby the leader engages in self-serving behaviors to the detriment of others or engaging in illegal or unethical behaviors (Barling et al., 2008).

Psychological safety: Psychological safety is the phenomenon in which people feel safe in their workplace to share views, provide honest feedback, and take risks without fear of potential negative consequences (Newman et al., 2017).

Transformational leadership: Style of leadership where the leader fosters forward-looking change toward a shared vision through providing individual care for each employee, striving to continuously improve, inspiring motivation in others to higher standards, and providing a positive role model of behaviors to others (Bass, 1995; Phaneuf et al., 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The following section presents the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations identified for this case study. The assumptions provide details specific to the study that were presumed to be facts. The limitations present the identified risks and the remediations implemented during the planning of the research study. The delimitations provide additional details regarding the scope of this study to examine the actions of a leader.

Assumptions

In performing this research, several assumptions and risks were identified and remediated. The confidentiality of all participants was protected at all times. One assumption was participants would provide honest answers for their area of knowledge and expertise. This research study was designed to promote an environment of psychological safety where participants can freely express their thoughts and perspectives without negative ramifications (Deng et al., 2019). Participants were assigned numbers to protect their identity. These numbers were used in place of their names. Another assumption presumed participants were being candid as they shared their observations, perceptions, and experiences. Participants were able to validate their statements, however complete honesty could not be ensured.

Limitations

As any research study cannot completely encompass every detail, some limitations were identified and were mitigated as appropriate. Due to COVID protocols, time constraints, and the location of participants across the Commonwealth of Virginia, interviews could not be conducted in person. Interviews were conducted via Google Meets which provided the option of participants to video or phone connections. Accordingly, body language could not be consistently observed during the interviews. Also due to time constraints, the agency project was not observed from initial ideation to the post-closing activities of the project. This post-closing would have included the refreezing of the new behaviors created during the project (Lewin & APA, 1997). Artifacts were collected representing the different phases of the project. Participants provided additional information as needed. Some artifacts that were relevant to the research study contained information of a confidential or sensitive nature. In these cases, a redacted form of the artifact was included, or the artifact(s) was excluded completely to maintain confidentiality. As the research progresses, the research attempted to fully document every formal and informal conversation. There may be some conversations which took place where a full recording could not occur. In those instances, the participants were asked to validate the notes from the conversation, however they still may not be complete. Where multiple participants were asked to validate, complete consensus may not have been obtained. During this study, the potential for biases or premature conclusions was minimized to the fullest extent possible. However, this risk could not be eliminated completely (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Delimitations

The focus of this research examined the actions of the leader to influence the organizational culture thereby enhancing organizational performance. To provide a more robust discussion, not all actions could be examined in the time allotted for the study. For this research study, the actions examined were limited to the levels of communication and the empowerment experienced by the participants during the project. In addition, there are many valid leadership theories and styles which have merit and may have been observed in the organization. For this research study, transformational leadership was selected as the focus. This leadership theory supports the positive development and empowerment of employees to successfully achieve shared goals. While stakeholder theory was identified as an influence on leadership actions, the interviews and data collection were contained to agency employee stakeholders enabling the focus on culture and performance. While the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and agency fuel management vendors were stakeholders, employees of these organizations were not invited to participate in the study.

Significance of the Study

The following sections provide an overview of the significance of the proposed qualitative research case study. Initially, the overview begins by identifying how this research study remediates a gap in the current academic literature. Following this identification, the presentation transitions to the integration of the Biblical Worldview. This presentation is intended to bridge scripture with the applicable academic theory. Finally, the implications of this study to business practices and the doctoral program cognate of the researcher are examined prior to an overall summary of the significance of the study.

Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

As noted earlier, Canterino et al. (2018) identified a need for additional research pertaining to the actions of a leader in practice. While some additional research has started to examine digital transformations, additional insights are still needed. As technology continues to change, the business model or culture of the organization needs to evolve to better formulate and execute strategy (Correani et al., 2020). As external factors typically precipitate change in organizations, there is oftentimes more of a research focus of the impacts on the private sector than the public sector. Yet, the public sector is increasingly feeling the pressure to become more efficient and effective in their use of resources. Having academic literature which is specific to a public sector organization can be a beneficial resource to other agencies seeking to improve processes (Capers, 2018). Ospina et al. (2018) identified public sector research as predominantly quantitative. Additional qualitative research providing more descriptive perspectives on events as they occur in their context is also needed to supplement current literature (Ospina et al., 2018). This study sought to supplement the extant literature. Lessons from this study can provide applicable lessons for practitioners and academicians for future transformations in the public sector.

Implications for Biblical Integration

While the public sector is secular, the Biblical Worldview is relevant. The theory and practice of the main concepts of this study also have alignment with Biblical principles. “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (New International Version, 1978/2011, 2 Timothy 3:16). The scriptures provide a basis for moral and responsible actions toward people and things. Accordingly, scripture presents practical advice that is applicable to leaders, employees, and other stakeholders. The Bible also provides guidance as to God’s perspective on leadership, the value of work, and people working together for a higher purpose (Kgatla & Kamukwamba, 2019; Slater, 2020).

> Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with one another, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don’t be selfish; don’t try to

> impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Philippians 2:2-4)

These concepts, including the consideration of others and working collaboratively, align with the earlier identified concepts of the actions of a leader and organizational culture. The actions of leaders should be ones that are based on love. "Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 John 3:18). These actions should also be replicated by employees as part of the culture of the organization. The employees should work together as they are one body as they are all important parts of the organization (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Corinthians 12:12). Each person is expected to perform at the best of their ability toward this higher purpose. For Christians, the higher purpose is the glory of God (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Corinthians 10:31). For secular organizations, their mission and vision are the higher purpose (Kgatla & Kamukwamba, 2019). This organizational purpose oftentimes incorporates a high level of performance in providing customers with quality goods and services. "The older counselors replied, 'If you are good to these people and do your best to please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects'" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 2 Chronicles 10:7). Consequently, high quality products and services can foster higher levels of customer loyalty. High levels of customer loyalty can be a competitive advantage and is thereby desired by organizations and their leaders (Gonzalez, 2019; Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). Customer loyalty begins with providing high quality products and services. Factors enhancing the ability of the organization to perform at high levels is further explained in the Review of Professional and Academic Literature section.

Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate

As there were expected goals for the fuel application project of an agency, there were also expected outcomes for this qualitative research case study aligning with the anticipated study significance. For the agency, this study sought to provide an objective reporting of their transformational project and its outcomes. The conclusions and themes drawn from this study provide opportunities for organizational leaders to gain new insights into their project and its outcomes. In addition, the learnings provided objective feedback and identified potential opportunities for improvement on future agency projects. As other public sector organizations engage in transformation, these learnings may be applicable to their situation.

This study also sought to provide additional academic support for the actions of a leader which facilitate organizational change in the public sector. Ospina et al. (2018) identified a gap in the knowledge differences between current business practices and academic theories. In addition, there was an identified gap in qualitative public sector literature (Ospina et al., 2018). The outcomes of this study sought to mitigate this gap by providing a case study with applicable learnings for practitioners and researchers to supplement extant literature.

This research has a benefit to doctorate program cognate of the researcher. The researcher is a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. The researcher is in the Doctor of Business Administration Program with a cognate in Business Administration Leadership. The researcher has also been a management consultant for over a decade assisting leaders implement changes in their organization. These changes have included implementing new technologies, performing current state assessments, developing future states, remediating audit findings, identifying process improvements, and enhancing information and financial controls. The researcher participated in many transformation projects in both public and private sector entities, including the agency being examined as part of the study. These projects included working with people at all levels of the organization to implement change as well as improve relationships with customers. These experiences provided a basis for understanding business practices and the public sector environment. This understanding facilitated the planning and execution of this research study. In addition, this understanding enabled a more robust analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. Consequently, this experience fostered a different perspective of the phenomenon to bridge academic literature and current business practices (Johnston et al., 2017; Ospina et al., 2018). This study also sought fill a gap in existing literature pertaining to qualitative public sector research (Canterino et al., 2018). Specifically, this research examined leadership theory and how a leader can influence a public sector organization. This impact included the organizational culture and performance.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

The opportunity to gain additional knowledge and understanding about leadership and organizational change drove the significance of this qualitative research case study. This study intended to remediate a current gap in leadership and public sector literature by examining the actions of a leader. This study sought to document the outcomes of a project intended to improve agency practices. This research also sought to build a bridge by triangulating academic theory, Biblical Worldview, and practice to provide learnings to the organization and to a broader audience.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The extant academic theory and Biblical Worldview are both components of the review of professional and academic literature. This literature review provides a robust discussion of the key concepts identified in the Conceptual Framework. This framework guided the extant literature search addressing the research problem and questions identified for this study. Initially, a brief introduction is provided.

This introduction is followed by an overview of the current business environment. The current business environment includes internal and external factors which can impact the ability of the organization to gain and utilize resources. The access to resources influences the ability of the organization to provide the appropriate goods or services to their customers. Following the examination of the business environment, the literature review progresses to include three primary concepts of this research study: leadership, organizational culture, and organizational performance. For each topic, the review is based on relevant professional and academic literature from multiple disciplines including, but not limited to, psychology, leadership, business, and sociology. Each section begins with a definition or foundational understanding of the concept. The literature review includes both prevailing and contrarian perspectives for each respective concept. In addition, the examination includes current challenges and opportunities for each concept.

After the secular perspectives are presented, the Biblical perspective for each topic is examined. These perspectives are intended provide a holistic perspective of the phenomenon. This phenomenon includes understanding leaders. This also includes the dynamics of organizations as leaders seek to better position their organizations in the marketplace for long-term success. In addition, the literature provided a basis for comparing and analyzing the data obtained during the study. The literature validated the conclusions drawn. These conclusions address the identified problem statement and research questions for this study. In addition, the conclusions facilitated a better understanding of the context in which a public sector organization operates as they implement the changes necessary to serve its constituents more effectively.

Introduction

The earlier discussion identified the need for organizations to continuously change and evolve to remain viable. Brene Brown said “Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.” In a dynamic global market, organizations are facing new vulnerabilities daily. As such, innovation and creativity are desired work outcomes leading to new products, services, and process improvements. The ability to achieve innovation and creativity are oftentimes used in describing key factors to organizational success (McKeown, 2019). But what does that really mean? How can an organization be innovative and creative in providing services when there are conflicting regulatory compliance requirements? In the workplace, “creativity derives from the application of knowledge, curiosity, imagination, and evaluation – and the output is innovation” (McKeown, 2019, p. 1). How does innovation happen in the workplace? Who in the organization has the knowledge? Are the knowledge and abilities in the organization being fully leveraged? Does the organization have the right leaders and employees to achieve success? How can an organization be innovative when there are rigid processes that which must be followed? What actions can a leader take to make the organization more responsive to customer, gain market share, and become more profitable? These are the challenges faced by current leaders as they strive to ensure the long-term competitiveness and viability of their organizations.

The desire to be creative and innovative are often explicit or embedded in the strategic goals and objectives leaders have for their organization to compete and thrive in the current business environment. Success in achieving is defined differently for each organization although the challenges and opportunities faced may be the same (Ahn et al., 2017). The most successful organizations are those which have corporate foresight. Corporate foresight reflects the ability to examine and forecast dynamic changes in the environment. This foresight enables an organization to optimally leverage the opportunities to further develop value creation efforts (Schwarz et al., 2020).

Overview of Current Business Environment

The current business environment presents both challenges and opportunities for all organizations. The environment includes both the external and internal conditions that impact the operations of the organization (Shatilo, 2019). "The external environment today is dynamic, characterized by turbulence and continuous change constantly posing challenges, opportunities and threats to businesses" (Chebbi et al., 2019, p. 1). This turbulence comes from multiple factors including technology, politics, regulatory agencies, social media, and the economy. These factors can manifest as issues such as sustainability development, gender equality, accounting reform, social audits, and environmental planning, policy, and audits (Passetti et al., 2019). These factors can also include religious ideology which can influence the politics, values, and societal expectations of organizations and leaders.

The predominant worldview in society can influence the expectations for the treatment of employees as well as the formational of ethical expectations for conduct in the workplace (Van Buren et al., 2020). These become human resource concerns as they try to address evolving needs of employees. Current trends impacting organizational human resource departments include changing demographics, an aging workforce, and the constant rate of change in technology (Rao, 2017). These factors oftentimes create tensions between employee groups resulting in non-productive, bad behaviors. Working relationships are strained when people feel disrespected. Globalization is creating additional cultural tensions, as organizations seek to increase the diversity in their workforce. Employees are increasingly being asked to do more with fewer resources. As a result, the tensions increase distrust and conflict in work relationships while lowering levels of performance.

These behaviors create a toxic culture which is detrimental to organizational communication and collaboration (Porath, 2015). To remediate this issue, leaders will oftentimes seek to implement new organizational technologies. While intended to facilitate information sharing and communication, technology has also been found to heighten additional misunderstandings and communication gaps (Faik et al., 2019).

Once these gaps are addressed through cultural changes, the organization may be able to leverage technology more fully, in more positive and productive ways. Social media and other communication technologies can impact the level of stakeholder relations. These technologies can be used to positively influence a public perception globally. In addition, these technologies can provide an avenue for the organization to further differentiate itself from its competitors. These tools also open an opportunity to build individual relationships with customers, enhanced customer service, and new delivery methods (Rao, 2017; Vendrell-Herrero et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2013). By making appropriate responses to external demands, an organization can create value for itself and its customers (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). In addition to customers, there are also other groups to which an organization is accountable. The effective use of technology can assist with managing the expectations of these stakeholders (Herremans et al., 2016; Passetti et al., 2019).

Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholders are the primary means for which organizations engage in transactions with the external environment. These transactions occur either directly or indirectly through the capital markets, consumer product markets, political and societal environments, or internally through employees (Freeman, 1994; Herremans et al., 2016; Passetti et al., 2019). Stakeholder Theory was developed as an expansion of shareholder theory. This expansion included placing a greater emphasis on governance and corporate social responsibility on organizations. With this development, the stakeholder concept became more applicable to all organizations rather than primarily publicly traded companies (Freeman, 1994; Rose et al., 2018). Stakeholder theory reflects competing and interdependencies between the organization and other external groups (Freeman, 1994). These stakeholder groups are impacted by the actions of the organization (Passetti et al., 2019). Stakeholder groups can be internal or external. These groups include, but are not limited to employees, government entities, shareholders, customers, suppliers, and local communities where the organization operates.

These groups engage in transactions with the organization either directly or indirectly. These interactions can be either positive or negative depending on the expectations and perceptions of the parties. Which party has influence or power over the other depends on the demographics of the organization as well as the stakeholder groups. The determining demographics include the level of interest in the organization, the size, and the legitimacy of the group (Freeman, 1994; Herremans et al., 2016). For example, a supplier is a type of organizational stakeholder. If the vendor is one of many suppliers offering similar goods, they will have significantly less influence on an organization than if there are one or two suppliers offering a product with few or no substitutions. This balance of power aligns with the Resource Dependence Theory. Under Resource Dependence Theory, organizations modify their behavior to obtain needed resources from the external environment (Pfeffer & Leong, 1977). These resources need to be obtained externally because they cannot be produced internally or are not currently under the control of the organization (Herremans et al., 2016).

While suppliers reflect a financial interest in the business operations, other stakeholder interests can include societal, environmental, ethical, or governance. Stakeholder groups can have multiple interests in an organization and their expectations can evolve over time. These interests can have a moral or a strategic view of the economic, social, or environmental impact the organization has. The moral perspective reflects the stakeholder being impacted by the actions or operations of the organization. An example would be a shareholder being impacted by the organization misrepresenting information. Due to these impacts, the stakeholder is entitled to be kept informed of important organizational facts and outcomes.

Honest and transparent communication is a basic expectation. In addition, the stakeholder oftentimes expects the organization to meet or exceed certain standards of performance. Similarly, the strategic perspective reflects the ability of the organization to meet or exceed its stated objectives and mission (Herremans et al., 2016). Each group can have different variations on their expectations based on their needs and the depth of the relationship with the organization. Often these different variations can conflict with one another. For example, a shareholder may want higher dividends while also wanting more eco-friendly business practices. This conflict reflects a key challenge for organizational leaders to satisfy stakeholder expectations while ensuring the organization can optimize the value it creates (Rose et al., 2018). Yet, the attention to all stakeholders and their needs may help foster the long-term viability of the organization (Peterson et al., 2012).

There are two areas of stakeholder expectations which have become increasingly areas of concern that are relevant to this study. These areas include sustainability and ethics. Sustainability reflects the long-term viability and performance of the organization. Ethics are relevant to actions of the leader and their impacts to organizational culture including the influence on employee behaviors and actions. Positive behaviors enhance sustainability. In contrast, unethical behavior can result in fines, lawsuits, and negative publicity to the organization. Due to recent scandals, stakeholders are demanding increasingly levels of transparency and integrity by all organizations and their leaders (Sun et al., 2018). These scandals have included negative behaviors by organizational leaders. Greenwashing, manipulating earnings, and engaging in other deceitful practices has resulted in increased scrutiny and oversight. This increased oversight necessitates the need for all organizations to provide higher levels of transparency and accountability into its practices and behaviors (Simola, 2018). In addition, stakeholders are pressuring organizations to change operational practices. Many stakeholders are calling for changes in senior leadership compensation to reduce the temptation to manipulate earnings. These compensation changes could be achieved by creating systems which reward the appropriate actions. These appropriate actions include the long-term sustainability and viability of the organization rather than current practices rewarding short-term earnings (Call, 2019).

Sustainability. Sustainability is often aligned with corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility pertains to the expectation of organizations to be an engaged corporate citizen in the community. This expectation promotes an underlying social contract where both parties identify the mutual benefit when the organization actively engages in socially responsible practices (Jahn & Brühl, 2018). This social responsibility includes an ethical, economic, legal, and philanthropic role the organization is expected to play in society (Nawaz & Koc, 2019; Pasricha et al., 2018). Consequently, stakeholders are increasingly seeking more information to hold organizations and their leaders more accountable. In response to the demands of stakeholders for higher levels of transparency, many organizations provide a periodic sustainability report into their operations. This report provides disclosures of the use of the economic, social, and natural resources under the control of the organization (Herremans et al., 2016).

The economic, social, and environmental accountability is often referred to as the triple bottom line. Organizations are increasingly being held accountable for making ethical decisions to appropriately manage this triple bottom line. To stakeholders, all organizational actions, what is done as well as how it is done, matters. These actions matter in the short term as well as the long term. The current actions of organizations have impact over the long-term. Senior leaders should consider the long-term during strategic planning and decision-making related to executing initiatives (Pasricha et al., 2018). These corporate responsibility plans and initiatives as well as their outcomes are often included in sustainability reports. These reports are oftentimes a strategic method of providing transparent communications with all stakeholders. The effectiveness of this communication depends on the level of directness in the writing, the depth to which it clearly identifies stakeholders, the deliberateness of the organizational activities, the broadness of the stakeholder groups it gains to reach, and the extent to which the organization engages in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders to better understand their concerns (Herremans et al., 2016). Through enhancing green practices in their operations, they are seeing higher levels of sales and brand loyalty. Customers are increasingly preferring to transact with corporate responsible organizations (Lartey et al., 2019).

Because of these results, many organizations promote their commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility. While many organizations are honest and forthright with their reporting, some are not. Greenwashing is an intentional act of deception where leaders promote their organizations having higher levels of "green" activities and positive environmental impacts than are actually occurring (Lee et al., 2018). These greenwashing actions reflect a negative assumption of stakeholders held by the senior leader or a prevailing presumption imbedded in the culture of the organization (Hommelhoff, 2017). The leaders engaging in greenwashing may have planned green initiatives but later reduced or eliminated them. These initiatives may have been eliminated as part of cost reduction efforts without effectively communicating the change. Many organizations have not only performed detrimental acts to the environment, but also tried to hide those effects. When caught, these companies have oftentimes incurred fines and remediation costs. These detrimental acts also add costs and regulations to other organizations. In addition, the lack of trust created by these executives inflict scrutiny on leaders trying to do the right thing (Lartey et al., 2019). As a result, stakeholders are demanding higher level of ethics in the business environment.

Business Ethics. Business ethics refer to behaviors which reflect the moral judgments of a society, group, or organization. These behaviors can be positive and negative. The moral judgements can also evolve over time. Increasingly, stakeholders are demanding higher levels of ethical behavior by leaders and their organizations. In recent news, headlines report unauthorized customer bank accounts being opened, falsified emission standards reported, and prisoners being harassed (Ivcevic et al., 2020). As a result, stakeholders are calling for higher levels of integrity (LaManna, 2019).

In some organizations, professions, and associations, high standards of behaviors are defined and articulated. These high standards include appropriate ramifications for non-compliance. Infractions against these codes of conduct could result in fines or license suspension. Members of these groups are held accountable for their behavior. As a result, stakeholders have greater trust and respect those individuals and organizations (Ismail &

Rasheed, 2019). Although specific leaders or organizations may be trusted or respected, they still face increased scrutiny and pressure to perform ethically (Ivcevic et al., 2020). While not all organizations make the front-page news for their mistakes, they may still struggle with other types of ethical issues. In a research report, there were five common areas of unethical behavior observed in organizations currently. These areas include abuse of leadership power, toxic work cultures fostering self-serving behaviors, discrimination/harassment, conflicting and unattainable goals, and inappropriate use of organizational technology (Michigan State University, 2019). The cost of these behaviors is detrimental to the long-term sustainability of the organization. “Organizations pay in a variety of ways, from health care costs to bottom line effects stemming from performance losses, absenteeism and turnover” (Porath, 2015, p. 254). These costs are preventable and reversible. A potential solution reflects an emerging concept which promotes an organizational culture which restores and promotes human dignity. This concept reinforces the relevance of Biblical principles regarding the treatment of people in the current business environment (Mea & Sims, 2019).

Biblical Worldview. The Biblical Worldview provides a Judeo-Christian perspective into the current business environment. How are the golden rule and other Biblical Worldview perspectives still relevant or even impactful in the current global environment? The golden rule states, “Do to others as you would like them to do to you” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Luke 6:31). People want to be in environments where they are trusted and repeated. “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Judge fairly and show mercy and kindness to one another” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Zechariah 7:9). Yet, kindness seems radical in many environments as noted earlier with the discussion of bad behaviors in the workplace (Porath, 2016). These environments are where the Christian beliefs of many stakeholders can have a positive influence on organizations. The actions and behaviors of individuals is reflective of their personal beliefs (Ismail & Rasheed, 2019). These beliefs can also act as a positive guide for developing appropriate leader and follower behaviors (Van Buren et al., 2020).

The positive impacts of the applying Biblical principles are not new to the current business environment, but have been a foundation of American business. Those seeds were sown during Calvin's Protestant Reforms. These changes in scriptural interpretation fueled the capitalistic spirit still present in the current business environment. Calvin believed people were to live as they are saved even though the original sin forced them to work. All people were to work to the best of their ability using the gifts and talents they received from God. This work reflects the production of goods or services. As these goods or services were purchased by others, the transaction would provide a profitable compensation (Gerde et al., 2007). This capitalistic spirit formed the "concept of the harmony-of-interests doctrine – which postulates a congruence between the pursuit of secular self-interest and contribution to the public good" (Gerde et al., 2007, p. 8). This public good referred to filling the needs of one's neighbor in service to God. This public good also aligns with the earlier discussion of corporate responsibility and sustainable business practices (Herremans et al., 2016).

These seeds, as noted by Max Weber, were later justified through more secular tenets rather than continuing with their religious roots (Gerde et al., 2007). Despite the transition of the justification to secular reasons, the Biblical Worldview still influences the current business environment (Van Buren et al., 2020). The treatment of workers, the working conditions, and the notion of work as a calling are all concepts which foundationally align with many of the concerns and expectations of organizational stakeholders. These stakeholders hold the leaders responsible for the financial performance of the organization as well as expecting ethical behaviors and providing safe working conditions for employees. These concepts are being validated through secular employee engagement research. Research has shown an increase in job satisfaction when people feel their work is a calling. This calling reflects a higher purpose in the work they perform.

In addition, there is an accompanying level of higher engagement and performance as employees see meaning and purpose in what they are doing. This higher engagement can be achieved when employees recognize that their day-to-day efforts align with the mission, vision, and objectives of the organization (Xie et al., 2016). “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Corinthians 10:31). There is an in-born desire for purpose and meaning in what someone does. For Christians, the higher purpose is God’s plan for their lives in relation to His creation. Non-Christians define the higher purpose differently. Whether Christian or secular, the alignment with a higher purpose and meaning fosters an intrinsic reward and motivation. As a result, the ability to harness that motivation and work ethic of employees toward the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization is a key role of leaders (Xie et al., 2016).

Leadership

The stakeholder perspectives of leaders and their role can vary greatly. Some people have no respect for leaders, while others have put some chief executive officers into celebrity status. Some of this celebrity status resulted from significant increases in stock values during their leadership. The celebrity status remained despite their departure from the organization. This departure oftentimes cam voluntary prior to the decline in the stock value. Many other people respect leaders while holding elevated expectations of them. Leaders, to some, are heroes who are expected to come in and save the day (Morris et al., 2005). “Leaders are expected to intervene in everything, everywhere, at all times, and display mastery of a growing list of competencies that would stretch the powers of any CEO super-hero" (Tourish, 2019, p. 226). These stakeholder expectations create additional pressure on the organizational leaders to steward the organization and its resources appropriately.

This section seeks to provide an understanding of leaders and their actions. Initially, examination of the actions of a leader and behaviors with a focus on communication and empowerment. This examination is followed by a presentation of current leadership theories from extant literature. This examination provides a more robust presentation on transformational as well as servant and pseudotransformational leadership theories. These theories are followed by an overview of servant leadership and stewardship from a Biblical perspective. This overview reflects the expectation on leaders as well as examples of Biblical leadership.

Leadership. Leadership reflects the ability of one person to lead another. This leading reflects the influence of one person over another in a positive or negative manner. Positive leadership involves the ability to focus the efforts of one or more persons to solve a communal problem or achieve a common goal (Tourish, 2019). The ability to lead reflects a process that occurs over time (Fischer et al., 2017). Thus, a leader is only effective or enabled when there is one or more people who are willing to be influenced or follow them (Ben-Hur & Jonsen, 2012). Leaders must have some facet which enables them to provide influence over the situation. There are multiple facets to leadership involving their knowledge, skills, and abilities which are developed over time and not innate.

> This is unfortunate because the organizations and people of today are in need of leaders who can paint a long-term picture (vision), role model how this can be achieved and operationalized (teaching), humbly leveling with customers, suppliers and employees

> (shepherd), while aiding multiple stakeholders and communities (servant). (Ben-Hur & Jonsen, 2012, p. 971)

As these abilities are developed, leaders should reflect a foundation in strong business ethics. Ethical leaders are perceived as more relationship oriented. These leaders are concerned with people and their well-being. As a result, these leaders desire to create organizational environments which are collaborative and supportive. These environments require higher levels of trust and commitment. The trust and commitment are formed through acting with integrity and fairness over time. Ethical leaders seek to have high values and morale in their organizations (Pasricha et al., 2018). These leaders align with the stakeholder expectations yet struggle to overcome negative perceptions caused by other executives.

> The financial crises and subsequent recessions in recent decades have resulted in accusations of unethical conduct among business and its leaders in all corners of the globe, including Madoffian scams and Enronian let downs. As some leaders deny responsibility for the crises, reward themselves with huge bonuses and continue to hold on to their powerful positions, the public has increasingly lost its faith and trust in corporations and their executives. (Ben-Hur & Jonsen, 2012, p. 962)

As a result of some bad leaders, leaders around the global are facing increasing scrutiny in addition to the other challenges that they face.

Current Challenges. This increased scrutiny from stakeholders is one of many challenges that face organizational leaders today. The Center for Creative Leadership (2020) surveyed global leaders and found six primary challenges they are seeking to overcome. These challenges include honing their own skills and effectiveness, inspiring others, developing employees, leading a team, guiding change, and managing stakeholders. How a leader can address and overcome these challenges oftentimes determines the greatness of their leadership (Slater, 2020). Prior to discussing these challenges and opportunities, an examination of leadership theories is needed to foster a better understanding of the process by which an executive can lead an organization through these challenges.

Leadership Theory. Leadership Theories provide academic postulations to explain the characteristics and behaviors of leaders which formulate their leadership style. Scholars have identified and categorized 66 different leadership theories. Of these 66, there are six primary theories that are most prevalent in academic literature. These theories include charismatic, strategic, leadership and diversity, participative/shared, trait approach, and transformational (Meuser et al., 2016). Charismatic Leadership Theory engenders that followers are inspired by the personality of the leader to participate in the goal achievement. These leaders are effective communicators who use speech and emotions to gain support of followers (Gebert et al., 2016).

In contrast to personality, the strategic leadership theory presumes anyone can develop the skills to be an effective leader. This leadership theory identifies senior organizational leaders need significant knowledge, skills, and abilities in their role to develop and implement strategic initiatives. These skills include effective decision-making as well as the ability to gain employee support and participation. While leaders may be born with certain abilities, these skills can be developed in people and are often included in training development programs (Shao, 2019). Diversity or strategic diversity leadership theory seeks to create a conducive organizational culture in which diversity is welcomed and accepted. The work environment is permeated with this inclusive culture. This diversity is recognized as an asset to the organization and therefore nurtured. In this culture, mutual trust, respect, and psychological safety is prevalent in the work environment fostering the sharing of knowledge, ideas, and observations.

Through the sharing and integration of different ideas, experiences, and perspectives, the organization can create better solutions. These better solutions often lead to a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Martins et al., 2020; Wittmer & Hopkins, 2018). This theory promotes empowerment, but not to the extent of participative leadership. In participative/shared leadership theory, the leader fosters an environment in which the followers actively participate or have input into the organizational decision-making process. As a result, a higher level of knowledge sharing is oftentimes observed. The knowledge sharing fosters a cultural environment of continuous learning and improvement. This form of leadership is often found in cross-functional teams whereby members value the other perspectives and leverage them to foster creative and innovative solutions (Chang et al., 2020).

Trait theory is one of the oldest theories. This theory postulates that leaders have specific traits which make them a great leader. The leader is born with these traits. Therefore, not everyone can be or become a leader. As this theory pertains to a trait, the literature focuses on the leader rather than the relationship between the leader and the follower or the environment in which they engage (Meuser et al., 2016).

Transformational Leadership Theory. Transformational leadership theory is the last of the predominant theories. These theories all have value and merit in the discussion of understanding leadership. Transformation leadership combines several aspects of these other theories. Originally, this theory began as an outgrowth of charismatic leadership and was adapted to include a higher relationship orientation. In addition to personality and communication style, transformational leadership includes additional roles or behaviors in which leaders display strategic abilities while creating nurturing organizational cultures.

The initial development of the transformational leadership theory is often credited to Bass. In his work, four main components of leadership were identified. These components include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1995; Meuser et al., 2016). There are four primary behaviors which align with the four components and characterize this form of leadership. “These behaviors are vision-builder, standard-bearer, integrator, and developer” (Bottomley et al., 2014, p. 5). As a vision-builder, a leader builds a trusting relationship with followers to move toward their shared goals in a manner that is consistent with their shared values. These shared values are clearly stated and an important aspect of the organizational culture. The establishment of these values, the ethical environment, and culture which form the expected behavior which is required for the role as a standard-bearer. The integrator behaviors include inspiring and leading organizational change as well as evaluating the level of success. This evaluation of success is obtained through examining the activities of the organization.

Lastly, the development of others through teaching and coaching characterizes the behavior of the developer (Bottomley et al., 2014). This leadership style perpetuates a positive perspective of employees. Transformational leaders assume employees have the potential and desire to do well. With the appropriate level of knowledge, training, and resources, transformational leaders assume their employees can further develop and grow with the organization (Hommelhoff, 2017).

Servant Leadership. Servant leadership is a type of transformational leadership. This leadership style fosters leading with love. Maraboli said, “The best way to love someone is not to change them, but instead, help them reveal the greatest version of themselves.” Nurturing and developing followers characterize this leadership theory promoted by Robert Greenleaf in the

1970s. Greenleaf (2002) identified nine primary characteristics of servant leaders (Ling et al., 2017). “These included initiative, listening and understanding, imagination, the ability to withdraw, acceptance and empathy, intuition, foresight, awareness and perception, the ability to persuade, the ability to conceptualize, healing and serving, and the ability to build community” (Joseph & Winston, 2005, p. 9). These leaders focus on serving the needs of others rather than managing the work. Through the focus on building relationships, mutual trust and respect develop fostering honest conversations. In these conversations, the needs of the employee can be identified. Leaders are able to then help employees to develop their skills and abilities as they perform their duties. These day-to-day responsibilities of the employee align with the shared goals of the organization (Greenleaf, 2002).

In a study, Lumpkin and Achen (2018) examined academic literature regarding servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership with a foundation of Self-Determination Theory and found synergies. The researchers found that effective leaders leveraged these synergies. “When leaders demonstrate integrity, trust, and respect, serve others with empathy and fairness, and are personally and socially competent” (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018, p. 6). Consequently, there is a positive leader-follower exchange as both parties see the benefits from the relationship. This positive exchange is confirmed by the Social Exchange Theory in Sociology. In social exchange theory, positive exchanges between leader and follower foster a conducive environment for employee development (Kim, 2020).

Pseudotransformational Leadership Theory. Pseudotransformational leadership theory also needs to be highlighted in this literature examination. Where transformational leadership focuses on developing employees through positive actions, pseudotransformational leadership is the opposite (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Pseudotransformational leadership is defined as “leader’s emphasis on advancing their own self-serving objectives at the expense of followers and the organization through dominance, coercion, and manipulation” (Thoroughgood et al., 2018, p. 631). These behaviors have a negative impact on the long-term well-being of the employees and the organization (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Erickson et al., 2015; Morris et al., 2005). The pseudotransformational leader may promote personal actions which are contradictory to organizational goals and objectives. The style and behaviors of the leader could also influence followers through threatening or other detrimental means (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Erickson et al., 2015).

Negative leadership behavior in the extent literature is also refer to as bullying, supervisory abuse, tyranny, and destructive leadership. These bad behaviors can be contributing factors in toxic work environments (Porath, 2016). While destructive leadership is often focused on the leader, some scholars claim the source of the problem may be with the group and not necessarily the leader. There are likable, capable leaders who oversee ineffective teams. In addition, there are dislikable or incapable leaders who manage highly productive, effective teams. Therefore, the cause of destructive leadership can be a function of the group processes which produce negative or lower than expected performance (Thoroughgood et al., 2018). Regardless, the presence of bad leadership is a result of wrongful actions and behaviors which are detrimental to the organizational well-being (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Slater, 2020).

Leadership Actions. The actions of a leader reflect their beliefs and thoughts (Hommelhoff, 2017). As noted in the leadership theory overview, the actions of leaders can be impactful in influencing their followers. Under social learning theory, followers often learn new behaviors by imitating their leaders. These behaviors and actions become integrated into the culture of the organization. Therefore, leaders should consistently emulate the behaviors they desire to see in their organization (Giberson et al., 2009; Kim, 2020).

Two specific leader actions relevant to this study are communication and empowerment. Communication reflects the use of words and nonverbal mannerisms to express and inspire stakeholders toward their shared values and goals (Tourish, 2019). Empowerment reflects the leader enabling an employee to have input into their role and/or the context in which their work is performed (Chhotray et al., 2018). For communication and empowerment to be effective, mutual trust must exist in the relationship. Trust reflects a confidence in ability and willingness of another person to consistently conduct themselves in an ethical manner. This conduct is seen over time. There is integrity in what the person says and does that is reliable. There is also a transparency and willingness to listen to others concerns (Joseph & Winston, 2005).

These actions and behaviors need to be grounded in a high level of moral and ethical beliefs. These beliefs, which drive the behaviors and actions of the leader, must also be consistent regardless of the situation. This consistency, whether positive or negative, can create a more universal perception of the leader by followers or employees. The actions a leader takes also demonstrates his or her assumptions or beliefs regarding human nature. These assumptions affect their decisions as well as their relationships with internal and external stakeholders (Hommelhoff, 2017). These concepts are validated by academic literature in both sociology and psychology. In management literature, these concepts are reflected in McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y. Under Theory X, leaders assume people are lazy, untrustworthy, and uncapable. In contrast, Theory Y leaders assume people are willing, honest, and capable of doing tasks well for the benefit of the organization (Hommelhoff, 2017; McGregor, 1957; Prottas & Nummelin, 2018). When the assumptions and behaviors are positive, employees can feel safer and secure which can be beneficial for open communication and knowledge sharing across the organization (Zohar & Tenne-Gazit, 2008). This psychological safety or moral courage can also foster a conducive organizational culture that is supportive of change and continuous improvement. This support of change and continuous improvement is beneficial in a dynamic business environment (Prottas & Nummelin, 2018; Simola, 2018).

Biblical Worldview. The Biblical Worldview provides an understanding of human actions and appropriate guidance for leaders. The Bible also addresses the assumptions people should have with others. Consequently, the assumptions of the leader begin to play out in their actions whether positive or negative. “Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, James 3:9-10). Scripture also provides the expectation God has regarding the treatment of others. As humans are made in His image, all people should be treated with dignity and respect, not with cursing or negative assumptions. “Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Romans 12:10). As people, even leaders, are human. They can make mistakes. Everyone needs grace. “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Colossians 3:13). These are the assumptions which should influence actions and behaviors of a person.

As leadership is defined as having influence, the actions of a leader are impactful regardless of their role in the organization. These actions are also regardless of whether the leader interacts with someone directly or indirectly. People are watching. A leader should consistently act with integrity by ensuring that their deeds reflect their words. “Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (New International Version, 1978/2011, 1 Timothy 4:15-16). God intentionally places people in leadership positions. Therefore, the leader should conduct themselves in a manner which gives God the glory. "To glorify God, it demands man, as the image of God, to rule with justice and peace. As God governs all creatures with leadership, so should we exemplify accordingly" (Hah, 2019, p. 4). Moses provides an example of transformative leadership in scripture.

Bottomley et al. (2014) identified four behaviors of a servant leader which will be used to present Moses as a leader. The "These behaviors are vision-builder, standard-bearer, integrator, and developer" (Bottomley et al., 2014, p. 5). In the Book of Exodus (New Living Translation, 1996/2015), Moses led Israel through the wilderness after sharing the vision of the Promised Land. He was instrumental in changing the Israelite culture from Egyptian influenced to one that honored and obeyed God. His actions reflected wise decisions and judgements influenced from the law God provided. These laws reflected a high morality, ethics, and concern for all people within Israel (Ben-Hur & Jonsen, 2012). As the Israelite population grew, Moses trained leaders in the law and empowered them with the authority and responsibility for judging legal cases (Exodus 18).

Scripture also provides examples of leading through love which is reflective of Servant Leadership Theory. Similar to the secular concept, Biblical Servant Leadership promotes the empowerment and development of others through the establishment and maintenance of covenant relationships (Fischer & Schultz, 2017). The scriptures provide the perfect example of servant leadership through the acts of Jesus Christ. "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and give His life as a ransom for man" (New International Version, 1978/2011, Matthew 20:28). Jesus taught His disciples most through His daily interactions with them. Jesus, in His teachings, provided parables and stories of leaders as examples. These stories reinforced His method of leadership by serving subordinates. Serving others helps to mitigate leadership traps as well as fosters subordinate development within the organization (Slater, 2020). The Son of God reinforced the importance of leaders to serve by washing the feet of the disciples (John 13). "I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you," (New International Version, John 13:15). His leadership, as well as Moses', was dependent on their relationship with God to be successful (Hah, 2019). Jesus said, "the words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work" (New International Version, 1978/2011, John 14:10b). As the vertical relationship with God deepens, better horizontal relationships are enabled with those made in His image (Hah, 2019).

While the Bible provides the perfect example of leadership with the stories of Jesus, but scripture also includes the stories of human leadership failures. "Leadership traps result in many avarice conduct such as compromising one's values, falling into dysfunctional behaviour, belittling others, being narcissistic, being incompetent and lacking the necessary leadership skills and morals" (Slater, 2020, p. 1). King Solomon began his reign as one of the wisest men. The downfall in his leadership came gradually as external influences weakened his faith and obedience to God. This downfall further weakened his relationship with God as well as those around him (Friedman & Friedman, 2019).

Organizational Development

God formed government through Moses (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Exodus 18). Through training the disciples, Jesus began His church (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Matthew 16). Organizations have existed for centuries. This section explores the development of organizations. This examination focuses on bureaucratic organizations with an emphasis on those in the public sector. As part of this presentation, the challenges, opportunities, and current trends of these organizations are examined extant academic literature. This presentation then progresses to an examination of organizational culture. Initially, in this examination, culture is defined prior to identifying the current challenges and opportunities. This section then presents the concept of organizational change and the factors enabling change to occur. As part of this presentation, the prevailing change theory and models are identified from extant literature. Lastly, this section discusses the Biblical expectations for organizational structure, culture, and organizational change.

Bureaucratic Organizations. Bureaucratic organizations can be a blessing or a curse depending on your level of interaction with them. This form of an organizational structure was developed to foster efficiency and effectiveness, although they are not always perceived as such (Caillier, 2020). The following section provides an overview of the history and evolution of bureaucratic organization as well as highlights of the typical structure. This overview is followed by an examination of bureaucratic organizations in the public sector. The latest developments, current challenges, and current opportunities effecting bureaucratic organizations are identified and defined. A brief overview of the Biblical Worldview of organizations follows these presentations.

Brief Overview of Their History and Evolution. A brief overview of the history and evolution of bureaucratic organizations provides an understanding of their importance. While today bureaucratic organizations are often seen in a negative light, they have been beneficial and remain so. In the United States, the introduction of bureaucracies came as a consequence of their founding as British colonies. Yet, the existence of bureaucracies evolved much earlier (Vogler, 2019). The need for bureaucratic organizations came because of population growth. This population growth increased the size of communities as well as conflicts over rights to resources. As the community grew, citizens needed structure and leadership to better engage with one another. This law and order reduced the level of chaos and conflict associated with the sharing of resources. This law and order also fostered the blending of appropriate behaviors into cultural norms.

Communities formed government and military institutions to facilitate law enforcement. Law enforcement was needed to protect the health and safety of the citizens. As communities grew, these institutions grew to create a more vertical hierarchical structure. Later, bureaucratic organizations began to emerge in the private sector. During the industrial age, people transitioned from farming and sole proprietor artisanship to forming organizations. These new organizations enabled people to conduct larger-scale product manufacturing. The resulting organizational structure created a hierarchy which enabled participants to follow a normative process.

This normative process enabled consistency in operations which fostered mass production and higher quality. When employees identified any irregularities occurring during production, they could escalate the issue to someone with a higher level of knowledge and authority (Horn, 1972). These organizations were task-oriented rather than relationship-oriented. In addition, these processes and procedures formulated new standardized rules and protocols. Through the standardization of the policies and procedures, operations could be more quickly and easily scaled and replicated. These rules also promoted consistency and stability in how the organization operated (Thomas et al., 2018). Also, with the formalization of processes and control structures, operations became more efficient and effective. Yet, the formalization of operations also limited the opportunities for creativity and innovation. Companies oftentimes standardized their products rather than providing customers the ability to customize features.

The product standardization facilitated work through an assembly line creating efficiencies and reducing manufacturing costs. As demand for products and services increased, these organizations grew. The growth of the organization occurred vertically as well as horizontally. With this growth, additional rules, regulations, and rigid processes also occurred. Consequently, some organizations became over bureaucratized. The laborious process and excessive rules began hindering their efforts to remain efficient or adapt to changes in the environment (Horn, 1972; Shapiro, 2017).

Typical Organizational Structure. A typical organizational structure is found in bureaucratic organizations. Bureaucratic organizations are authoritarian in nature with a central top of the hierarchy having the highest level of power and control. Communication is primarily top-down. Knowledge sharing can be difficult. Oftentimes the knowledge owner will hoard the information and thereby create a false sense of power and security (Amber et al., 2019). In addition, processes and responsibilities in bureaucracies are highly structured and defined. Roles require specialized skills and knowledge which is oftentimes siloed in the organization. In addition, organizations enforce conformity and compliance to numerous rules and regulations to better foster a shared understanding and accountability (Slack & Singh, 2018; Thomas et al., 2018). Decision-making is often prescribed by long-standing processes and only made by those at the top. As this structure promotes stability, there is a strong internal desire to maintain the status quo (Boon & Verhoest, 2018). As such, the technology in bureaucracies is oftentimes outdated as well as their processes. As a result, these behaviors and resistance to change becomes embedded in the culture. This culture oftentimes then impedes process improvements, innovation, and creativity (Slack & Singh, 2018).

Public Administration. Public administration organizations are typically bureaucratic. Strong power and hierarchical relationships often define these organizations. The culture reflects the top-down hierarchy which dictates employees to respect superiors. In addition, leaders oftentimes expect employees obey and not question the decisions made (Erickson et al., 2015). The top positions control power, information flow, and decision-making. This command-and-control culture impacts how people interact with employees and customers as well as the processes impacting customer service (Slack & Singh, 2018). In organizations developed to protect and serve the public, the structure and power can appropriately provide safety through strict obedience. Also, in this bureaucratic structure, there is highly defined jurisdictions, roles, and responsibilities as well as standardized processes and rules. Oftentimes, formal written procedures require a documented audit trail denoting the multiple levels of approvals throughout the transaction. These procedures promote consistency and fairness in the services provided to constituents (Dormann et al., 2019). These are all factors which influence the attitudes and engagement level of employees.

Latest Developments. The latest developments in bureaucracies revolve around reforming public agencies. These reforms seek to address processes as well as the organizational culture. This culture is reflected through the morale and the level of engagement of employees. The attitudes and engagement of public sector employees are often identified as more negative than their private sector counterparts. Recently, there has been an increase in research to better examine the context in which the public sector employees’ work. This examination seeks to better understand the cause for lower performance results (Borst, 2018). Another trend being observed includes changes in stakeholder demands. Stakeholders are increasingly requiring public administration organizations to provide additional types of accountability reporting. This reporting includes environmental impact of decisions as well as providing more transparency in their decision-making processes. For example, some agencies are required to publish their cost benefit analysis for all options considered as part of the procurement process (Shapiro, 2017).

Another trend in bureaucratic organizations is the transition of their current hierarchy and culture to a neo-bureaucracy structure. This hybrid structure blends bureaucratic concepts with a structure which is more organic. The new organic structure eliminates vertical organizational layers to promote more agility. In this structure, an emphasis is placed on project-based work. The project-based work fosters the need for cross-functional teams which changes the traditional communication and power channels. This change also transforms how knowledge is shared across the organization. The new structure also requires employees to develop new technical skills. This transition also requires a change in culture where leaders expect employees to exert more self-management and control of responsibilities (Hodgson, 2004; Morris et al., 2016).

Another recent development reflects the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through new partnerships to facilitate the providing of social services to citizens. This facilitation has been beneficial in filling a gap in local governmental resources. These third parties have provided short-term staffing as well as providing needed skills training to staff and the public. In addition, these NGOs have provided support for identifying and implementing necessary policy changes through sharing their best practice expertise (Campbell et al., 2019). The leveraging of industry best practices has been beneficial for agencies which engage in public-private partnerships. These partnerships have helped agencies better adapt to their current challenges (Jukic et al., 2019).

Current Challenges. The bureaucratic organizations are faced with many of the same challenges as other organizations. These include, but are not limited to, engaging employees, staffing retention and development, increased stakeholder expectations, technology, and organizational change management (Rao, 2017). Many of these challenges stem from the increase in technology which makes information more readily available. Therefore, consumers are more informed which influences their wants, needs, and desires.

Recent technologies have transformed personalized goods and services in the private sector by enabling more direct relationships with its stakeholders. This capability created a desire by citizens to have the same opportunities with their transactions and interactions with government agencies (Jukić et al., 2019). Yet, due to resource constraints, many agencies struggle to allocate funds to implement these technologies. When agencies do implement new technology, they oftentimes face a lack of appropriate skills and knowledge in its employees. These agencies often struggle with being able to attract, train, and retain staff with these skills (Agarwal, 2018; Langer et al., 2019). Often people with the desired skillsets seek positions with private organizations offering higher compensation packages. People may elect to relocate to other states to obtain these better opportunities.

When private organizations and skilled employees leave the state, the revenue base for the public sector changes. These economic impacts often change the dynamic for citizens which may require new or additional government services. Agencies may struggle with having to increase services and public protections while experiencing decreases in revenues (Agarwal, 2018). This further hinders the ability of agencies to recruit people with needed skillsets as well as implement new technologies. Another big challenge to public sector agencies is their organizational culture. As noted, bureaucracies were formed to promote stability. Their organizational culture seeks to maintain the status quo. Reformation brings significant change. This desire to maintain the status quo creates a resistance to change. This resistance by employees to change what they do and how permeates the culture. This culture impedes their ability to reform (Slack & Singh, 2018).

Current Opportunities. These challenges can also create opportunities for the public sector organizations. This desire to improve organizational processes and outcomes is driving pressure for public sector agencies to reform. In response, some organizations are temporarily or permanently modifying their structures. Temporarily structures include cross-functional teams. These new structures offer organizations additional agility and flexibility. The new structure shares power and lessens the reliance on strict rules to achieve organizational goals (McDonnell, 2017; Morris et al., 2016).

Some public sector organizations are reforming their structures to leverage efficiencies through shared service centers which lessen the duplication of efforts across many agencies (Boon & Verhoest, 2018). Some of these reforms have resulted in an increase in the number of public-private partnerships. These partnerships have enabled the public sector organizations to gain innovative solutions by leveraging knowledge and experience from the private sector through these collaborations. Some public sector organizations have also begun co-creating with its citizens. This co-creation has led to transforming how citizens interact with the public sector agencies (Jukić et al., 2019). These interactions are being redefined by recent changes in information technology. The technology enables more customer self-service options as well as more electronic forms of communication and digitalization which were not previously available. These changes increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization without adding additional staff (Dormann et al., 2019).

To address the on-going need for changes in skills, some organizations have found development opportunities through implementing servant leadership practices. These practices foster the growth and development of employees. As continuous learning becomes part of the culture, the employee investment fosters the ability of the organization to have the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve their goals (Kim, 2020). The servant leadership model places an emphasis on positive working relationships. The relationship investment is beneficial by enabling managers to invest the time needed to identify employee needs. From this identification, the manager is better able to provide the appropriate development of the employee skills (Slack & Singh, 2018). In addition, the investment fosters higher levels of performance and engagement as employees feel valued (Borst, 2018). As noted earlier, employees of public sector agencies are seen more negative than their private sector peers. As a result, implementing servant leadership would also require a notable change in their organizational culture to become more positive and relationship focused.

Organizational Culture. The culture of the organization is a key factor in what work is performed and how it is done. Companies can obtain short-term success by responding appropriately to the changes in the external environment, but long-term success is primarily a factor of its culture (Chhotray et al., 2018). Culture is the connection between leadership and the performance of the organization (Pasricha et al., 2018). There are two major dimensions that impact culture and how an organization responds to its environment. The first dimension is whether the group has flexible or stable processes. The second dimension is whether the group has an internal or external focus.

The intersection of these two dimensions creates a matrix with four distinct types of cultures including clan, adhocracy, hierarchical, market. Clan cultures have high process flexibility and an internal focus. Adhocracy has high process flexibility with an external focus. Hierarchical cultures have a high process stability with an internal focus. Most bureaucratic environments have a hierarchical culture. Market has a high process stability with an external focus. The appropriate culture is determined by the optimal level of process the organization needs to facilitate the achievement of their mission and vision (Slack & Singh, 2018).

"As every family must have culture to be healthy, every organization must emphasize culture to unite employees emotionally to achieve the desired organizational goals and objectives" (Rao, 2017, p. 2). The concept of organizational culture is based on sociological theories pertaining to groups and their norms. Culture reflects the group dynamics from which the group operates to achieve their purpose or goals and solve problems. These norms include their values and behaviors impacting their internal and external interactions. These interactions include communication, trust, and the decision-making processes. These cultural dynamics are reflected in the identity, stated values, the stories, and other artifacts of the organization (Nickelsen, 2017).

These organizational behaviors are influenced by the actions of their leaders. These actions include what the leader pays attention to and rewards, allocates resources to, behaviors they model, handles of critical situations, and manages the employee life cycle. Trust is critical factor in the relationship between a leader and followers. This trust should permeate the culture. In addition, the culture must also include integrity and respect across the organization (Joseph & Winston, 2005). The culture is a principal factor in determining the level of knowledge sharing, communication, collaboration, and engagement experienced in the organization (Pasricha et al., 2018).

When the levels of sharing and collaboration are low, the ability of the organization to appropriately respond to changes in the external environment is hampered. The status quo is no longer the optimal condition for the organization and a change is necessary. Organizational change is the result of conflict in the normalized behavior or actions. The organization may need to first identify and address the behaviors in the culture which are no longer beneficial. The change is more effective when the group internally discusses and modifies (Nickelsen, 2017). Despite this, often change is forced from the top-down. “Moreover, even when group processes and group outcomes are considered, the critical roles of followers, the environments in which leaders and followers interact, and time are frequently overlooked” (Thoroughgood et al., 2018, p. 628). In essence, leaders overlook the current state of the organizational culture and the impact of the change on the employees.

As with leaders, McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y may be prevalent in the culture of the organization. Leaders are often a considerable influence in the assumptions imbedded in the culture. These assumptions reflect the beliefs on human nature. Whether negative or positive, these assumptions held by leaders impact the strategies and actions taken toward employees, customers, and other stakeholders. These assumptions impact the actions and behaviors of the organization. When these actions and behaviors of the organization do not align with the values of stakeholders, conflict can occur internally or externally (Hommelhoff, 2017; McGregor, 1957).

Current Challenges. One current challenge is the increase in bad behaviors in the workplace. These bad behaviors include bullying and incivility (Porath, 2015, 2016). This incivility also includes gossip (Agba et al., 2017). Incivility costs organizations financially through increased white-collar crime, higher health program costs, lower performance, and higher employee turnover. These higher costs are a result of employees having to combat the negative psychological, emotional, and physical impacts to their well-being over a significant period of time. These behaviors are not limited to only those in positions of authority but can happen at all levels of the organization (Porath, 2015, 2016). As noted, culture in bureaucratic organizations oftentimes considered knowledge as a source of power. The hoarding of information or other resources can often create additional discord and conflict (Amber et al., 2019).

In addition, some public sector roles have negative stereotypes either socially, economically, or physically. These stereotypes can be developed organizationally or by the broader society. These prejudices or biases can stigmatize workers impacting their performance. These stigmas can create additional tensions which manifest during interactions with colleagues or the public (Malvini Redden & Scarduzio, 2018; Porath, 2016). These stigmas can hamper recruiting people with the needed skills. Technology has better enabled a company to attract talent across the globe. There have been changes in the diversity of employee and citizenship demographics as a result. As there is more diversity, organizations are seeing increasing challenges in language and culture which can further impede communication and collaboration (Downey et al., 2015).

Current Opportunities. These challenges can also create opportunities for the public sector. The increase in diversity can bring opportunities for innovative ideas and solutions (Downey et al., 2015). These innovative and creative ideas are desired by senior leaders. The goals of the organization reflect this desire to further enhance their products, services, and processes through innovation or creativity (Wu et al., 2019). Organizations with a culture which values and fosters diversity can better achieve these goals collaboratively. Furthermore, organizations which seek to align their organizational culture with their operations and strategy are having higher levels of success implementing continuous improvement (Downey et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2019).

Opportunities for success are oftentimes presented where there is scrutiny. As a result of the increased scrutiny of the leaders and companies, many organizations are reexamining their values and actions. Integrity is important. As a result, these organizations are increasing their efforts to espouse what they claim. These efforts include allowing people to incorporate their religious faith into their work. Enabling the integration of faith and religious values into corporate culture can be beneficial to organizations. The values universally defined by religion can provide a foundation for organizational ethics, conduct, and decision-making processes (Ben-Hur & Jonsen, 2012; Mea & Sims, 2019).

In addition, many organizations are increasingly adding servant leadership principles into their training and development programs (Kim, 2020). This style of leadership can foster a learning environment and ensuring staff are in the appropriate positions to thrive. Leaders enable their employees to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in their role for the organization. When employees are able to thrive in their roles, the organization is oftentimes better able to achieve their goals. As a result, leaders are observing a higher level of engagement in their workforce (Langer et al., 2019).

For this higher level of engagement, organizations need an environment which fosters are open and honest conversations. These conversations are enabled when employees feel respected and safe. Consequently, organizations are modifying their cultures to increase psychological safety. To achieve psychological safety, organizations are having to re-instill trust within their culture. Through increasing trust, the organization establishes an environment where employees can feel safe in expressing their concerns, mistakes observed, or challenge the status quo without fear of negative consequences. The ability of employees to safely express their concerns and observations can enable the organization to better address issues. In many organizations, this is a momentous change in its culture, but one which has been beneficial in significantly improving the organizational processes and outcomes (Frazier et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017; Prottas & Nummelin, 2018).

Organizational Change. Organizational change is the result of conflict in the normalized behavior or actions (Nickelsen, 2017). Roy T. Bennett said, “It’s only after you’ve stepped outside your comfort zone that you begin to change, grow, and transform.” While he was referring to people, the same principle applies to organizations. Both people and organizations need to evolve and growth to survive. This evolution is normal as the organization modifies the products and services offered to meet the changing needs of their customers. Organizations should also embark on periodic reassessment of their group norms. This periodic reassessment can enable an organization to appropriately respond to changes in their external environment (Nickelsen, 2017). Effective strategic management requires the organization to answer appropriately the questions of what (content) needs to change, why (context) it needs to change, and how will it change (Chebbi et al., 2019). The strategic planning process should include an examination of these questions (Schwarz et al., 2020).

Once the questions are defined and addressed, leaders need to clearly communicate these answers across the organization. Ensuring all employees receive appropriate notification of changes is important to keep them engaged. Engaged employees are more productive. While there is an increase in automation, processes continue to require human involvement for their accomplishment. As a result, responsible change management puts additional emphasis on the employee needs and perspectives (Chebbi et al., 2019). Employees desire to know how the change will impact them. Open and honest communication removes some of the uncertainty and resistance to change. This communication should be two-way, enabling employees to share their knowledge and participate in the change.

Employees prefer to hear information from leaders rather than from gossip or other informal channels. The lack of communication is typically one of the reasons organizational change fails (Amin & Servey, 2018). To better understand organizational change processes and other behaviors, researchers are leveraging psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis can provide better insight on resistance as change can invoke emotional responses in employees (Barabasz, 2016). The change process of the organization must address these responses to be effective.

Organizational Change Theory. Organizational change theory provides academic explanations for the behaviors and actions which occur during transformation activities. The meaning of the change is subjective to the organization. There is no universally accepted definition for organizational change (Suddaby & Foster, 2016). For this study, organizational change involves a transformation within its structure or processes over a period of time (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). As a result, organizational change theory is concerned with how and why employees react to implemented change (Van der Voet et al., 2016). The ability for an organization to change is dependent upon their history and culture.

There are three ways which history can impact the ability of the organization to change. These ways include imprinting, structural inertia, and escalation of commitment. Imprinting reflects the strong influence of the founding of the organization. This desire to maintain traditions creates a hesitancy to change. For example, an organization continuing to provide their initial good or service despite a significant decline in demand or profitability is imprinting. As the organization grows, their experiences and culture can form a structural inertia which hinders change. This inertia can manifest through internal politics or the inability of the organization to obtain needed external resources. These internal politics are often a typical form of resistance found in public administration organizations. Lastly, the escalation of commitment reflects the perception that prior decisions made limit the ability to foster change. The leader decides to continue pursuing the same course of action despite new information (Van der Voet et al., 2016). An organization continuing with a project as planned despite evidence the project will no longer benefits the organization is an example of the escalation of commitment (Suddaby & Foster, 2016).

Where there have been unsuccessful numerous attempts to change or distrust within the organization, a level of cynicism may be imbedded in the culture. This cynicism can manifest as resistance. Cynicism is defined as a negative perception of the workplace which impacts job satisfaction, engagement, and performance. This resistance is a barrier for change. This barrier can be overcome (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). Not all resistance is bad or counterproductive. When the resistance is voiced and understood, the discussions can foster more appropriate solutions or provide needed information to make better decisions (Schweiger et al., 2018). When resistance is appropriately diagnosed, an effective approach or solution can be developed. When remediation is necessary, resistance can oftentimes be overcome by leaders making personal interventions with those employees (Suddaby & Foster, 2016). These interventions by leadership and the building of trust are often required to overcome resistance. In addition, these actions can also increase employee support and engagement (Hughes, 2016). To assist leaders with these actions, organizational change models were developed.

Organizational Change Model. Organizational change models provide a framework for understanding and managing the change process. These frameworks seek to enhance the ability to gain employee support and engagement to implement change. Oftentimes, the active participation of employees throughout the change process facilitates their support and engagement (Suddaby & Foster, 2016). While there are many models that focus on fostering organizational change, three are presented as relevant to this study. These models include the Lewin's Change Theory, Kotter's Eight Steps for Leading Change, and the Four Frame Organizational Change Model.

Lewin identified that organizational culture changes occur more effectively when they are voluntarily rather than involuntarily. He observed a small representative group can foster the change across the entire organization. His change theory identified the need for organizations to first unfreeze the current behavior, initiate the new behavior, and then refreeze the new behavior. Unfreezing includes the identification of behaviors or processes in the current culture which are no longer beneficial. As part of this process, the vision of the future state is created and agreed upon. Next, the new behavior is introduced and practiced until begins to be normalized throughout the organization. The organization then refreezes the newly adopted behavior to become part of normal operations (Lewin & APA, 1997; Nickelsen, 2017).

Like Lewin, Kotter (2012) identified the need to modify unproductive behaviors. This modification is an important aspect of implementing organizational change. In his research, Kotter found eight common errors typically made by leaders while implementing change. These errors were identified as the underlying causes of most failures in organizational change and transformation efforts. In developing the solution, Kotter reversed the errors. The reversal provided eight positive steps for leaders and organizations to implement change. The first step establishes a sense of urgency regarding issues in the external or internal environment which can have a significant impact (positive or negative) on the organization. This step creates a dissatisfaction with the status quo. Next, the leader assembles a team to act as the guiding coalition for examining the issue and determining the appropriate solution. This cross-functional team has the responsibility and authority to implement the change. Third, the team creates the vision for the future state and the change plan for its achievement. Fourth, the team engages the organization with on-going communications regarding the change and the process. Next, the team empowers others to act on the vision by removing any obstacles hindering the change. The sixth step facilitates a series of short-term wins against planned milestones.

These wins reflect progress being made. Kotter determined that these early wins needed to be communicated and celebrated throughout the organization. These short-term wins can help foster additional momentum and excitement for the continuing change efforts. In the seventh step, change continues by consolidating improvements while fostering additional changes. Lastly, the changes become normalized. This normalization process aligns with Lewin's concept of refreezing. The team reinforces the successful outcomes and organizational performance as part of this last step (Chebbi et al., 2019, Hughes, 2015; King et al., 2018; Kotter, 2012; Pollack & Pollack, 2015).

The Four Frame Organizational Change Model was developed by Bolman and Deal (2017) as a diagnostic means for assessing necessary organizational changes. The four frames reflect the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic aspects of the organization. These different perspectives enable a better understanding of what is occurring across the organization. In addition, the different perspectives can enable generating creative ideas for improvement. The structural frame includes the mission, vision, and governance of the organization. This frame also includes the roles needed to perform the work as well as the policies and procedures which govern their actions. The human resources frame relates to the hiring, training, and development of employees to ensure the organization maintains the necessary skills. The political aspect refers to the power relationships in the organization and how the allocation of resources occurs. The symbolic reflects the organizational culture and incorporates the stories and traditions. The use of all four perspectives represents a more balanced determination of the needs, opportunities, and challenges of the organization. As a result, a more holistic perspective can enable better decision making and resource allocation for long-term success (Bajis et al., 2018; Bolman & Deal, 2017; Sowell, 2014).

Biblical Worldview. The Biblical Worldview reflects the concept of change from the beginning of creation when the thoughts and words of God became tangible. Albert Einstein said, "The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking." In scripture, the world was created by a triune God through His words. "God said, 'Let there be… and it came into existence" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Genesis 1:3-25). He created all things through community for community (Hah, 2019). Yet sin also entered the world through man, causing his downfall. Man was not able to repair the damage done on his own. God knew this and provided the solution. Through His life and death, Jesus provided the means for restoration. He created the church as His mechanism for consummating His redemptive plan. This redemptive plan restores the world to its original intent and His people to proper relationship with Him (Kgatla & Kamukwamba, 2019; Wellum, 2020).

Entities have also followed this path of creation, fall, redemption, and consummations as is reflective in the history of bureaucratic organizations (Gerde et al., 2007). Likewise, these organizations can be used in the consummation. The consummation reflects the on-going reformation and transformation to serve the needs of God's creation (Wellum, 2020).

> Adam and Eve were put in the garden to maintain and develop an organised system of life that acknowledges God as the source and final purpose of creation. This organized system of life or way of life has to do with beliefs, customs, social systems, artistic taste, language, juridical conception, governance and so on. It is this organised way of life that is herein referred to as a 'God-ward culture.' (Kgatla & Kamukwamba, 2019, p. 8)

All humanity is to work together as one body (organization) to steward the resources that He has provided in creation. These resources are to be used for His glory by providing goods and services to His people. All people are His people. "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Corinthians 12:12). Whether a person is religious or secular, they are part of an organization which participates in God's economy. Each person has a vital role to play. People are intended to live in community and serve one another. "And He will answer, 'I tell you the truth when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Matthew 25:45). Accordingly, all work is sacred as it seeks to glorify God by collaborating together to serve others (Espedal & Carlsen, 2019; Gerde et al., 2007; Xie et al., 2016).

The body is organized to perform. There is an intentional structure, including a hierarchy for governance. Originally, this governance was to come only from God, yet His people desired a leader in human form. "Choose some well-respected men from each tribe who are known for their wisdom and understanding, and I will appoint then as your leaders" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Deuteronomy 1:13). As God is in control of those appointed to leadership positions, He expects the followers to be respective to those appointed. “Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Romans 13:1). In addition to establishing the expectations of followers, scripture also provides wisdom literature for those in authority. “Don’t Lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Peter 5:3). The scriptures address economic, social justice, and human relation matters that all impact organizations today. This wisdom is intended to guide behaviors and interactions to promote His desired culture for humanity. People are to treat one another with dignity and equality as they work together for a higher purpose (Hah, 2019; Mea & Sims, 2019; Serrano, 2018).

Organizational Performance

When employees are doing the best they can in the appropriate roles, should that be enough to ensure success? The outcomes of organizational efforts are the topic of this literature review. This section presents the extant academic literature and Biblical support for what constitutes successful organizational performance. Initially, performance and success are defined. These definitions transition into an examination of academic theories in strategic and quality management. As part of this examination, the challenges and opportunities experienced by organizations in the current business environment are presented. These experiences align with the challenges facing leadership addressed earlier in the leadership section. The presentation is followed by an examination of the current trends in human resources management. Finally, the presentation provides the Biblical Worldview regarding individual performance, stewardship, and executing with quality is provided.

Organizational Performance. Organizational performance reflects the outcomes of the efforts which are undertaken. The overall performance is the summation of individual employee performance and other organizational actions which drives outcomes. But what makes an organization successful? Some extant literature in management identifies several key elements for a successful organization. These elements include a clear vision, good leadership, and employee engagement toward the goals (Chhotray et al., 2018). Other scholars prescribe that an organization needs to be in a constant state of renewal to maintain their competitive advantage (Ahn et al., 2017). Edgeman (2018) defined organizational performance as the ability of an entity to satisfy the demands of multiple stakeholders by creating value through leveraging limited resources to fulfill those needs. Organizational performance parallels the level of commitment and participation by employees in their daily tasks. The increase in commitment and participation results in higher levels of performance. The commitment and participation are key elements in employee engagement. High levels of engagement are prevalent in successful organizations (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018).

There are four key areas where high performing organizations differentiate themselves were identified. These areas include management methods, work organization, human resources (HR) practices, and employee relations (Kallenberg & Moody, 1994). Each of these areas rely significantly on human resources (HR) staff. The HR staff assists the organization obtain and retain employees with the required skill sets. The HR staff can also be integral in maintaining a conducive organizational culture (Rao, 2017). This conducive organizational culture fosters cohesiveness in the organization. This cohesiveness seeks to ensure all parts of the organization are aligned and working together effectively to achieve the shared goals and objectives.

Relevant Academic Theories. There are many academic theories which are relevant to this research study regarding employee engagement and performance. The research on employee engagement and performance is prevalent in the human resources management literature. The extant literature focuses on three main categories pertaining to organizational performance including human resources, organizational outcomes, and financial outcomes (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018). HR should be a key business partner to all areas across the organization.

The HR staff plays an integral role in ensure the organization is staffed with the required skills to execute its mission and vision. Once employees are hired, HR should work with managers to ensure that employees are continuously learning to improve their current talents while gaining the necessary knowledge and skills the organization will need over the long-term. These needs include identifying and developing new leaders. In addition, HR assists leadership in the promotion and maintenance of the organizational culture (Rao, 2017).

The influence of the actions of a leader and organizational culture have been discussed. While the HR theories and roles are important, this examination focuses on strategic management and quality management. These two performance-related disciplines provide a better understanding for how organizations address stakeholder needs and the importance of continuous change. Strategic management pertains to what the organization strives to achieve while the quality reflects how it will get done. Oftentimes, the intersection of the strategy and quality is where organizations find their competitive advantage (Vaziri & Beheshtinia, 2016). The competitive advantage fosters higher sales and market share. When an organization is a low performer in the market, the lack of strategic management or innovative processes is often the culprit (Shatilo, 2019).

Strategic Management

Strategically determining what products and services will be offered is the focus of senior organizational leaders. According to Dynamic Capabilities Perspective, strategy development requires corporate foresight. Corporate foresight enables and organization to examine the external environment and exploit opportunities as they respond to changes (Schwarz et al., 2020). This examination includes the how the organization can best fulfill the needs of customers with the resources at its disposal. “At company level, the factors of external and internal environment have impact on the overall operation, innovation, management decision-making” (Shatilo, 2019, p. 85). The strategic planning process should incorporate discussions across the organization to obtain the necessary information for effective decision-making (Ornoy, 2019).

Methods like Hoshin Kanri offer organizations a planning methodology to integrate with their strategy and quality management efforts. This methodology provides tools, like catchball, facilitates communication across the organization. This methodology also facilitates participation by all departments in the organization in the development and the deployment of the strategy. As a result, the organization obtains the necessary employee engagement needed to identify and implement appropriate change. As noted earlier, this engagement can foster better outcomes as employees see the impact of their daily activities in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. In contrast, the lack of integrating the daily operations with the strategy and the inability to manage organizational change are often why strategic efforts do not achieve their anticipated level of success (Paraschivescu, 2018; Simon & Houle, 2017; Souad et al., 2017).

Once developed, the organization communicates their strategy to stakeholders through their mission, vision, and goals. These goals should not be easily obtainable, but ones which challenge the organization to stretch and grow. Oftentimes these goals state the desire of the organization to provide the highest level of value to customers through their product and service offerings (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). From the mission, the organization determines the appropriate short and long-term goals for its achievement. Overall, effective strategic planning processes follows Deming's PDCA model of planning, doing, checking, and acting. This model becomes an on-going process to ensure actions align with the goals and objectives. These plans include both short-term and long-term (Paraschivescu, 2018). The strategic process reflects the ability of the organization to forecast the current and future demands of customers by identifying their needs and wants. This demand information is analyzed along with the resources accessible to the organization to estimate production.

The strategic process reflects the prioritizing of all the alternatives into strategic plans, goals, and direction (Vaziri & Beheshtinia, 2016; Vishnevskiy et al., 2016). In addition, appropriate metrics and reporting requirements are identified and implemented to ensure timely evaluation and communication. These metrics provide valuable feedback to ensure that efforts are achieving the stated goals or if changes need to be made (Paraschivescu, 2018). The importance of high standards/goals, metrics and making appropriate interventions fosters an examination of quality management.

Quality Management.

Initially, quality management was deemed an audit function reflecting an overhead cost of doing business, predominantly in manufacturing organizations. While quality management continues to align performance with high-level standards, the concept has evolved include process improvement methodologies. These process improvement methodologies seek to gain efficiency and productivity while often reducing costs (Vaziri & Beheshtinia, 2016). This evolved quality function includes all activities related to planning, coordinating, organizing, controlling, and evaluating. These activities pertain to the achievement of organizational goals through the optimization of resources. Thus, the entire organization is responsible for quality and participating in the process (Paraschivescu & Stoica, 2018). The total quality management (TQM) movement began in Japanese automobile manufacturing organizations. As TQM evolved, organizations in other industries began adapting the methodology for their processes. This evolution brought frameworks and methodologies such as Just In Time, Six Sigma, Lean Manufacturing, and Houses of Quality. These frameworks and methodologies promote a collaborative, learning culture in the organization.

This learning culture fosters an environment capable of enabling continuous change. The ability to foster continuous change has positive long-term impacts for the organization (Shafiq et al., 2019). For example, lean methodologies focus on the elimination of waste in the process by first ensuring the organizational culture is conducive to open communication, continuous learning, and knowledge sharing. As a result, participants become more empowered to take ownership and responsibility for operations. Their participation in sharing ideas could lead to identifying further efficiencies. This conducive culture also seeks collaboration across the organization to continuously improve by seeking resolution over blame (Dorval et al., 2019). These Lean concepts have also expanded into a Lean-green movement which goes further to promote the reduction of waste toxicity and an increase in natural resource conservation efforts. These concepts foster better solutions toward more sustainable organizational operations being demanded by stakeholders. Those organizations successfully implementing these practices gained a competitive advantage in the marketplace and increased levels of stakeholder satisfaction (Lartey et al., 2019).

Challenges. Besides the challenges created by external forces and stakeholder demands, organizations face many internal challenges to performing effective strategic and quality management practices. Often organizations will follow the trends of implementing the latest technology or methodology. These organizations abandon current methodologies which did not fulfill expectations. There is not one methodology which will fulfill all the needs of the organization. Organizations will often implement a whole methodology instead of selecting the appropriate tools from multiple methodologies. The implementation of the appropriate tools can enhance their operational success. Thus, the repeated unsuccessful attempts at implementing different versions of the methodologies often leads to frustration, cynicism, and burn out of employees. These can be factors in employee resistance and disengagement (Simon & Houle, 2017).

As noted earlier, the lack of employee engagement often leads to the inability of the organization to achieve its expected outcomes. The implementation of these methodologies can sometimes fail due to the incorrect resources being part of the team. Managers often lack knowledge in effectively building and leveraging teams. As a result, the employees may not have the necessary skills or knowledge needed to effectively address the situation. Another factor may include the lack of empowerment the team has to effectively diagnose the situation or identify the solution (Warrick, 2016). The ineffectiveness of teams could also be reflective of a phenomenon referred to as group think. With group think, participants will oftentimes voice their agreement with the leader despite their concerns. Group think can result from a lack of psychological safety or moral courage to speak up with different perspective (Bell, 2016; Simola, 2018). Phenomenon such as group think, oftentimes highlight a need to make modifications in the culture of the organization in order to improve communication, knowledge sharing, decision making, and outcomes.

In addition, organizational practices surrounding strategic and quality management may not be effective. These organizational practices can manifest in numerous ways. For example, the practices and processes may not have evolved over the life of the organization. Another example could be new information sources may not have been identified. There may not be effective metrics to determine if strategic goals are being met, if intervention is needed, or if new opportunities are available. In addition, there may be biases in analyzing the information due to internal politics. Because the process can be tedious, staff may leverage previous data or reporting formats to save time. As a result, new perspectives may be prevented from emerging during the data analysis. These practices all hinder the ability of leadership to effectively analyze and respond strategically to changes in their environment (Martin, 2014).

Opportunities. The dynamics of the environment provide continuous opportunities for organizations to improve. Organizations have an opportunity ensure there is alignment between its culture, strategy, and operations. As a part of this alignment, employees should be able to see how their daily tasks contribute to the strategic goals of the organization. This connection between their role and the mission enhances employee engagement. This alignment can also create some additional efficiencies and effectiveness (Vaziri & Beheshtinia, 2016). These are areas where HR can be a strategic partner to the business areas. New opportunities are emerging to modify current human resources practices which can further facilitate higher levels of employee engagement and participation (Kallenberg & Moody, 1994).

Another opportunity is maintaining a strong corporate governance model. The oversight by an independent board can foster better accountability especially in the upper levels of the organization. In addition, board members can provide different experiences, perspectives, and knowledge which can assist leaders in making effective strategic decisions (Singh et al., 2018). Another opportunity is found through implementing the right technology.

As discussed in previous sections, technology can facilitate communication and information sharing across the organization. In addition, technology can now digitize information which was not previously available electronically. The use of electronic records can facilitate new opportunities for collaboration. These new technologies also foster the ability to synthesize and analyze this data from multiple sources to provide different perspectives and insights. When understood and used appropriately, these tools can provide new or different forms of analysis to be performed which fostering better decisions to be made (Castellano & Del Gobbo, 2018).

As noted, the recent technology has created opportunities for sharing, communicating, and collaborating across the organization. These technologies have been beneficial, especially for teams and tasks forces. The increased use of the cross-functional teams has many benefits especially for leaders implementing organizational change. “Teamwork can significantly improve performance, effectiveness, efficiency, morale, job satisfaction, unity of purpose, communications, innovative thinking, quality, speed in getting things done, and loyalty to an organization” (Warrick, 2016, p. 13). Leveraging these cross-functional teams can enable better solutions and outcomes for both strategic and quality management processes.

Current Trends. Academic literature highlights several trends in organizational performance. One trend is seeking appropriate measurements to calculate a diversity dividend. This dividend quantifies the benefit derived from diversity as “organizational performance [that] includes financial outcomes as well as psychological and sociological outcomes derived from the human and social capital gains from fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce" (Martins et al., 2020, p. 1192). As a result, organizations may be better able to articulate the value of their inclusive culture as it fosters goal achievement. Another trend is the leveraging of integrated road maps as part of the strategic planning process. This integration incorporates the adaptation of market conditions with the technological advances. As a result, the organization is better equipped to respond to dynamic socio-economic conditions (Vishnevskiy et al., 2016). Academic literature also reflects an increasing trend in employee engagement research. Additional studies reflect the implementation the recommendations to increase employee participation.

Organizations are beginning to continuously examine and modify their human resource practices as the needs of the employee and the organization change (Saks, 2017). As a part of these efforts, additional attention is being given to organizational culture. As a result of this attention, organizations are finding new ways to enhance their culture and employee development programs. These enhancements can include raising emotional intelligence and ethical behavior of employees across the organization. Improving these behaviors foster better decision making, employee engagement, and performance (Kola & Challapalli, 2019).

Biblical Worldview. The Biblical Worldview aligns with the themes emerging from the academic literature on organizations. "When spirituality is linked to the corporate culture, the organizational vision shifts, and therefore, both spirituality and corporate sustainability are linked to a higher productivity" (Vila Porras & Toro-Jaramillo, 2020, p. 3). This alignment promotes the linking of efforts of an individual with their efforts outside of the organization. This concept incorporates their faith as well as their volunteer experiences. The employee is then able to bring their whole self to work. These efforts involve participating in God's economy which incorporates all the interactions between Him, people, organizations, and the environment. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to Him" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Psalms 24:1).

As such, the organizational vision points to the bigger picture of providing for the needs of people while protecting the created earth. Everyone has an integral role in stewarding His creation. "God have given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Peter 4:10). People are to use their gifts to the best of their ability in service to one another. Using these gifts to the best of their ability reflects His desire for high quality in all that is undertaken. A person doing their best glorifies God. "So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Every person is a valuable part of the organization, whether a business entity or the church. "All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." His intent was for the body of Christ to all work together in harmony. Yet, the existence of group think and other negative behaviors in many organizations, including the church, can limit the utilization of these gifts and the desired higher productivity (Bell, 2016). These unproductive behaviors present in the culture of an organization are often the target of changes in the TQM frameworks and methodologies. These frameworks enable organizations to better achieve higher levels of performance (Dorval et al., 2019).

These frameworks also reflect change as an on-going process. This on-going organizational improvement process necessitates the need of each individual to continue the development of their own skills and abilities (Conklin, 2012). "So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, James 1:4). Endurance denotes growth and development as long-term processes rather than a destination. This development journey provides benefits along the way. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (New International Version, 1978/2011, Galatians 6:9). God provides rewards for those who persist in doing the right thing and participating in effective stewardship.

Man is expected to be effective stewards of His creation. As stated in scripture. “Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds of the air, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and all the small animals that scurry along the ground” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Genesis 1:26). Jesus reiterated this expectation in His teaching. His teachings were oftentimes through the use of parables. For example, the parable of the talents reflects this principle of stewardship. In Matthew 25, a man was leaving for a trip. Before leaving, he entrusted some of his money to three of his servants to manage in his absence. Upon his return, he found that two of the three servants had used the money to make more. “The master said, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Matthew 25:23).

Stewardship is the responsibility of all people to effectively use what has been given. These resources are to be used creating the goods and services needed by His people. Providing for His people is a service to God. God also appoints leaders. Leaders have an increased responsibility over the people and resources God has placed under their authority.

Summary of the Literature Review

Being in senior leadership positions, executives are responsible for optimally leveraging the resources available to the organization. These resources include physical, financial, and human resources. The human resources need to be in the right roles and given the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tools to thrive. Their ability to thrive leads to higher levels of organizational performance. Yet, the literature reflects the challenges organizations face in achieving high levels of performance as identified in the problem statement. This review of the extant professional and academic literature has also provided a foundation for this study and answering the identified research questions.

As a result of gaining a better understanding of the key concepts of this study, several themes have emerged regarding the ability of leaders and organizations to be successful in achieving their goals and objectives. The efficient use of resources to create long-term value is a recurring concern for both organizational leaders and stakeholders. To foster this efficiency, leaders should ensure all aspects of the organization are aligned, including the strategy, culture, and operations.

> The popular leadership approaches, along with organizational best practices for processes, structure, and culture, all seem to touch upon the importance of empowering employees to grow and develop as human beings in the workplace context, in such a way that benefits the entire organization. (Fischer & Schultz, 2017, p. 45)

Organizational leaders need to ensure their actions consistently reflect a high set of values and ethics. These values align with God's expectations. These expectations include personal conduct as well as the provision and protection of His creation, including all people. In accordance with the Biblical Worldview, all humans are made in His image. As a result, each person is valuable and should be treated with dignity. Throughout this literature review, developing trust relationships emerged as an important aspect of organizational activities. This trust is established over time and requires open, honest conversations. Therefore, leaders need to consistently behave and act with integrity and transparency. These positive actions and behaviors also need to infiltrate the organizational culture. This culture also needs to embrace diversity. In addition, the culture should foster an environment promoting continuous learning and improvement. This type of environment promotes higher employee engagement. The engagement and empowerment of employees has been another emerging theme throughout the literature regarding high performing organizations. Increasingly, organizations are empowering employees through their participation by leveraging cross-functional teams. The use of cross-functional teams can facilitate problem solving, creating innovative solutions, and providing valuable insight for better decision making even in bureaucratic organizations.

The leveraging of teams was prevalent in organizational change, strategic management, and quality management literature. Effective leaders are using teams to identify issues and implement innovative solutions. Oftentimes these solutions first need to address cultural changes to create a more collaborative environment. These changes can lead to higher levels of performance. While teams are more prevalent, the actions of leaders are still important. This is especially true when the leader consistently acts with a high level of integrity while promoting an organizational culture which values, respects, and empowers employees to be and do their best.

Discovered Themes

Many of these themes emerging from the literature review were prevalent in the findings of this research study. During the data analysis phase of this study, five themes emerged. Theme One – Leadership Expectations reflected many of the concepts provided earlier. Leaders should act with integrity. They should cast a vision which provide opportunities for employees to grow and develop. Caring about others and their wellbeing is important. Followers want leaders they can trust, respect, and communicate with. Effective Communication was Theme Two. To be effective, communication needs to flow both ways, have a clear message, ensure a mutual understanding, and use appropriate channels. Themes Three – Lessons Learned, Four – Project Perspective, and Five – Future Agency Success reflect many of the concepts including cross-functional teams, technology implementation, change management, collaboration, quality management, and organizational culture. Included in this organization should be behaviors where people are developed, trusted, respected, and cared about so their success enhances the organizational performance.

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

Ghandi was credited for stating the priorities of a person are reflected in their actions. This adage applies to a leader of an organization as well as the organization itself. For a long-term sustainable organization, it is imperative these actions and priorities seek to satisfy the needs of the stakeholders in the most efficient and effective means possible. Yet, many organizations today are not able to fully achieve their strategic initiatives and goals. Consequently, leaders are being held responsible.

This qualitative research case study sought to examine how the actions of leaders impact the culture of the organization which in turn drives transformational change. The anticipated outcome of this change is for the organization to realize higher levels of performance. While leaders perform thousands of actions per day in directing their organization, the focus of this study was on communication and empowerment of employees. By using the case study methodology, this study examined a public sector organization and the outcomes of their project. The case is bounded by a transformation initiative project which will provide the context for the examination. Through the gathering of evidence in this study, relevant lessons and themes emerged addressing the actions of the leader as well as organizational improvement and success. The extant academic literature as well as the Biblical Worldview provided documented evidence justifying the purpose and necessity for this research. This research assisted in remediating a gap in this literature by providing an example of how leaders and organizations perform in the current business environment. The literature also provided a validation for the data gathered in this research study. As this initial information was gathered, the literature also informed additional planning for the gathering and analysis of artifacts, interviews, and other data provided in the second section of this document.

Section 2: The Project

The following section provides justification for the research methodology. Initially, the Purpose Statement is restated which guided the research process. This research process identified the actions taken in the collection and analysis of the data to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research planning began with the identification of the roles and responsibilities of the researcher. In the Role of the Researcher section, the presentation identifies the actions performed to conduct the research in a fair and responsible manner. This section also provides an overview of bracketing prior to presenting the methods being implemented in this study. The presentation transitions from the researcher to the identified framework for the study. The Research Methodology section provides justification and appropriateness of the selected paradigm, design, and methodology for this study. Included in this section is a further discussion of the significance of triangulation and the strategies used during this research study.

With the selection of the research paradigm and methodology, the presentation expands to further characterize the phenomenon and its context. This case study sought to examine the actions of a leader which influence the culture at a governmental agency in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The selection criteria begins with the methods used to identify the agency as well as the employees to be interviewed. Following the identification of participants, the presentation transitions to the examination of the population and the appropriate sample for the study. These determinations assist in determining if sufficient data can be gathered to fulfill the purpose of the study as well as answer the research questions.

With the identification of the participants, the research presentation transitions to identifying the protocols for the data. The data collection and management performed in this study is provided. The presentation begins by identifying the data collected. This presentation also identifies the instruments and the processes used to gather and organize the data. Following the data collection, the data analysis strategies used is provided. The strategies used to promote reliability, validity, and bracketing is provided. The identified strategies foster assurance the data collected is accurate and appropriately reflects the phenomenon being examined.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how the actions of a leader influence the culture of the organization during a transformational project. Transformational projects seek to implement change in organizational behaviors and actions to better achieve desired results. These desired results oftentimes align with higher levels of performance against the shared strategic goals and objectives of the organization (Hughes, 2016). While other public administration projects may seek to improve efficiency and effectiveness, transformation projects do not involve changes in policies, building construction investments, or implementing new public programs. These transformational projects are management led efforts to address internal activities (Fred & Hall, 2017). Transforming how things are done, however, creates change which is often received with significant employee resistance (Hughes, 2016). Oftentimes, higher levels of employee resistance to change are observed in public sector organizations. More research on transformation efforts is needed in the public sector to better understand how leaders can successfully guide their organizations through change (de Gennaro, 2019). This examination added to the existing body of academic literature by providing a case study of the phenomenon. This case study examined the actions of a leader during a transformation project in a governmental agency located in Virginia.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to perform their study in a responsible and ethical manner. The role should clearly define and articulate the actions taken as part of the research process. The research process includes planning and executing activities which fosters the accurate collection, recording, analyzing, and reporting of data. The honesty and transparency of these actions add to the credibility, reliability, and replicability of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this research study, the role of the researcher is divided into two sections. The first section reflects the actions of the researcher. The next section provides an understanding of bracketing and the strategies used in this study.

Actions of the Researcher

The actions of the researcher throughout the study are important to understand. In performing case studies, Yin (2018) identified five main actions for a researcher. The first is asking good questions of the participants and fairly representing their responses. Next, the researcher should be a good listener by mitigating their personal biases. The third action is to stay adaptive throughout the process, seeing opportunity in new developments or situations. The fourth action is to remain focused on the purpose of the research throughout the study. Lastly, the research is to be conducted ethically. “In focusing its inquiry on people social science research is intrinsically bound to raise ethical issues” (Rawdin, 2018, p. 346). As part of the research plan, the researcher has the responsibility for anticipating ethical issues and mitigating their potential risks throughout the study. These ethical issues primarily revolve around the treatment of people. The people should be treated with dignity and respect. The participants had a clear understanding of their role, the process by which the research was conducted, and the final output (Rawdin, 2018).

This research pertains to observing people in their work environment and collecting pertinent artifacts. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Therefore, the roles, expectations, and responsibilities need to be clearly documented, communicated, and practiced. In this study, these responsibilities were articulated through university requirements and a letter of understanding (LOU) with the agency. This research study was performed in compliance with the rules and regulations as defined by Liberty University (LU) and its Institutional Review Board (IRB). The members of the LU Research and Administrative Review Committees for this study provided oversight and accountability. The Consent Form contained appropriate permissions, roles, documents to be obtained and used, how the research would be conducted, confidentiality, and other mutual understandings. The researcher was an observer only in this research and not a participant. “Essentially, to know is to see, and to see is to look beyond constructions, preconceptions, and assumptions (our natural attitude) to the essences of the experience being investigated” (Gearing, 2004, p. 1430). The intent of the researcher is to remain objective and neutral in conflicts between participants which may arise during the study (Morrison & Sacchetto, 2018). No conflicts arose during the study.

The actions of the researcher began with the identification of the problem and continued through to the writing of the final report. Throughout a study, “researchers must ensure rigor from the design to the evaluation of the research, i.e., start to finish” (Tomaszewski et al., 2020, p. 5). In quantitative research, there is an emphasis on the validity and reliability of the data which fosters credibility to the study. In contrast, qualitative research is more subjective than quantitative. Therefore, different disciplines need to be employed.

There are four primary disciplines or criteria comprising the rigor framework for assessing qualitative research. These criteria include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). Credibility reflects the research data and processes are believable and done with integrity. The strategies for credibility in research include ensuring the study length has an adequate duration. The appropriate study length provides sufficient time for appropriate observations and analysis, triangulation, validation of data by participants, and peer review(s). Dependability pertains to the reliability of the collection methods, transcriptions, and coding of data. Confirmability refers to the accuracy of the information gathered. Dependability and confirmability have the same strategies. Both strategies require transparency by the researcher regarding their relationship to the subject and any biases.

In addition, the researcher provided sufficient documentation to clearly explain the rationale for decisions or assessments made. The last criteria, transferability, reflects the extent to which the study could be replicated or applied to similar situations. The strategic approach for providing higher levels of transferability is to include providing significant detail for the reader to discern their ability to replicate the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Houghton et al., 2013).

Bracketing

Bracketing enhances the credibility and transferability in research. “Bracketing is a method used by some researchers to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81). These preconceptions, or biases, are inherent to qualitative research (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The likelihood of bias, especially in qualitative research is increased as the researcher is one of the instruments used for data collection (Gregory, 2019). “These preconceptions influence how data are gathered, interpreted, and presented” (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81). As a result, bracketing should be incorporated in the planning stage rather than waiting until the collection and analysis phase (Gregory, 2019). Emotional detachment from the topic and the participants is one method of bracketing. By creating this emotional boundary, the researcher can better focus on the answering the research questions (Gregory, 2019; Tufford & Newman, 2012). As part of bracketing, the researcher should maintain self-awareness throughout the study. This self-awareness fosters honesty and transparency regarding past experiences, emotional reactions, and preconceived notions. This honesty can assist in mitigating the risks of these factors negatively impacting the data collection and analysis (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Summary of the Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to present the research fairly and justly. To do this, the researcher has a responsibility to plan and execute the study in a manner which provides transparency and integrity. This responsibility also includes treating the participants with respect and dignity. In addition, sufficient strategies were exercised throughout the study to enhance the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the research (Houghton et al., 2013). Also, in this research study, the researcher implemented bracketing strategies to limit potential biases (Gregory, 2019).

Research Methodology

As noted, the ability to replicate a study enhances its credibility (Houghton et al., 2013). Identifying and following the appropriate research framework fosters the opportunity for others to replicate the study. The appropriate framework is determined through the selection of the paradigm, design, and methodology which fosters the data collection necessary to answer the research questions. The following section furthers the examination of design and methodology initiated in Section 1 of this paper. In addition, this presentation identifies the specific methods for data triangulation in this study.

Discussion of Flexible Design

As noted earlier, the purpose of this study was to examine the actions of a leader. The actions of a leader and their impact, however, cannot be examined in isolation. To gain a better understanding of the impacts, data should be gathered regarding the actions taken as well as understanding their context. The truth of the full impact of these actions may not be determined, but we can obtain a better understanding. The post-positivism paradigm postulates the absolute truth cannot be found. An understanding of the truth can be obtained by examining the phenomenon in its context (Panhwar et al., 2017). An understanding of the context requires descriptive or qualitative data to be collected and analyzed. The post-positivism paradigm also requires triangulation of the data from multiple sources. Consequently, this research study followed the flexible design (Creswell, 2014; Panhwar et al., 2017; Tobi & Kampen, 2018).

Discussion of Case Study

The flexible design requires one of several possible methodologies. These methodologies include narrative, ethnology, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tomaszewski et al., 2020). While each of these methodologies are valid and necessary to gain a full understanding of a phenomenon, the case study methodology was selected. Case study research seeks to answer questions pertaining to how or why a phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018). This research study sought to understand how the actions of a leader impact the culture of the organization which influences performance outcomes.

In addition, case studies explore a phenomenon within its context. The inclusion of the context is necessary in case study research as the phenomenon may not be clearly delineated otherwise (Yin, 2018). Despite this lack of clarity between the phenomenon and the context, case studies do have a clear boundary which characterizes the event being studied (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). For this research, the fuel application project fostered a natural boundary in which the phenomenon could be examined as a single case study. This examination occurred through the collection and analysis of multiple data sources (Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Yin, 2018). The data sources included project initiation documents, presentations from project meetings, training documents, participant interview notes/transcriptions, and other project artifacts. After collection and validation, these artifacts were coded and analyzed during the study to ensure adequate resources were obtained. This coding and analysis enabled themes to emerge which provided learnings that can be applied to other organizations or validation of existing theories (Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Yin, 2018).

Discussion of Method(s) for Triangulation

For this qualitative research study, several methods were utilized to triangulate the data. As noted in Section 1, there are eight triangulation strategies used in research including multiple sources of data, participants review, detailed descriptions, transparency, supporting and contrarian data, adequate time allotment, peer review, and independent audit of study. In this research study, multiple sources of data were collected (Cox & Hassard, 2005; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These artifacts included project presentations, training documents, and interview transcripts. These documents were compared to one another to facilitate validation and identify potential conflicts in the data. The transcripts as well as a draft of the final report were reviewed by the participants for validation. In addition, professional and academic literature was gathered containing contrarian perspectives when available. The results of this study were compared to this literature as part of the validation and reporting processes. The plan for this study was to provide transparency throughout the project as well as in the final report. This transparency was intended to enhance the credibility and replicability of the study.

Summary of Research Methodology

The replicability of research was also enhanced by clearly defining and articulating the methodology for the study. The research methodology provided a framework from which studies can be performed. This framework supported the appropriate data collection and analysis strategies to ensure the study can fulfill its purpose and answer the research questions. The purpose of the study sought to understand how the actions of a leader impact the culture of the organization to increase performance. This understanding was obtained by collecting descriptive data of the phenomenon occurring in its environment. As a result, this study was a qualitative (flexible design) single case study using a post-positivism paradigm.

Participants

The participants provide the data for this study. Typically, researchers select the participants either randomly or non-randomly. Non-randomly can also be referred to as conveniently selected or by quasi-experiment. With a quasi-experiment, participants organically form a group. The researcher works with the individuals in the group (Creswell, 2014). Once the agency and project are selected from the population, the quasi-experiment was used to identify interview participants. The cross-functional project team forms a natural group. This project team is compiled by the organization without any influence or direction from the researcher. This team is expected to have a least one member from each department being impacted by the transformation.

These team members and other agency employee stakeholders participated in the interviews. All or a few team members may be interviewed as part of the study. There were thirteen interviews conducted when saturation was obtained. Francis et al. (2010) found saturation could be obtained in ten plus three interviews. In their research, they determined 97% of codes were obtained through conducting 12 interviews.

Population and Sampling

As noted earlier the project team provided a quasi-experiment from which the interview participants will be selected. This project was selected by the agency. The researcher first identified the public sector agency to participate. This Population and Sampling section reflect the methods and criteria used in the agency selection process. The selection began with defining the population. When there is inadequate time or it is not necessary to evaluate the entire population, a sample can be chosen as a representative (Creswell, 2014). The selected project was representative of typical transformation projects being undertaken by public sector agencies. Initially a brief overview of predominant sampling methods is provided. Then sampling method used for this study is provided. A definition and identification of the appropriate sample frame is presented. The last section identifies the desired sample and sample size for this study.

Population

Prior to determining the sample and sample size, an understanding of the population must be obtained. The population refers to all possible participants in the universe (Robson & McCartan, 2016). As stated in the purpose, this study sought to examine the phenomenon in a governmental agency based in the Commonwealth of Virginia (COV). In the Commonwealth, there are a total of 298 agencies. These agencies are part of three governmental branches, including the judicial (13 agencies), legislative (45 agencies), and the executive (240 agencies) and are predominately based in Richmond, VA (Department of Planning & Budget, 2021). Over 123,000 people are employed by a COV agency (Virginia Department of Human Resources Management, 2021).

Sampling Method

As time does not permit an examination of all COV agency projects or conducting interviews with all employees, a sample was taken to represent the overall population. With a single-case study, the subject of the research should be representative of the population (Yin, 2018). Sampling can be performed either randomly or non-randomly. Seawright and Gerring (2008) identified random sampling without an initial population stratification could result in selecting a non-representative sample. As a result, non-random sampling may enable the selection of a more representative case (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Purposeful sampling is a non-random strategy used in qualitative research. Purposeful sampling reflects intentionality in selecting individuals or sites in which the desired phenomenon occurs. This intentionality can be derived from a multitude of sampling strategies to facilitate identifying a representative sample from the population.

Seawright and Gerring (2008) employed a hybrid of methods to identify a representative project. These methods included stratification, convenience, criterion, and snowball. Stratification divides the population into subgroups to facilitate comparisons. Convenience methodology fosters selecting samples in a quicker and cost-effective manner. The criterion method identifies the selection based on predetermined characteristics. Identifying a sample from criterion can limit some potential bias by creating some objectivity. The Snowball method leverages the social network of the researcher to identify a participant. If the contact does not qualify as a participant, they may provide suggestions or introductions to other potential candidates (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Palinkas et al., 2015).

To narrow the potential list of agencies, the branch of government provides one method of stratification. The study focused on agencies in the executive branch primarily for convenience. This convenience is partially due to the availability of a list of current IT projects in the executive branch as well as the researcher has stronger relationships within these agencies. The Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA) requires agencies to report significant technology projects. These projects are listed publicly. There were 22 Executive Branch agencies with technology projects (VITA, 2021). The listing enabled a stratification of agencies into those with current transformation projects and those without. From the agencies with transformation projects, the researcher used the snowball method to identify an agency to solicit. Once the agency was identified, the researcher worked with a member of the management team to identify a project based several criteria. The criteria for the selected project include:

- Follows project management standards;
- Defines clear and measurable objectives;
- Impacts all or majority of the agency;
- Impacts at least one external stakeholder group;
- Senior agency leader is actively involved;
- Organizational culture is changed; and
- Project ends no later than June 30, 2021.

These criteria facilitated the purposeful selection of the project while limiting potential bias. The first three criteria also reflect typical projects at agencies. The use of purposeful selection sought to ensure the phenomenon could be observed in a timely and efficient manner. In addition, these criteria provided transparency into selection which can foster replicability of the study. The fuel application implementation project met all the criteria above at the time of selection. There were some implementation activities which occurred after June 30th.

Sample Frame

The use of purposeful selection does not require a sample frame. The sample frame reflects the random selection from the population list (Robson & McCartan, 2016). A sample frame was used to select the interview participants. The population list contained the names of all project team members in addition to other stakeholders affected by the implementation of the fuel application. The names were selected by the agency. All names had an equal probability of being selected (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Desired Sample and Sample Size

As public sector agencies seek to leverage increasingly limited resources more effectively and efficiently, they are initiating transformational efforts (Agarwal, 2018; Jukić et al., 2019). As a result, many opportunities could exist to observe the phenomenon. Yin (2018) identified that a single case study could be selected when the situation and circumstances of the phenomenon typically occur in the environment. There was one project identified by the selected agency which was examined during this study. Interviews were conducted with all project team members. At minimum, 15 interviews were initially planned with agency employees. These employees were project team members as well as other stakeholders who were identified by the agency. Interviews were planned to continue until saturation was obtained. There were thirteen participant interviews conducted when saturation was achieved. Saturation occurs when the additional data being collected does not result in new information or findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

The saturation process ensures ample data has been collected to answer the research questions. This saturation occurs as a result of identifying the appropriate population, sample methodology, and sample size to observe the phenomenon. For this case study, the population of Commonwealth of Virginia agencies have been identified. In lieu of randomly selecting an agency, a purposeful selection methodology has been selected. This methodology utilized stratification, snowball, convenience, and criteria to facilitate the case selection. The project team provided a quasi-experiment from which interview participants were selected. The researcher conducted 13 semi-structured interviews to ensure adequate data were obtained for saturation.

Data Collection and Organization

The accurate collection and organization of the data enhances the credibility of the study. In qualitative research, the data collection and analysis processes are concurrent and iterative. These processes continue until saturation is obtained. Until saturation, the data collected can impact the necessity of new or different information or potential changes in the direction of the research (de Weerd-Nederhof, 2001). Understanding what information is needed and how to obtain the information is critical (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This section presents the activities which occurred to collect the data in this study. The instruments for data collection are identified. This presentation is followed by how the data were organized during collection.

Data Collection Plan

The effectiveness of research is dependent upon defining the appropriate data required for answering the research questions as well as an effective means for its collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2018) stated the data comes from the everyday events of people and institutions. This collected data includes the perceptions of the participants as well as multiple forms of evidence obtained from the organization which can be triangulated (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). “Case studies typically combine data collection methods such as archives, interviews, questionnaires, and observations” (de Weerd-Nederhof, 2001, p. 513).

For this study, agency artifacts, interviews, and observations are the sources of the data. These observations include participant actions and behaviors as well as their context (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The agency provided electronic forms of their project documents, training materials, meeting notes, and other sources. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Once the interview had been transcribed, the participants were given the opportunity review and the transcript for accuracy. The designated agency representative(s) also reviewed the final report prior to publishing. The researcher documented her observations in a manual journal which was also be converted into electronic form.

Instrument

Instruments refer to mechanisms used for data collection. These can include surveys, standardized tests, or interview questions specifically designed for the study (Creswell, 2014). The use of multiple instruments in a study can provide additional credibility to the research through triangulation. Qualitative research requires multiple sources of data to be collected providing descriptive information of the perceptions of the participant and its context (Houghton et al., 2013). The researcher was the primary instrument for documenting observations, transcribing recorded sessions, and interpreting the data collected in this study. This instrument impacted the planning, collecting, analyzing, and reporting of the data (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews of participants as one method of data collection. These were conducted through Google Meet. The researcher developed an Interview Guide (Appendix A) which served as a checklist of questions for the sessions with participants. The interview questions were derived from the research questions defining this study (Alam, 2020; Robson & McCartan, 2016). Once the interviews were recorded and transcribed, the participants were able to review and edit the transcriptions. The email sent with the transcription is provided in Appendix D.

Data Organization Plan

The data organization plan includes the storage and coding of the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher maintained a notebook for capturing observations, meeting notes, decision justification, and experiences. This notebook acted as a reflective journal to record biases as they occurred and any mitigations implemented to reduce potential impacts on the study (Houghton et al., 2013). These notes were converted to electronic form (Microsoft Word) and entered into NVivo software and Excel on the laptop of the researcher. The NVivo software was the repository of record for this project. NVivo is a qualitative research software which facilitates the storage, organization, and analysis of the data (QSR International, 2021). This software also enabled the development and management of a codebook. A codebook is a method for creating data categories to facilitate the organization and analysis of the artifacts collected. This codebook contained a list of all categories and a description of its meaning. An initial set of codes was developed in Excel at the beginning of the study and was modified during the study as new categories were identified. As the data were collected, the appropriate code was assigned to the artifact and entered with into Excel and NVivo as part of the record (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of Data Collection and Organization

The use of NVivo software facilitated the storage and organization of the data collected as part of this research study. The researcher obtained artifacts from the agency. In addition, the researcher documented observations and transcribed the semi-structured interviews conducted with participants. All hard copy notes and artifacts were digitized to facilitate its storage and analysis. In addition, NVivo and Excel contained the codebook to facilitate the organization and analysis of all data collected.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted in concurrence with its collection until saturation was obtained (Ward et al., 2018). The use of NVivo software and Excel facilitated the coding and analysis process (QSR International, 2021). The data analysis involved sorting the data to identify themes and relationships through triangulation. The data analysis enabled conclusions to be drawn providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the context in which it occurs (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). These conclusions were drawn from emergent ideas and themes identified during coding. Following the understanding of these concepts, the data analysis presentation transitions to interpreting the ideas and themes identified. The concept of data representation is then presented. The last section explains the use of triangulation in the data analysis.

Emergent Ideas

The objective analysis of the data enables ideas and themes to emerge. Creswell and Poth (2018) identified memoing as a data analysis activity for researchers. Memoing entails taking notes while reading academic literature and study documents, reflecting on the overall study, or summarizing observations from the site visit. These notes identified new codes for which to better categorize the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher documented these ideas in a manual journal and prior to entering them into NVivo.

Coding Themes

A codebook was developed at the beginning of the study. This codebook was created with an initial list of anticipated codes and descriptions. These codes were modified as needed throughout the data analysis process. The development and assignment of codes to the data fosters consistency in how the data are categorized. This categorization can facilitate the analysis of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Oftentimes a data element will have a high rate of occurrence which fosters a separate category from which different analysis can occur. Thematic analysis can then be performed to identify potential themes (Ward et al., 2018). The use of NVivo and Excel facilitated the coding and analysis of the data. The reporting capabilities in the software facilitated the identification of coding themes (QSR International, 2021).

Interpretations

As part of the analysis, a researcher must interpret the data obtained. Interpretations reflect an understanding of the information so the appropriate conclusions and findings can be reported (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Despite multiple data sources were obtained in this study, there could be occasions where there is a lack of clarity or gaps in the information. In those cases, the researcher may determine assumptions should be made (Ward et al., 2018). The knowledge and experiences of the researcher can assist in making assumptions or other decisions which were made as part of the study (Mendenhall, 2007). The researcher identified and shared these assumptions in the final report to foster transparency (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Representation

Data representation reflects the transformation of raw data into a consolidated format provides a concise summary of the data, findings, and conclusions. These summaries can take the form of diagrams, tables, or narrative content (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of software can facilitate the summarization of data through algorithms. These algorithms invoke artificial intelligence to represent the data in one of four methods. These methods include principal component analysis (PCA), log-scaling, zero-to-one scaling, and standardization (Chong et al., 2017). The NVivo software uses algorithms to facilitate the coding of new data as well as provide reporting and analysis capabilities to facilitate the development of the tables and matrices that will assist in communicating the findings and conclusion of the study. While the software may be used, these programs are not infallible (QSR International, 2021). Processes were implemented to review and validate the coding and reports generated. Section 3 of this report contains a written narrative which includes tables and charts to facilitate summarizing the data.

Analysis for Triangulation

The data analysis process includes triangulating the data. The occurrence of triangulation infers that the data are collaborated through the use of multiple sources added to the credibility and reliability of the research. If triangulation does not occur, the researcher can determine if additional interviews or artifacts can or should be obtained. As a result, data collection and analysis are concurrent during the research process. Comparing data elements, identifying patterns, validating findings against extant theories are methods in which triangulation can occur (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each of these strategies were employed during this study.

Summary of Data Analysis

The use of Excel and NVivo software facilitated the analysis of data in this study. The development and use of a codebook promoted consistent coding of the data. These codes enabled themes to emerge. The researcher also reflected on the data to identify other emergent ideas from the observations and transcripts. The researcher included their reflections and interpretations in a journal. This journal was digitized and was include as another data source in the study. The triangulation of the multiple sources sought to enhance the credibility and reliability of the research.

Reliability and Validity

Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, procedures should be implemented to ensure the reliability and validity of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The effective use of reliability, validity, and bracketing during this research study were anticipated to enhance the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data, analysis, and conclusions. A general understanding of each concept is provided as well as the applicable strategies which were implemented for this study.

Reliability

Reliability, in qualitative case study research, occurs when the study provides transparency and consistency to mitigate potential biases and errors (Yin, 2018). Transparency of biases, risks, mitigations, and procedural steps are all strategies to enhance the reliability of the research (Yin, 2018). The use of a codebook can reduce errors by fostering consistency and stability in how data are labeled (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bracketing, leveraging a codebook, and documenting research procedures were incorporated to foster reliability in this study.

Validity

Validity reflects the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2018) identified three forms of validity for case study research. These forms include construct, internal, and external validity (Yin, 2018). Triangulation is a method of fostering all three forms of validity (Farquhar et al., 2020). Construct validity pertains to the objectivity of the judgements made during the study. This form of validity is oftentimes obtained through using multiple data sources, having participants review the transcripts (member checking) and the final report, conducting external audits, and leveraging peer reviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Internal validity is concerned with identifying the why and how a phenomenon occurred. The strategies for internal validity are matching patterns, building explanations, considering contrary opinions/evidence, and utilizing logic models (Yin, 2018). When a study has external validity, the findings have broader applicability. Strategies for external validity include triangulation, comparison to extant literature, peer review, and external audit (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). For this study, validity strategies included triangulating the data, member checking, leveraging extant academic literature for theory and potential contrarian perspectives, and having an external committee review.

Bracketing

Qualitative researchers use bracketing as a method for removing their personal influence in their study (Dörfler & Stierand, 2020). Mendenhall (2007) identified that the knowledge and experience of the researcher can be beneficial for problem identification and interpreting results. However, personal bias can also hinder objectivity in a study which can negatively impact the validity and reliability of the study. Identifying the relationship between the researcher and the subject as well as transparency throughout the study are common bracketing strategies (Dörfler & Stierand, 2020). In this study, the researcher maintained a journal throughout the study to record biases, reasons for decisions, and experiences identified through self-awareness. With the risk or bias, the researcher would also include how to mitigate any potential negative consequences. Where appropriate, these reflections were shared in the final report.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

Transparency in the final report promotes the reliability and validity of the study. The use of triangulation, member checking, peer review, and comparison with extant literature are effective strategies to enhance the reliability and validity of qualitative research. While these strategies are effective in promoting the trustworthiness of the data and the study externally, the use of bracketing is internal to the researcher (Dörfler & Stierand, 2020). In bracketing, the researcher sought to be objective in conducting the study. Through bracketing, the researcher provided transparency regarding any potential influence of their experiences and biases on the study.

Summary of Section 2 and Transition

The transparency and objectivity of the researcher fosters the credibility, reliability, and replicability of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Accordingly, Section 2 provides the details of how the research study was performed. Initially, the Role of the Researcher provided an overview of the actions to ensure the study was conducted in a responsible manner. These actions included the implementation of bracketing and triangulation to foster the accurate recording, analyzing, and reporting of the data collected in this study. The triangulation and bracketing are key processes used by researchers to promote the reliability and validity when conducting research studies. This study followed the qualitative single case study with a post-positivism paradigm framework. The Research Methodology section presented the analysis of paradigms, designs, and methods used to determine the appropriate framework for this study.

After the identification of the framework, the planning began to focus on the identification of the participants. A project at one COV agency was selected from the population as a representative sample for the population. This agency was selected using purposeful sampling performed by leveraging several methods including stratification, convenience, criterion, and snowball (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The project team created a quasi-experiment sample from which interviewees were identified. In addition, other internal stakeholders were interview participants. The transcriptions from the semi-structured interviews were one form of data collected for this study. Other data collected included project administration documents, training materials, and other agency documents.

The data collection and analysis were performed concurrently until saturation was obtained. The data collection also includes coding the data in Excel prior to its entry into NVivo software. These codes fostered the emergence of themes and ideas as the data were collected and analyzed. These emerging ideas were also identified through the reflective practices of the researcher as notes were created and reviewed. These recurring themes and ideas became discovered themes. These themes were validated through the use of academic literature and quotes from participants. These findings are presented in Section 3 along with their application and the implications for the current business environment.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 presents the findings as well as the potential applications and implications of this qualitative case study research. Initially, the presentation begins with an overview of this research study. This overview summarizes the purpose of the study and supplies the relevant agency background information to foster an understanding of the data collected. After this overview, the next section presents the findings of this study. The presentation of the findings is organized into themes which emerged during data analysis. These findings are supported with extant literature and quotes from participants. The presentation also explains the relationships between these findings to the research questions, conceptual framework, literature, and problem statement defined in Section 1 to guide this study. Following this presentation, the next section presents the application of the findings to professional practice. This application includes how other organizations can benefit from the results of this study as well as provides a potential strategy for implementation. Following this implementation strategy, recommendations for further research are identified. In the final section, the researcher provides their reflections on this study. These reflections include the personal and professional growth experienced by the researcher during this study. These reflections also include an examination of the relationship between Biblical Worldview and the findings of this qualitative research case study.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative research case study sought to better understand a problem found in the current business environment by answering the corresponding research questions. The post-positivism qualitative case study methodology was selected as the appropriate framework. This framework fosters the examination of the phenomenon in its natural environment without external manipulation. Qualitative design enables a more robust description of the phenomenon and the context in which it occurs. The robust description promotes a deeper understanding of the phenomenon over quantitative methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The agency project parameters provided a natural boundary to examine leadership actions as a case study. To answer the research questions, the researcher identified and contacted an executive branch agency in the Commonwealth of Virginia, following the criteria established in Section 1. This agency then selected a current project meeting the predefined criteria. Stakeholders from this project were recruited to participate in confidential, semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed participants using an interview guide (Appendix A). This interview guide was designed to obtain the information necessary to answer the research questions and address the problem statement. The findings of this study were derived from responses to the interview questions and other project artifacts provided by the agency.

The public sector agency selected is one of the largest in the Commonwealth of Virginia with approximately 7,700 employees and a budget of $7.0 billion (Virginia Department of Human Resource, 2021; Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, 2021). The Governor of Virginia appointed the current agency commissioner in 2018. The commissioner cast a new vision for the future state of the agency. This future state has three primary goals including developing employees, empowering innovation, and modernizing agency processes. To achieve these goals, the agency developed several initiatives. Two of these initiatives are relevant to this case study. The first initiative seeks to increase technology fluency across the agency. The second relevant initiative seeks to build automation management capacity within the agency.

These initiatives align with the goals to develop employees as well as modernize agency processes. In support of these goals and initiatives, the agency created Office of Strategic Innovation (OSI) to identify innovative ideas to organizational opportunities and challenges. The agency also created an Idea Driver program to encourage employee ideas and suggestions for process improvement. Once a solution was approved, the agency leadership empowered the OSI and the District staff to facilitate the development and implementation of the innovative solution without the encumbrance of existing bureaucratic processes.

In 2020, an employee in the Bristol District submitted an idea to automate the fuel delivery bill of lading in the agency. The agency has over 250 fuel sites across the Commonwealth of Virginia. These sites dispense between two and seven million gallons of fuel annually. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requires these sites to inspect the fuel equipment monthly and submit periodic fuel management reports. An OSI staff member had a similar idea and the two were combined into one project utilizing a Low/No Code solution. The resulting solution was the development of a smart phone application (fuel app). During the implementation, the Office of Business Integrated Solutions (BIS) was engaged to assist with the project. Members of the BIS staff were the primary agency contacts for the researcher during this study. BIS identified the fuel application project as a candidate for this research study based on the predetermined criteria provided by the researcher. The project created a natural boundary to examine the activities occurring during the implementation without external influence or manipulation (Yin, 2018).

At the time of this study, the project team was completing the deployment of the fuel application to agency users across the Commonwealth. The project team was finalizing the reporting functionality and the sharing the prototype with users to obtain their feedback. The cross-functional project team consisted of seven members representing different agency divisions. These project members were responsible for designing and implementing the application as well as training the over four hundred users. These users include members from different levels of the organization and locations across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Initially, the agency provided the name and contact information for sixteen participants. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher randomly assigned participant numbers to those employees who had accepted the interview meeting invitation. The interview guide used the participant number in lieu of their name to foster confidentiality. After the interviews began, participants' assigned numbers Two, Eight, and Eleven chose not to participate. Because saturation was obtained, recruiting new participants to replace those interviews was not necessary. Therefore, those participant numbers are absent from Table 1.

The researcher interviewed each agency participant individually through Google Meet. Thirteen interviews were conducted and recorded. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes in length. Each participant provided a response to all questions in the interview guide. The researcher transcribed the interviews in Word and emailed the transcription to the participant. The transcription was password protected with the password sent in a separate email to the participant. The participant was given three days to review the transcription and identify any necessary changes. If no response was received, the transcription was assumed to be correct.

The researcher designed the interview guide, Appendix A, to address the research questions for this study. The first interview question sought to gain an understanding of tenure with the agency which may influence their responses. Ranges were used with five-year increments to foster greater confidentiality. The intent of the second interview question was to gain an understanding of the participant's familiarity with the project management process.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Participant Number												
	1	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	12	13	14	15	16
Years (Range) with Agency	0-5	0-5	15-20	20-25	Over 25	5-10	20-25	10-15	20-25	Over 25	Over 25	Over 25	5-10
Number of Agency Projects	10	10-11	5-6	15	25+	35	1	4	Not many	8	Not many	50+	3
Total Number of Projects	50	50	5-6	25-30	25+	40	1	4-5	2-3	10	Not many	50+	3

Interview Questions Three through Six pertained to the first research question. Interview Questions Seven and Eight pertained to the third research question. Interview Questions Nine and Ten addressed the second research question. In addition to the interviews, the agency supplied additional artifacts and data to provide the project background and foster a deeper understanding of what occurred.

Presentation of the Findings

The themes discovered emerged during the data analysis phase of this research study. To identify themes, the transcribed interviews and project artifacts were analyzed and coded. Coding refers to the labeling of data to facilitate the organization and analysis of the data. These codes were then grouped into themes. The themes facilitated the interpretation of the data collected during the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collection process included conducting thirteen interviews in addition to examining other project and agency artifacts. Through the data collection and analysis process, five themes were discovered. Initially, each theme is presented with a brief overview. A more robust presentation of each theme is subsequently provided.

Theme One: Leadership Expectations. Leadership expectations reflect actions and behaviors that participants expect of their leaders.

Theme Two: Effective Communication. Effective communication reflects the opinions of participants regarding the characteristics necessary to foster a mutual understanding of information and expectations.

Theme Three: Lessons Learned. Lessons learned provide a hindsight examination of project activities to identify opportunities for future improvement.

Theme Four: Project Perspectives. Project perspectives reflect the opinions of participants regarding the fuel application project outcomes as well as on leadership involvement, effectiveness of communications, level of empowerment experienced, and the impact on agency culture.

Theme Five: Future Agency Success. The future agency success reflects the perspectives of participants pertaining to how the organization can be more successful in achieving initiatives.

Theme One: Leadership Expectations

Interview Question Three sought to understand the perspectives of the participants on the appropriate actions and behaviors of effective leaders. The resulting responses reflected their expectations of leaders. These expectations included character traits as well as actions. Participants desired leaders to be authentic, decisive, honest, humble, and open-minded. As Participant Ten said, “Being genuine. Being decisive and also humble enough to admit that when your decisions don’t work out like you thought; being big enough to say that didn’t work the way

I thought." Participants believed leaders should also care about the well-being of employees. "I guess be a good role model, don't put employees in harm's way, don't have them do something you would not have done," stated Participant Nine. The participants look to leaders for vision, knowledge, and clear communications. Participant Twelve mentioned, "Having experience and being able to relate to people. Being able to use lessons from experiences to deal with the current situation." For participants, knowledge sharing was important.

These participants appeared to want to learn. In addition, participants expected a leader to obtain buy-in, be a motivator at times, make initiatives a joint effort, and provide resources and emotional support as needed. Participant Four said, "Sometimes, you have to tell employees what they do not want to hear but you have to tell them in a way where it reflects that we are all in this together." These responses align with the prevailing theories and extant literature examined as part of this study.

The responses regarding character align with the transformational leadership literature. Lumpkin and Achen (2018) identified that successful leaders served others while conducting themselves with integrity, respect, and empathy. Those successful leaders sought to build relationships with followers founded on trust and respect. Bass (1995) described these leaders as:

> Transforming leaders convert followers to disciples; they develop followers into leaders. They elevate the concerns of followers on Maslow's (1954) need hierarchy from needs for safety and security to needs for achievement and self-actualization, increase their awareness and consciousness of what is important, and move them to go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the larger entities to which they belong. The transforming leader provides followers with a cause around which they can rally. (p. 467)

The responses of participants regarding leader actions align with these transformational leadership concepts. Participant Fourteen stated, “Then of course to be an effective leader, you always want to treat people the same regardless of who they are and provide opportunities for what they need.” Greenleaf (2002) identified a role of leaders was to care about the well-being of employees and help them develop. “Leadership is dealing with people and trying to find out about them, what they do, who they are, and their outside stressors that can affect their job,” said Participant Sixteen. Participant Fifteen believed, “Effective leadership is listening, believing your employees are worth developing, always hire the best people (do not hire so-and-so’s brother, for example).” The concept of employees being worth developing reflects Theory Y. McGregor (1957) defined Theory Y leaders as those who believe the employees are capable and willing to perform their tasks to the best of their ability. Consequently, McGregor believed the role of the leader was to guide employee performance toward the achievement of organizational goals. Participant Twelve said, “Lead by example. Be part of the team, you started somewhere too. Share what you know and make sure others know what you know if it is something that is going to help them.” Several participants shared examples of leadership they experienced on the project. Participant Three described the actions of one agency manager by stating, “He recognized their work in identifying the need and wanted to know how he could help move it forward.”

Participants also look to leaders provide a clear vision and goals for the future. Bottomley et al. (2014) found effective leaders casted a vision, set the standards of behavior, integrated, and developed the organization. Participant Fourteen remarked, “Well of course, the most effective [leadership] is to make sure you accomplish the goals set forth for the department. That’s how you are effective.” Several participants identified the need of leaders to understand the organization and its culture. As Participant Five said of effective leadership, “I think definitely knowledge of the organization. I believe having a whole picture view, a global view of the organization, but also being able to communicate at every level of the organization.”

Summary of Theme One – Leadership Expectations. Leadership expectations emerging from this study reflected the characteristics and actions of leaders which participants desired. These characteristics and actions align with transformational and servant leadership theories. Participants desire leaders they can trust. Transformational and servant leaders exhibit honesty, humility, and empathy. Participants want leaders to care about them as people and help them to be their best. Leaders should have a holistic understanding the organization. This holistic understanding can enhance the development of appropriate vision and goals as well as making clear, effective decisions. In addition, leaders should foster employee development by sharing their knowledge and experience. To share the vision, knowledge, and experience with all levels of the organization, leaders should be effective communicators.

Theme Two: Effective Communication

The effective communication theme reflects the characteristics participants identified as desired to ensure mutual understanding of information. Four codes emerged to form the effective communication theme. These codes include two-way communication, clear message, communication preferences, and mutual understanding.

The concept of two-way communication reflects a balance of listening and sharing between parties to gain a mutual understanding. Participant Seven stated, “It takes two to dance.” Greenleaf (2002) identified that leaders are valued for their effective communication and decision-making skills. As one of the requirements of a servant leader, Greenleaf identified the ability to genuinely listen to gain understanding. Interview Question Five asked participants to define effective communication. Many participants identified the need for mutual understanding between parties. Participant One stated, “Confirmation that what both parties have said in that discussion was understood.” Participant Twelve shared, “Two-way communication, not only talk but listen. Take in what people say, make it a team effort.” Amin and Servey (2018) found that the two-way communication must reflect open and honest conversations. These open and honest conversations can foster higher levels of organizational success. To promote open and honest conversations, employees should feel safe from repercussions when sharing information or concerns which may have negative connotations (Kahn, 1990).

To foster mutual understanding, there should be a clear message being shared. In the clear message code, participants desired communications to be concise, be timely, and accurately reflect the intended meaning. “We get so much information, if the message is too broad, you lose what is important. I think bulleted lists are important for communication and sending action items after meetings of what is expected is important,” stated Participant Seven. Ngai and Singh (2018) found operational effectiveness is enhanced by the ability of the leader to clearly articulate the values, goals, direction, and decisions. Participant Thirteen described effective communication as, “Verbally or in writing, clear statements, clear expectations, and clear instructions.” Similarly, Participant Three said clear communication should be “eliminating any ambiguity in your wording; making sure questions are answered in a timely and decisive manner.” These concepts are confirmed in literature. Kotter (2012) stated effective change requires communicating a clear vison and path, so employees are empowered to participate in its achievement.

While a clear message is important, leaders should also consider their communication channel(s). Under the communication preferences, participants identified that effective communication may require the use of different channels to reach its audience. Sanina et al. (2017) stated “A communication channel includes all the means for the creation and acceptance of a message, i.e., signs, language (including body language), codes, technical devices, etc.” (p. 253). Participant Four stated,

> First, you are trying to roll out a new process or keep the lines of communication open, setting up time, talking to people, sending emails, sending background information on things, having check-ins, having some type of email string or dashboard, anything to keeping the lines of communication open.

Participant Seven defined effective communication as, “Being able to communicate with people how they prefer to be communicated; how they are most comfortable. Like people in the field, they do not do email.” Sanina et al. (2017) identified the factors determining the appropriate channel included reliability, speed, and effectiveness. Participant Sixteen said, “Sometimes the written communication is so vague that it actually confuses people. A lot of times, it is better to pick up the phone and see what they are trying to understand.”

Under the mutual understanding code, participants expanded on the concepts of two-way communication and message clarity highlighting the need for consensus. Weller et al. (2020) found obtaining leader-employee consensus reduced gaps between expectation and resulting performance. Participants desired a reduction in their misunderstanding of expectations. Also, many participants commented that both parties need to have a mutual understanding of the message. Participant Ten defined effective communication as, “Gets the point across, reaches the audiences where it needs to reach, and is understood by those the audiences. I think that is the key.” Park et al. (2012) found consistently obtaining a mutual understanding builds credibility, reliability, and trust between the parties. The building of trust is a key factor in higher levels of engagement (Ngai & Singh, 2018). As Participant Four said, “People should be given enough information, so they understand what they are being asked to do and they have the tools to do it.”

Summary of Theme Two – Effective Communication. The theme of effective communication reflected four primary concepts identified by participants. These concepts included the need for two-way communication, clear message, communication preferences, and mutual understanding. Extant literature reinforces these concepts as important facets to organizational culture and performance. Performance is enhanced when open and honest conversations promote collaboration and knowledge sharing across the organization (Amin & Survey, 2018).

Theme Three: Lessons Learned

These open and honest conversations should also include knowledge sharing of lessons learned from prior experiences. Theme Three – Lessons Learned emerged as participants shared their experiences and perceptions of the fuel application project. These lessons learned reflect their opinion of what could have been done differently. The participants believed these different actions could have improved some aspect of the project. The participants also believed these lessons should be applied to future agency projects. Lefley (2016) identified the need for organizations to better leverage the use of post-audits to improve future performance. Post-audits are an examination of projects from the initial development of the business case to project completion. These post-audits provide valuable insights to improve future decision making and activities by examining the actions and outcomes. This examination identifies what went well and what could be done differently.

Hunt and Xavier (2003) also recognized the need for organizations to document their reviews and corrective actions to facilitate organizational learning. Similarly, the interviews conducted provided participants the opportunity to reflect on what went well and what could be done differently in the future to improve outcomes. During data analysis, several codes or subthemes emerged as lessons learned. These subthemes included earlier engagement of stakeholders, improving communications, preventing scope creep, and having more clarity in the project plan and scope.

Participants identified the need to ensure all stakeholders are identified and engaged early in the project. Freeman and Reed (1983) theorized leaders had a fiduciary duty to stakeholders to leverage resources in the satisfaction of their greatest needs. The stakeholder was defined as an individual or group having a stake in the operation. For the fuel application project, the stakeholders included employees involved in the fuel management processes of the agency. When asked what could have been done differently, Participant Five said, “Reaching out and getting stakeholders more involved a lot sooner.” Many participants made similar comments. Participant Three remarked, “Since we were engaged after the application was created, we had to slow progress down some to review processes and ensure that everything was included based upon the needs.” Chaplin and Akao (2003) found developing the voice of the customer and using other quality function deployment tools fostered a better understanding of the needs of each stakeholder. Consequently, the organization identified and implemented better, more innovative solutions. For the fuel application, the project team conducted a voice of the customer assessment after development had already begun. As a result, the developers made changes in the functionality to address the newly identified needs. These changes also created some confusion for some users. This confusion fueled a desire to prevent scope creep, improve communications, and provide more clarity with the project plan and scope.

The changes in functionality reflected a modification from the original scope. Deviating from the original scope can be referred to as scope creep. Scope creep can be factor in a project not achieving their intended goal(s). Cullen and Parker (2015) identified successful projects as those that effectively manage the scope, time, and resources to achieve their planned outcomes. Deviations from the original scope can be necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the resulting outcomes. These changes should be clearly decided, documented, and communicated. When these changes are not clearly communicated, there is confusion. Participant Fifteen shared "[Someone in the district] submitted an idea for the fuel application. Originally it was for something else." Similarly, Participant Seven acknowledged, "We went into it a little open to know where we could innovate instead of just targeting what we were going to do, and these are the features it is going to have when this is complete." The continuous changes added complexity to the project. Participant Four explained, "So as people were making suggestions they were being incorporated into the application and it began to get convoluted and confusing." The changes in the functionality occurred after some users had received training. The late changes reportedly caused some confusion. Participant Ten explained, "We all got a little lost and we all were spinning our wheels a little bit."

The late changes also highlighted a need for better due diligence in future projects. Lewin (1939) identified a process could not be fully understood until someone tried to change it. Yet, the mapping of processes from beginning to end was a necessity. Participant Seven explained, "I think you have a lot of success when you know how something works from start to finish. Encouraging that in the department would be really helpful." After the application development had begun, process maps were developed. These maps provided better insight to the needs of the users. Participant Seven stated, “There were some features that were recently added that if we had known earlier would have changed the way the app works.”

Most participants identified the need of the project team to gain a better understanding of how the processes work. As Participant Ten explained, the agency does not have standardized processes for all district operations. Consequently, a solution may not be appropriate for all districts. Historically, when all districts were not engaged, non-participating districts showed resistance to tools and process changes being implemented. Participant One stated, “I have seen instances where a new tool was suggested and only a few districts were kind of brought into the discussion…It was not taken as well with the districts that did not get to provide input.”

Participants identified the need to improve communications when rating the effectiveness of the project communications as well as identifying what could have been done better. Those interview questions were Questions Five and Nine, respectively. As explained in Theme Two – Effective Communication, many participants identified a gap between their expectation of effective communication and their experience during the fuel application project. Several participants also clarified their response by acknowledging the communications with some parties were better than others. Participant Thirteen stated “Overall, the communication could have been done better. The communication from the developer was good.” The level of communication in the organization significantly influences the organizational practices and outcomes. Thus, improving communications can strategically play a positive role in the achievement of the organizational mission, goals, and initiatives (Ngai & Singh, 2018).

The improvement in communication responses oftentimes highlighted a desire for better clarity in the project scope and plans. Cullen and Parker (2015) identified the need of projects to have a clear scope as well as measurable outcomes to enhance effectiveness. Participant Ten stated, “Should be more clearer expectations – not dictating what you have to do, but just having more clarity of expectations of the project team’s end goal and how we plan to get there.” In his change model, Kotter (2012) identified the need to clearly communicate the vision of the end goal. The corresponding plans should also be developed with the stakeholders to increase buy-in. Participant One acknowledged, “I would say that there should have been a little more communication and input from the users of the app for what they wanted the training schedule to go as. Ultimately, this was for them.”

Summary of Theme Three – Lessons Learned. The lesson learned theme reflected the hindsight perspective of activities which could have been done differently. The emerging subthemes identified the need to engage stakeholders earlier in the process, improve communications, prevent scope creep, and define a clear scope and plan. Participants believed the improvement in each of these areas would have resulted in a more successful project. Consequently, these lessons should be applied to future projects to foster more successful project outcomes.

Theme Four: Project Perspectives

Theme Four - Project Perspectives reflect the outcomes of the project. These outcomes include the perspectives of participants regarding the fuel application, the level of senior leader involvement, effectiveness of project communications, level of empowerment participants felt, and the impact of the project on agency culture. At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked the length of their tenure at the agency as well as the number of projects they have participated on (Table 1). Longer term employees can oftentimes be cynical or seek to maintain the status quo and thereby resist change (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). The length of tenure was not a significant factor in resistance to the change reported.

Participant Six has been with the agency for over 25 years. In response to what went well on the project, Participant Six said, “Communications and the time span that it took to get done. It was lightning fast for the Commonwealth of Virginia. I have been on several projects. Some of them never come to be.” Yet not all participants shared this perspective. Several participants reported the existence of hesitancy or resistance even at the end of the project. This resistance did not appear to be caused by cultural norms or cynicism in longer term employees. Participant Thirteen (over 25 years of service) explained, “Once the reporting gets finished and all the data from the inspection side, it is going to be great. This is the only module that I feel is beneficial, the rest of the modules are not necessary.” The level and timing of the engagement of the different participant stakeholders appeared to more of a factor of resistance. Participant Fourteen explained, “What pushback occurred happened because we had bypassed [the DAIMs].” Those participants who had higher levels of involvement and were engaged earlier in the process reported more favorable perspectives of the project. These perspectives included the influence of senior leaders, the level of empowerment felt, the effectiveness of communication, and the influence of the project on the agency culture.

The fourth interview question sought to gain an understanding of how senior agency leaders had influenced the fuel application project. Some participants recognized their direct managers or senior district leaders in addition to or instead of the commissioner and his direct reports. Participant Thirteen said, “We have not really been working a lot with senior leadership. From the ADA leadership that was putting it together, he presented a PowerPoint presentation of what was being developed.” Kotter (2012) identified the need of leader to endow teams with the resources and authority to achieve their goal. Participant Three explained, “From the business side of Fuel Management [and BIS] the leadership there, their greatest influence was trust and support… Anything above their level, they were getting the heads up of what was happening, but they did not get involved.” While Participant Six said, “When I say provide support, they actually asked us what we needed from them to accomplish this. Anything we asked, which what we asked for was relatively small – they provided us with support.”

This level of support also translated into some participants experiencing higher levels of empowerment. Ivanova and von Scheve (2020) found empowering employees fosters more innovation, creativity, and flexibility which is needed to respond quicker to external demands. Those participants who were more actively engaged earlier in the project reported feeling more empowered. As Participant Three stated, “The general way this app came to life was extremely empowering.” Participant Sixteen replied, “I felt very empowered. They looked at me for answers, but I had to divert some of this to people the field.” In contrast, those participants engaged later in the project reported not feeling empowered. “I did not feel very empowered at all because of the fact that the person getting the feedback was not receptive to anything that we provided when it came to some kind of constructive feedback,” stated Participant Ten. While Participant Fourteen explained, “I don’t know that it was so much inputs, but it was already a thought-out process, and they were basically just showing how to use the process.”

Similarly, the responses to the effectiveness of the communication on the project were also mixed. These responses reflected the desire to improve communications as discovered in Theme Three - Lessons Learned. Participant Five explained, “I would say about a seven [out of ten]. That is from my perspective, someone that was more hands-on may have a different opinion. But I do know that there was some frustration with my staff getting the communication they needed.” Other participants reported the communication with some groups were more effective than with other groups. Participant Seven shared, “I think our communication to the field has been good. The communication to administrative (DFCs, DAIMs) has not been as effective." Several participants reported the communications with the DFCs and the DAIMs would have been more effective if those groups were engaged earlier in the process. Participant Ten acknowledged the delayed engagement of some stakeholders created "a lot of hard feelings and confusion." These hard feelings can create distrust which can manifest as resistance to organizational change (Grama & Todericiu, 2016).

Factors such as distrust in the organizational culture can impede individual as well as group performance. Negative past performance in change initiatives can also be an impediment to future change (Grama & Todericiu, 2016). In contrast, organizational cultures with more open communication, collaboration, and employee engagement report higher performance outcomes (Mikkelsen et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2018). As part of the Interview Question Seven, the researcher defined organizational culture as an accepted pattern of actions, beliefs, and behaviors (Martinez et al., 2015). Participants were then asked how this fuel application project has impacted the agency culture. The responses again were mixed. Participant Four explained, "Don't think it really has. People don't like to learn anything new. Eventually they will accept it." Participant Five replied, "I think that any project we have going on right now with using applications and the latest and greatest technology is really helped the culture at [the agency] in looking more for those types of things." Several participants perceived this project as a step in the process of changing the agency culture. Participant Three stated, "I do not know that this one project will change corporate culture. I think that is a longer standing mission than one project."

Summary of Theme Four – Project Perceptions. Theme Four - Project Perceptions reflects the participants' feelings and outcomes of the fuel application project. The emerging subthemes identified the participants' perceptions of agency leadership involvement, empowerment, effective communications, and the impact of the project on the agency culture. The perceptions of participants were mixed depending on the level of engagement as well as the timing of their involvement. Many participants explained some communications were effective while others believed improvement was needed. Those participants who had higher levels of involvement on the project felt more empowered. Xie et al. (2016) found employees with higher levels of engagement felt more job satisfaction and more favorable perceptions of the organization. High levels of engagement were identified as a contributing factor in successful organizational performance.

Theme Five: Future Agency Success

The final interview question asked participants how the agency could be more successful in achieving initiatives. While many ideas for future agency success were reflected in the Theme Three - Lessons Learned, there were some additional thoughts shared by participants. These responses reflect a desire of participants to engage in more collaborative efforts to create meaningful change at the agency. From these responses, four subthemes emerged. Participants expressed a desire to have input into appropriate tools. In addition, participants wanted to see more opportunities for collaboration and empowerment, middle managers act as change agents, and this project leveraged to further progress toward agency goals and initiatives.

While not specifically stated, agency goals and initiatives include an expectation that work will continue to be performed at high quality standards. As Participant Twelve said of senior leaders, “They want to get the job done and want to do it right. Always do your best.” To better do their jobs, participants recognized the need for new tools. Castellano and Del Gobbo (2018) identified modern technologies can be facilitators to enhance processes as well as facilitate collaboration which can lead to higher organizational performance. Participants acknowledged and appreciated the willingness of senior agency leadership to provide tools to help them be better. Participant Seven explained, “The reality is if you give the field technology they can use and it makes their job easier, they enjoy it. They will use it.” While appreciative, they desire input in the identification of the appropriate tools. “Ask them [those dealing with the stuff everyday] for feedback to make it easier on them so they can make systems that are easier on the Area Headquarters” explained Participant Nine. As noted earlier, the agency does not have standardized operational processes across the districts. Therefore, their needs are often different. These different needs should be identified in the due diligence process. While being more time consuming, the additional collaborative efforts may produce more effective solutions across the agency.

These sentiments align with the desire to see more collaboration and empowerment in future initiatives. The involvement of the whole organization reflects the precepts for the total quality function deployment movement underlying the continuous improvement movement (Akao & Mazur, 2003; Yan & Sawada, 2006). Continuous improvement methods require open lines of communication, knowledge sharing, and trust to enhance the ability of the organization to collaborate. Oftentimes these collaborations occur through the development and use of cross-functional teams. Kelly and Hines (2019) explained organizations are increasingly using cross-functional teams to identify and implement solutions. Participant Six said,

> Having several people from different areas IT people, management people, operations type people, all of them taking a look at it and seeing if there is something there from their department that they can do to help, I think that will help more good initiatives be started.

Participants reported a desire to see additional initiatives emerge from the Idea Driver. The deployment of the Idea Driver was received positively as a useful tool to enable lower levels of the organization to have their ideas heard. Participant Three explained, "Open tools like the Idea Driver and the future state of the agency initiative are positive changes towards empowering the employees to drive change forward."

The concept of more collaboration also included a desire for more mid-level managers to foster change. Participant Fourteen explained, "not all DAs or ADAs in the districts push hard enough to complete or begin new initiatives quick enough, so there can be collaboration across the district instead of silos." Participant Ten explained this project provided an opportunity to learn from and build relationships with their peers. These relationships may create new opportunities to facilitate knowledge sharing across the districts as well as to increase collaboration on agency goals.

The alignment of this project with agency goals and initiatives was acknowledged by most participants. Overall, the project received a lot of positive feedback. While there were several opportunities identified for improvement, many participants hope this project will set a precedent for future projects. As Participant Seven explained, "This may be one of the field folks first forays in digital forms and doing a lot of things electronically…[The] office and field believe tech can be used for other applications. We can follow this pattern to do more." The agency should clearly communicate the highlights of the project and celebrate the success. Kotter (2012) identified the need of leaders to celebrate wins. This celebration can build excitement and momentum toward future projects. Participant Three also explained, "I think it starts to hopefully show that ideas can be driven from end user space, and it is going to be listened to." Consequently, the fuel application project adds credibility to senior leadership. The project reflects the commitment of resources to investigate ideas from employees anywhere in the agency toward accomplishing the strategic goals to invest in technology which facilities the improvement of agency operations. Senior leaders provided the support and resources the team needed without managing the activities of the team through the typical bureaucracy.

Summary of Theme Five – Future Agency Success. Theme Five – Future Agency Success reflects additional ideas, observations, and suggestions offered by participants. These ideas seek to foster more successful outcomes of agency initiatives and other endeavors. These suggestions were in addition to the subthemes which emerged to form Theme Three - Lessons Learned during the project. Many participants hoped this project could set a precedent for future activities. These activities include a desire for future opportunities to increase collaboration across the agency as well as having middle managers become more active in fostering change. Kotter (2012) recognized the need for senior leaders to encourage future activity through sharing the successes the team achieved. This broadcast of current wins can encourage momentum toward additional change efforts. Participants also desired the opportunity to participate in the identification of new tools. Their early engagement can provide additional insight into the processes and needs of the staff to accomplish their required tasks. There appears to be a high level of engagement and desire for the agency to be successful in achieving its mission, vision, and goals among the participants.

Interpretation of the Themes

Following the discovery phase, the research analysis transitioned to developing an interpretation of the themes. The interpretation of the themes reflects an examination of the codes and themes to gain a broader understanding of the data. The interpretation reflects the insight and judgements of the researcher based on data collected, identified patterns, and intuition. These insights and judgements consider what is missing from the data as well as what can be learned from a higher perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From the discovered themes, several insights were identified. The discovered themes from this study appear to communicate feedback to leadership on current initiatives, change readiness, the evolution of the organizational culture, and future evolvement.

The current agency goals and initiatives provide a clear vision for the participants. All participants recognized the alignment of the fuel application with the vision of tomorrow and the initiative to increase technology fluency. During the interviews, many participants specifically identified the Idea Driver as a helpful tool. As Participant Fifteen explained, “Bristol district believes employees can initiate ideas even at the crew member level.” Participants from other districts recognized the alignment with the vision but assumed the application was from central office. They were not aware the fuel application idea originated in the district. The training document provided did not clearly communicate the origin of the idea. This creates an opportunity for the agency to communicate the successes of the fuel application as well as the Idea Driver. Kotter (2012) identified the need for the organization to celebrate wins to create momentum for future successes. As explained earlier, many participants hope this project sets a positive precedent for the agency to further automate agency processes.

Overall, the discovered themes during this study, reflect feedback to senior agency leaders. Based on participant responses, the employees appear receptive of change. Theme One – Leadership Expectations reflected the expectations employees have of their agency leadership. Theme Two – Effective Communication relayed how employees desire to communicate. The earlier identification and engagement of all stakeholders are desired. Participant Five believed agency success begins with a holistic understanding of the organization. The earlier engagement of all stakeholders can provide a better, more holistic understanding of the processes from start to finish as well as determining the needs of the stakeholder. The need for better understanding was prevalent in Theme Three – Lessons Learned. Themes Three – Lessons Learned, Four – Project Perspectives, and Five – Future Agency Success reflect employee ideas and thoughts on how the agency can successfully achieve the future state of the agency and other initiatives. This achievement is a joint effort in which they desire to participate.

Representation and Visualization of the Data

Table 2 provides a recapitalization of the data collected during this study. Data representation reflects organizing the findings into a table format as part of the analysis process. The use of a table format fosters a visual picture of patterns in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following table reflects the findings and their alignment with different facets of the research study. The first column reflects the themes discovered and presented in the previous section. The second column reflects the relevant interview questions for the respective theme. The third column provides relevant academic support for the theme. The final column contains a supporting quote from a participant interview.

Table 2

Representation and Visualization of the Data

Theme Discovered	Relevant Interview Questions	Relationship to Literature	Participant Quote
Leadership Expectations	3, 6	Transformational Leadership and Servant Leadership focus on the development of supportive relationship between employee and manager. This relationship promotes the well-being of the employee through ensuring their needs are met and they have the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools to be perform their role to the best of their ability (Bass, 1995; Greenleaf, 2002).	"The ability to be flexible, to allow the team to work at their best – best suited approach. Not forcing your beliefs on the team, but allowing the team to foster, grow, and work in the style that best suits them and empowering that," Participant One.
Effective Communication	5	Effective communication reflects environments where there is trust and respect. These environments are often more successful in collaborating across the organizations to develop creative solutions to identified issues (Mikkelsen et al., 2017).	"I think communication is keeping all the different groups informed in order to accomplish a specific goal," Participant Six.
Project Perspectives	4, 5, 6, 7, 8	The culture in bureaucratic organizations often seeks to maintain the status quo and resists potential change (Slack & Singh, 2018).	Participant Five stated, "Of course with COVID right now, anything that makes it easier doing work from home is going to be well received."
Future Agency Success	9, 10	Effective organizational change requires a thorough understanding of all facets of the situation despite new understandings continuing to be identified as throughout the change process (Lewin & American Psychological Association, 1997).	"I think you have a lot of success when you know how something works from start to finish. Encouraging that in the department would be really helpful," Participant Seven.

Relationship of the Findings

The following section further expands on the relationships identified in the Data Representation and Visualization section. Initially, this presentation examines the relationship between the findings and the research questions guiding this study. Following this presentation, the relationship between the findings and the conceptual framework is examined. Based on the research questions and conceptual framework, the planning of this study formed some anticipated themes to emerge from the data. These anticipated themes are identified prior to examining their relationship to the findings of the study. The presentation then transitions to examine the relationship between the findings and the extent literature. In the final analysis, the relationship of the findings to the problem statement for this study is presented.

Relationship to the Research Questions. The relationship to the research questions examines how the findings align with the questions guiding this study. This examination seeks to determine whether the findings obtained during this study can addresses these questions. As part of the planning for this study, the following questions were identified to guide the research data collection:

RQ1 – How are leaders ineffective in changing the culture of their organization during a transformation project?

RQ1a. What are the effective actions or behaviors of organizational leaders?

RQ1b. What are the ineffective actions or behaviors of organizational leaders?

RQ2 – How can organizations successfully improve performance to obtain expected results?

RQ2a. What determines organizational success?

RQ2b. What determines an improvement in performance?

RQ3 – What are critical success factors in organizational culture that impact success in achieving organizational initiatives?

Table Three provides a visual alignment between the research questions and the discovered themes. A relevant quote from participant interviews conducted during the study is provided to validate the relationship between the theme and the research question.

Table 3

Relationship to the Research Question

Theme Discovered	Research Question(s)	Participant Quote
Leadership Expectations	RQ1a	"Not forcing your beliefs on the team, but allowing the team to foster, grow, and work in the style that best suits them and empowering that," Participant One.
	RQ3	As explained by Participant Thirteen, "I would say fairness, knowledge, consistency, being open to changes, providing improvement skills that may be needed, being open minded to changes and processes."
Effective Communication	RQ1a	"The one thing [in effective leadership] is communication. Being able to listen," Participant Twelve.
	RQ2	"Allowing questions to be directed back for clarification – open communication," Participant Thirteen.
Lessons Learned	RQ2	As Participant Sixteen explained, "I don't know that I would change a lot, I think maybe how some of the end users became involved and reaching out to them first and getting their thoughts on the overall thing."
Project Perspectives	RQ2	Participant Ten explained, "Our feedback wasn't being received or paid attention to. A lot [of people] questioned the validity of the need."
	RQ2b	Participant Five said, "I think anything that makes our jobs easier and better certainly helps."

Relationship to the Conceptual Framework. The relationship to the conceptual framework is the next element being examined. The conceptual framework identified in both graphical and narrative form the concepts, theories, actors, and variables for this study. This framework also described the anticipated interaction between each of the elements (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). The concepts included leadership actions, organizational culture, and organizational performance. This framework anticipated that transformational leadership and stakeholder theories would guide leadership actions. The leadership actions of communication and empowerment were the identified variables to be examined. The examination of these variables sought to determine the influence of these actions on organizational culture which then impacts the performance of the organization.

In addition to leaders, employees and external stakeholders are actors in the study. Theme One – Effective Leadership reflected the behaviors of leaders expected by participants. These behaviors identified by participants aligned with the precepts of Transformational Leadership. The action variables, communication and empowerment, were reflected in Theme Four – Project Perspectives. In this theme, participants provided their perspective on the effectiveness of communication and the level of empowerment they experienced. Theme Four – Project Perspectives also included the perceived impact of the fuel application project on the organizational culture of the agency. Themes Three – Lessons Learned and Five – Future Agency Success reflected observations and suggestions employees believe can foster better success in achieving initiatives. These lessons learned also reflected the need to identify and engage all stakeholders early in the project to determine their needs. This stakeholder engagement aligned with Stakeholder Theory identified in the conceptual framework.

Relationship to Anticipated Themes. The relationship to the anticipated themes compares the expected values to those discovered during the research process. These expected values created the initial codes in the codebook. As the study progressed, the researcher revised the codebook and themes to better reflect the emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Robson & McCartan, 2016). The researcher derived anticipated themes from materials reflected in

Sections One and Two of this document including the interview questions, conceptual framework, the literature review, and the research questions. There were seven anticipated themes. These themes included Leadership Expectations, Leadership Involvement, Effective Communications, Project Communication Effectiveness, Change on Organizational Culture, Lessons Learned, and Future Agency Success. Of these seven anticipated themes, four themes emerged during data analysis. These four themes included Theme One - Leadership Expectations, Theme Two - Effective Communication, Theme Three - Lessons Learned, and Lesson Five - Future Agency Success. There were three themes anticipated but were not discovered. These anticipated themes included Leadership Involvement, Project Communication Effectiveness, and Change in Organizational Culture.

These three themes were anticipated based on their respective interview questions. To determine the level of leadership involvement, participants were asked how senior leadership impacted the project. Although senior leadership was clarified during the interview as senior agency leadership, some participants provided responses reflecting their supervisors or district leadership. In response to Interview Question Four, Participant Sixteen stated, “I think this project was influenced by someone in the district.” Other participants recognized the influence of senior leaders through their development and communication of the agency goals and initiatives. As a result, these responses emerged as elements in Theme Four - Project Perspectives.

Similarly, the second part of Interview Question Five sought to obtain an understanding of the effectiveness of the communications on the fuel application process. Similarly, Interview Questions Seven and Eight intended to determine on how the project has impacted the agency culture. Themes from these questions did not emerge with a distinct perspective. As a result, the anticipated themes pertaining to Project Communication Effectiveness and Change in

Organizational Culture themes were not discovered as anticipated. After obtaining a definition of effective communication in the interview, the researcher asked participants to assess the effectiveness of the communication on the fuel application project. The individual responses to this question were often mixed and seemed to differ based on when the participant was engaged. Grama and Todericiu (2016) explained, “The attitude of the employees regarding organizational change are always influenced by past experiences, available information and individual cognitive processes” (p. 48). Some participants believed the communications were effective, then identified a gap. Participant Seven stated, “I think our communication to the field has been good. The communication to administrative staff (DFC, DAIMS) has not been as effective.” Those participants engaged later in the project more frequently identified a need to improve communications. “[I] didn’t know anything about it until I got the invite that it was coming on there” stated Participant Fourteen.

Other participants would state that the communication was good or bad, but then provided contradictory information. The specific comments were coded as good or bad and were included in the Project Perspectives theme. The comments reflecting gaps or areas for improvement were coded as “improve communications.” The improve communication code is included in Theme Three - Lessons Learned. The anticipated Change in Organizational Culture theme sought to include the responses to two interview questions. These questions were Questions Six and Seven on the Interview Guide (Appendix A). Interview Question Six sought the participants feeling of empowerment during the project. The responses to this question varied based on when they became engaged on the project. Participant Three was engaged earlier in the project and explained, “General way this app came to life was extremely empowering.” In contrast, Participant Nine became involved during training, and said “No, I did not feel empowered. They just told of a new app coming out, we were never asked about fuel stuff." For consistency, the responses were primarily included in the Theme Four - Project Perspectives. Interview Question Seven asked participants how the fuel application project impacted the actions or behaviors of the agency. Participant Five stated,

> I think that any project we have going on right now with using applications and the latest and greatest technology has really helped the culture at [the agency] in looking more for those types of things. I think before we may have been more satisfied with the status quo. This has created some excitement and encouragement to do our jobs better and more efficiently.

Other participants did not share the same perspective. Participant Thirteen stated,

> I don't think it did. The new fuel app is a statewide project to go with the future state of the agency and trying to go paperless. I am all for that and we are currently doing processes now more online.

As responses were mixed, these were included in the project perspective theme for consistency.

Relationship to the Literature. The Relationship to the Literature section examines the findings of the research with the extant literature to determine its similarities and differences. While extant literature was leveraged in the triangulation of the data, this section examines the relationship between the findings and elements identified in the literature review.

Theme One – Leadership Expectations and Theme Two – Effective Communications reflected participant expectations regarding the desired characteristic of leaders. In the interviews participants defined those characteristics and actions they desired in their leaders. These characteristics and actions emerged to define Theme One - Leadership Expectations. These expectations included honesty, integrity, authenticity, and caring. These expectations aligned with Transformational and Servant Leadership (Bass, 1995; Greenleaf, 2002). Participants identified the need for leaders to clearly articulate the vision, goals, expectations, and decisions effectively. Theme Two – Effective Communication identified the factors participants aligned with effective communication. These factors included two-way communication, clear messages, communication preferences, and mutual understanding. Sanina et al. (2017) identified the need to use effective language and the appropriate channels to get the message across to recipients. Park et al. (2012) identified consistency in effective communications builds trust between the parties. For agencies to obtain higher levels of engagement and performance, high levels of trust must be prevalent in the organization (Ngai & Singh, 2018).

The obtainment of higher levels of success were outcomes of Themes Three – Lessons Learned, Four – Project Perspectives, and Five – Future Agency Success. The interviews provided a post-audit examination of the project. Participants were asked to assess the leadership, communication, empowerment, and outcomes of the project as well as identify opportunities for the agency to be more successful. The responses aligned with literature in Organizational Culture, Organizational Change, Organizational Development, Project Management, and Quality Management. Kotter's Eight Stage Process (2012) guided the Change Management concepts. These steps included the identification and engagement of stakeholders in the problem identification and solutioning phases of the project. The early engagement of all stakeholders can foster a better understanding of the needs so better solutions can be developed (Chaplin & Akao, 2003; Freeman & Reed, 1983). Cullen and Parker (2015) identified the need to clearly define the scope, plan, participant responsibilities, and measurable goals for the project. These plans should be clearly articulated to all stakeholders. The empowerment of cross-functional teams can facilitate more creative problem solutioning activities and fostering higher organizational performance (Warrick, 2016). Higher employee engagement and performance were outcomes which were highly desired by organizational leaders, but not often obtained (Hughes, 2016).

Relationship with the Problem. The relationship with the problem examines how the findings correspond with the problem of projects not obtaining their expected goals. The general problem being addressed in this research study was the inability of leaders to effectively change the culture of an organization during a transformation project resulting in lower-than-expected results. The general problem highlighted the use of transforming processes to enhance organizational performance. The problem statement was validated through extant academic literature. Tursunbayeva et al. (2020) identified that majority of transformation projects undertaken by organizations do not fully achieve all expected goals. Hughes (2016) identified transformations will oftentimes fail due to the organizational culture.

In this transformation project, the agency successfully developed and implemented a smart phone application as part of an effort to automate processes pertaining to fuel management. The project team delivered the application to users. This application functionality was modified from the original scope to foster acceptance. However, with the modified functionality, the delivery of the application was not completed by June 30th as per the revised planned. Agency documents reflect the original rollout plan was too aggressive and revised the plan to enhance the likelihood of adoption. Agency management reported the application was delivered to all districts during the first week of June. As a full month of data were required, the reporting was not completed until the beginning of July.

As explained in the previous section, the delays and additional costs are consistent with extant literature (Jones, 2020, 2021; Tursunbayeva et al., 2020). As Participant Seven explained, "Once complete, we will have achieved 95% of what we set out to do." Some participants shared they would not be using some of the functionality as it duplicates an existing automated process. Part of the reason for this resistance appears to be due to the late engagement of some stakeholders. Participant Fifteen said, "We could have started at the DAIM level and given them their hour, perspective and speech by bringing them in a little earlier before developing the app in Bristol." Several participants recognized the earlier stakeholder engagement could have provided better insight. This insight could have improved how the application was developed as well as the functionality available.

The functionality modifications related to fuel tank inspections and reporting in the application are well received and seen as a helpful tool. This tool does modify how tasks related to fuel management are performed within the agency as well as its external reporting to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Despite the tool, modifying how tasks are being performed, many participants did not feel the project had an impact on the organizational culture. Participant Thirteen explained, "I don't think it did. The new fuel app is a statewide project to go with the future state of the agency and trying to go paperless."

While participants did not perceive a significant change in the organizational culture, the project is perceived as a small step in a positive direction. As Participant Three explained, "I think it starts to hopefully show that ideas can be driven from end user space, and it is going to be listened to." As with the other questions, those participants who were more actively engaged throughout the project had more positive responses. Those participants who were engaged later in the project and had little to no direct interaction with senior agency leadership perceived the project having no or a negative impact to the agency culture. As Participant Ten explained, "I think it has created more of a disconnect between what the field and end users need and what

Central Office and leadership at that level sees the need. I feel it has created more conflict than a cohesiveness." While many participants loved the idea of the application, they were unclear if they would use any or all the functionality available.

Summary of the Findings

As explained in extant literature, current business leaders are looking for innovative solutions to address organizational opportunities and challenges. These creative and innovative solutions are often included in the strategic goals and objectives of the organization. The achievement of these goals can determine the level of organizational success (McKeown, 2019). The agency set the vision of creating a new tomorrow through preparing their people, empowering innovation, and modernizing their methods. The creation of a clear vision is one step in managing organizational change (Kotter, 2012). Kotter (2012) recognized to effectively lead change, leaders first needed to create a sense of urgency. As Participant Five explained, "Of course with COVID right now, anything that makes it easier doing work from home is going to be well received." The pandemic has generated a significant external force on all organizations creating a need to change how they operate. As Chebbi et al. (2019) found, the external environment can consistently drive change that significantly impacts the operations of the organization. Successful leaders of these organizations engage internal stakeholders to determine effective solutions.

The internal stakeholders were identified and engaged to implement a phone application to automate certain fuel management processes. A cross-functional team was formed. This team was empowered to develop and implement a fuel application. Kotter (2012) identified the need for leaders to form a guiding coalition to foster the change. The senior leadership of the agency provided support and resources needed to complete the project. Participant One explained, "For the most part, they still kind of just let us do our thing with the groups we worked with and let us deliver the product to the districts.” As Warrick (2016) identified, the use of teams can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. In addition, using teams can increase employee engagement and morale which can foster higher performance. The desire to leverage more cross-functional teams to increase collaboration and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency was prevalent through this study.

This study provided a form of post-audit review of the fuel application project. As part of this study, interviews were conducted with agency employees who were involved in the project. The interviews sought to obtain participant perspectives on leadership, communication, empowerment, corporate culture, and organizational performance. From these perspectives, five themes emerged.

Theme One: Leadership Expectations. Leadership expectations reflect actions and behaviors that participants expect of their leaders.

Theme Two: Effective Communication. Effective communication reflects the opinions of participants regarding the characteristics necessary to foster a mutual understanding of information and expectations.

Theme Three: Lessons Learned. Lessons learned provide a hindsight examination of project activities to identify opportunities for future improvement.

Theme Four: Project Perspectives. Project perspectives reflect the opinions of participants regarding the fuel application project outcomes as well as on leadership involvement, effectiveness of communications, level of empowerment experienced, and the impact on agency culture.

Theme Five: Future Agency Success. The future agency success reflects the perspectives of participants pertaining to how the organization can be more successful in achieving initiatives.

The analysis and interpretation of these themes triangulated the data with extant literature. The relationship between these themes and elements of this research study were then compared. These elements included the research questions, the conceptual framework, anticipated themes, academic literature, and the problem statement that defined this study. This examination identified alignment with these elements.

Application to Professional Practice

Yin (2018) concluded case studies provide an opportunity to examine a phenomenon in its natural environment. As a result of this examination, the generalized findings could be applied to a broader audience. The following sections explain the broader application of the study findings to professional practice. Initially, the section provides suggestions for how the findings can improve general business practices. Following these recommendations, potential application strategies are identified and described.

Improving General Business Practice

As identified during the current business problem overview in Section 1, organizations need to continually evolve to remain viable. This evolvement includes the values, behaviors, and actions occurring in the organization (Wu et al., 2019). Oftentimes organizations become inert and require significant transformation initiatives to be implemented. The majority of these transformation efforts, however, fail to achieve their anticipated benefits (Faik et al., 2019; Hughes, 2016; Tursunbayeva et al., 2020). Yet, as Canterino et al. (2018) observed, positive changes in leadership actions can foster higher levels of performance. In this study, participants identified several concepts to improve general business practices including culture, communication, due diligence, and empowerment.

Theme One – Leadership Expectations reflect behaviors and actions which should be prevalent in an organizational culture. Participants identified having honesty, integrity, humility, and keeping an open mind as important aspects of leadership. These generalized concepts characterize behaviors participants wanted to observe. As followers often imitate the behaviors of the leaders, these expectations infer how participants seek to engage with one another (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Hughes, 2016; Kim, 2020; Schein & Schein, 2017; Wu et al., 2019). The Shingo Institute (2021) identified successful organizations have humility, trust, collaboration, and empowerment embedded in the culture. In addition, participants wanted leaders to share their knowledge and experiences. People desire to hear things directly from their manager rather than through the grapevine (Ruck & Welch, 2012).

Schein and Schein (2017) defined culture as accumulated learnings from solving problems which shape the organization ways, behaviors, and decision-making. These problems include adaptation to the external environment as well as the internal integration of solutions. Therefore, leaders can manage culture through sharing information, experiences, and decisions. The Shingo Model and other quality management tools foster the examination of the organizational culture as a precursor of change. This examination should challenge the ways, behaviors, and decision-making processes which may have been successful in the past. Changes should be made when the values or actions are no longer effective (Kotter, 2012; McGill & Slocum, 1993; Shingo Institute, 2021).

The culture also impacts how effectively the organization communicates. “Effective internal communication is a prerequisite for organisational success” (Ruck & Welch, 2012, p.

294). Theme Two – Effective Communication provides recommendations for other organizations to consider. These recommendations mirror the responses of the participants. Effective communication should include two-way communication, a clear message, appropriate communication channels, and mutual understanding. Young and Post (1993) identified eight principles for effective corporate communications. One principle identified the need for senior leaders to be a champion of communication. Another principle requires alignment between words and actions. Two additional principles identified the need two-way dialogue while recognizing that effective communication is a shared responsibility across the organization.

While discussing the use of different channels, the researchers placed an emphasis on face-to-face communication. The principles also identified the need for strategically planning communications. This communication plan should identify the stakeholders so the appropriate message can be tailored to the needs of the customer/recipient. The message should facilitate sharing the necessary information required for the desired action to occur. For employee communications, the study determined the discussion of future events should include why and how things will change, not just what.

These discussions should link the big picture understanding (organization-wide) as well as how the events will impact the employee. These discussions should also focus on the events rather than trying to influence how a person should feel. In addition, the study identifies organizational leaders as having responsibility for fostering a continuous flow of internal information sharing (Young & Post, 1993). When these principles are not reflected in organizational communication efforts, conflicts can occur. The presence of conflict reduces performance and trust within the organization. These reductions can snowball to further declines and the need for a significant organizational transformation (Dupe, 2015).

Improving communications and enhancing due diligence processes were several of the concepts also identified by participants during the interviews. Theme Four- Project Perspectives and Theme Three – Lessons Learned emerged from responses regarding what went well and what could have been done differently. During the study, participants recognized the need to identify and engage stakeholders early in the due diligence process. This earlier engagement can provide a better understanding of the entire process(es) and all stakeholder needs. Lewin (1939) found organizations need to understand the entire situation prior to initiating change. Lewin also recognized a full understanding of a process is oftentimes not known until people try to change it. The interdependencies of processes and resources can cause this phenomenon.

Goldratt and Cox (2004) described an organization as a series of synchronized efforts. The outputs of one effort create inputs to another process creating integrated systems. As a result, the organization must understand a process from beginning to end. Several participants in the study identified this need during the interviews. During the project, the BIS staff mapped the process, but after the development had begun on the fuel application. These participants believed the fuel application could have been designed differently resulting in even higher levels of user satisfaction. According to the Shingo Institute (2021), this understanding of the interconnectedness of systems and processes is key to aligning the organizational culture, goals, strategy, and operational processes. Shingo principles reflect the need for organizations to standardize and stabilize organizational processes while fostering quality with each step. At the same time, organizations should continuously be improving processes as new information or technologies are available.

The Shingo principles also promote the involvement and empowerment of all employees (Shingo Institute, 2021). Participant Fifteen identified “Hire the best people, listen to them, listen to the customers. Make best decisions following your activity to develop some information." Participant Sixteen stated, "When the right person is there, meetings will start to open up and the questions begin to be answered." The participants interviewed during this study shared a desire to be engaged and participate in future initiatives. Participants also recognized the project brought together a lot of talented people from across the agency to develop an innovative application. Participant Six stated,

> Having several people from different areas IT people, management people, operations type people, all of them taking a look at it and seeing if there is something there from their department that they can do to help, I think that will help more good initiatives be started.

In Theme Five – Future Agency Success, participants shared their desires to collaborate more, participate in identifying appropriate tools, and experience greater levels of empowerment. McGregor (1957) postulated the role of management was to create opportunities for employees to achieve their potential. Managers were to remove barriers and provide guidance of efforts toward organizational goals. Greenleaf (2002) also determined the role of a servant leader was to provide opportunities for employees to grow and develop while directing their efforts to achieve organizational goals.

Leaders desire ways to enhance the achievement of organizational goals. The inability of organizations to fully achieve their initiatives was identified as common phenomenon experienced in the current business environment (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Through the findings of this research study, the organizational culture should include honesty, integrity, humility, and being open-minded. Leaders should also ensure the organizational culture enables trust, respect, collaboration, and effective communication. Effective communication should include two-way dialogue, a clear message, appropriate channels, and mutual understanding of information.

A more holistic understanding of organizational process and participant needs characterize the concept of better due diligence. Identifying and engaging all stakeholders early in the change process can facilitate a more holistic view. The engagement of stakeholders early in the process enables an opportunity to hear their concerns, understand their needs, as well as allow them to take responsibility for finding solutions. This empowerment of employees can be a catalyst for more effective change and higher level of performance.

Potential Application Strategies

The potential application strategies for modifying current business practices draws from change and quality management disciplines. Lewin (1939) found behavior is a function of the person and their environment. To be effective, the behaviors in the organization should support the achievement of the mission and goals (Shingo Institute, 2021). Consequently, the environment should foster the appropriate beliefs, actions, and decision-making for the organization to achieve their mission and goals. As the mission and goals for each organization are different, a detailed, universal application strategy cannot be developed. Therefore, a potential application strategy being presented has four general steps. These steps include team identification, assessment and planning, execution, and evaluating. After the initial team identification, the processes align with the Deming Model. Deming (1953) determined continuous improvement was a four-stage cycle. These stages are plan, do, check, and act.

Initially, leadership must identify organizational members to participate in a cross-functional team. Kotter (2012) found effective teams required position power, expertise, credibility, and good leadership. Leaders should communicate the creation of the team and its purpose across the organization (Young & Post, 1993). Senior leaders also should provide a clear purpose, measurable goals, appropriate guidance, and the necessary resources for the team while removing any obstacles encountered (McGregor, 1957). In addition to the goal, leaders should clearly articulate and reiterate the sense of urgency to the team and the organization (Kotter, 2012). Cullen and Parker (2015) found effective projects clearly define and communicate the scope, purpose, schedule, objectives, plan, roles, and responsibilities.

Once assembled, the team should begin their assessment of the environment and the problem. This assessment includes a determination of the desired future state as well as a realistic portrait of the current state. Bolman and Deal (2017) theorized a holistic organizational assessment involves using four frames or perspectives. These frames included structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The structural frame pertains to the strategy, goals, policies, and technologies. The human resource frame identifies the relationships, skills, and needs of the organization. The political frame pertains to power and competition while symbolic frame incorporates the culture of the organization. These frames influence the understanding of the environment to enhance decision-making. This decision-making includes identifying the appropriate plan forward to bridge the future and the current state. Once the assessment is complete and the vision approved, a detailed implementation plan should be developed. This plan should include a clear purpose, scope, timeline, milestones, measurable goals, and key performance indicators (Cullen & Parker, 2015).

Once approved by the appropriate executives, the execution of the implementation plan can be initiated. Kotter's Eight-Stage Process for Leading Change (2012) and the Shingo Model (Shingo Institute, 2021) provide guidance for implementing organizational change. Kotter (2012) identified the need to incorporate opportunities for short-term wins. These short-term wins should be publicized and celebrated across the organization. The celebration fosters additional momentum in the change effort. The Shingo Model provides principles for implementing a culture of organizational excellence. In this model, appropriate behaviors are supported through principles, tools, and systems to achieve results. There are three primary components of the model include cultural enablers, continuous improvement, and enterprise alignment (Shingo Institute, 2021).

As noted in the project plan, the change effort should include milestones, measurable goals, and key performance indicators. Kaplan and Norton (1992) developed the Balanced Scorecard to facilitate organizational performance evaluations. The scorecard examines four different perspectives including customer, innovation and learning, internal business, and financial. This scorecard facilitates an on-going performance evaluation, by providing leading and lagging indicators. These indicators can facilitate the identification of areas needing investigation. These investigations can identify operational issues earlier before they become significant problems. Customer feedback and quality management tools, like Lean and Six Sigma, can also provide valuable information on potential areas of improvement. These methods promote continuous improvement of processes enabling organizations to obtain higher levels of performance (Di Pierto et al., 2013).

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

The generalized findings of research case studies can have broader applicability and thereby influence practices (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Yin, 2018). As organizational leaders seek to improve performance, the generalized findings of this research study are applicable to their organizations. Organizations can develop and leverage effective teams to identify issues and develop solutions. The due diligence of these assessments should include examining the organizational culture and processes as well as the inclusion of all stakeholders. This examination should ensure the culture and processes align with the organizational goals and objectives. Tools like the Four Frame Model, Kotter's Eight Step Change Model, the Shingo Model, the Balanced Scorecard, and the Deming Model can provide frameworks and guidance to effectively identify and implement continuous improvement in their organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Deming, 1953; Kaplan & Norton, 1992: Kotter, 2012; Shingo Institute, 2021).

Recommendations for Further Study

While evaluating the data and findings during this study, several recommendations for further study were identified to determine if similar results could be obtained. The first recommendation replicates the study using another idea upon a return to normal operations. This recommendation assumes the lessons learned and other improvements would not be implemented. As noted earlier, this study was conducted during a pandemic. The pandemic created a natural sense of urgency to automate the fuel process. This sense of urgency could have influenced the change acceptance for some users. Once normal operations return, would users continue to be receptive of change or revert back to resistance behaviors prevalent in cultural norms? Accordingly, all other study parameters would remain the same. The data from the two studies would be compared and contrasted. The second recommendation replicates the study using an idea from senior leadership. This study reflects a top-down idea instead of from the field (bottom-up). This recommendation assumes the lessons learned and other improvements would not be implemented. The OSI could still receive and assess the idea to identify potential solutions. All other study parameters would remain the same. Using the framework from this study, the findings of the two studies could be compared and contrasted.

A third recommendation reflects replicating the study using another idea submitted to the Idea Driver. This study however would examine the entire process from receiving the idea to the final project close out. This recommendation assumes the lessons learned and other improvements would not be implemented. Using the same interview questions, the responses could be compared between the studies. A fourth recommendation creates a case study to examine the implementation of the lessons learned and recommendations suggested by participants. This case study would begin as the project team members are selected through to the final project closeout. The findings implementation would include the development of a framework for the OSI team. This framework incorporates improving due diligence as well as ensuring all stakeholders are identified and engaged early in the process.

One final case study is proposed. This case study recommendation replicates the study to examine the outcomes of implementing another Idea Driver suggestion. This recommendation assumes the agency fully implements the lessons learned and the other recommendations suggested by participants. The findings between the studies would be compared, particularly the Lessons Learned and Project Perspective themes to determine if the recommendations enhance agency performance.

Reflections

The purpose of the post-positivism qualitative research study was to examine the impact of leadership actions on the organizational culture and performance. This study sought to fill a gap in the current literature. Canterino et al. (2018) identified the need for additional literature examining leadership actions in the public sector. Johnston et al. (2017) and Ospina et al. (2018) also recognized the need for additional literature bridging the gap between theory and current business practices. In this study, a public sector agency developed a cell phone application to automate their fuel management processes. The researcher interviewed thirteen agency stakeholders obtain their perspectives on leadership, communication, empowerment, project outcomes, and future agency success. The interviews provided participants the opportunity to reflect on the project events as the implementation ended. As this research ended, the researcher took time to reflect on the events of this case study. These reflections include the personal and professional growth experienced by the researcher as well as the relationship of the discovered themes to Holy Scripture.

Personal and Professional Growth

As the researcher is a continuous learner, this research study provided opportunities for personal and professional growth. As noted earlier, the researcher had provided consulting services to the agency in the past. Through embracing the bracketing process, the researcher listened differently. The researcher listened to learn rather than analyze the situation to make recommendations to remediate the problem. In reflecting on the interview transcriptions, the researcher recognized how much the agency culture has evolved over the past ten years. There is greater diversity and sharing of information across the agency. This observation as well as hearing about the new technology being used created a special experience for the researcher. The development and implementation of the application created some excitement for some participants. That excitement can be contagious. This project provided opportunities to meet and learn from new people across the Commonwealth. These learnings were derived from hearing participants’ perspectives on leadership, communication, empowerment, and success factors as well as from extant literature.

While there is applicability for organizations, these learnings can also be applied personally to enhance the consulting, managing, and researching skills of the researcher. These learnings reiterated the importance of communication and developing positive relationships. People working together and sharing what they know can resolve many significant issues quickly and more creatively. The creativity and innovation leaders seek are oftentimes currently available in the organization. There needs to be opportunities for these to be recognized. Employees need opportunities to share what they know, further develop their skills, and have a positive impact on others. “People are the only organizational asset that has an infinite capacity to appreciate in value” (Shingo Institute, 2021, p. 20). Part of the role of a consultant is facilitating the sharing of knowledge and information in addition to providing expertise to address organizational issues. This expertise is a gift that should be used to help clients become more successful. Scripture teaches, “God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Peter 4:10).

Biblical Perspective

Serving one another is one of many important instructions within scripture that are relevant today. “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 2 Timothy 3:16). The findings of this study also align with Biblical principles in scripture. This relationship between the discovered themes and scripture are discussed.

Many of the concepts identified in Theme One – Leadership Expectations align with scripture. These concepts include being honest, setting a good example, and caring for others. Mutual respect should also be present. Leaders are to be respected as God appoints people to their roles. “Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Romans 13:1). Scripture also provides His selection criteria for leaders. Leaders should be "…capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Exodus 18:21). Participants desired leaders who are humble and a good role model. "Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Peter 5:3). Jesus provided the good example for humble, servant leaders to follow. "I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, John 13:15). This example reflected how people should treat one another. God cares about people and expects His children to do the same, especially those in leadership positions. "Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly – not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Peter 5:2). Leadership is an act of service which cannot be done effectively without His help. Solomon provides an example in scripture. As Solomon was being anointed as king, he sought wisdom from God in order to lead well. Solomon prayed, "Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, 1 Kings 3:9). Through this vertical relationship with God, people can maintain better relationships with others.

Vital to both the vertical and horizontal relationships is communication. Scripture provides validation for the elements comprising Theme Two – Effective Communication. These elements included two-way dialogue, a clear message, and a mutual understanding. The two-way communication requires both speaking and listening respectfully. "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters, you must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry" (New

Living Translation, 1996/2015, James 1:9). Scripture also highlights the need to have a clear message. “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Habakkuk 2:2). Finally, having a mutual understanding can foster the alignment of efforts toward the same goals. “Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with one another, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Philippians 2:2). Collaborative efforts involve embracing differences to work in harmony with one another. These differences can include skills, abilities, and experiences which can provide new insights and lessons as well as innovative solutions to problems.

Wisdom in the scriptures align with Themes Three – Lessons Learned. “Intelligent people are always ready to learn. Their ears are open for knowledge” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Proverbs 18:15). Wise people continuously seek to learn and develop new skills. “So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, James 1:4). Growth is a process. People need one another to foster that growth and development. “So let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Job 34:4). In the learning process, mistakes will happen. People need to be humble to admit mistakes as well as learn from them. “If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept correction, you will be honored” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Proverbs 13:18). Applying lessons learned from mistakes enables good fruit to emerge from a less than positive situation.

The scriptural descriptions of fruit align with Theme Four – Project Perspectives. “A tree is identified by its fruit. If a tree is good, its fruit will be good. If a tree is bad, its fruit will be bad" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Matthew 12:33). A culture or structure that fosters collaboration, trust, and continuous improvement can promote higher levels of performance (Shingo Institute, 2021). "You will enjoy the fruit of you labor. How joyful and prosperous you will be" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Psalm 128:2). There are intrinsic rewards for employees when their efforts align with achieving the goals of the organization (McGregor, 1957). "Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Titus 3:14). Doing good and meeting the needs of others can foster the long-term success and sustainability of the organization (Freeman & Reed, 1983).

Scripture provides guidance for future success which aligns with Theme Five – Future Agency Success. "Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Proverbs 15:22). Participants recognized the value of the cross-functional team. The engagement of many stakeholders enabled a better fuel application to be developed. "Commit your actions to the Lord, and your plans will succeed" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Proverbs 16:3). Prior to beginning work, clear plans need to be defined, written, and shared. This clear plan includes the purpose, scope, and goals of the effort. "So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Galatians 6:9). Organizational change takes time and effort, but there are rewards for those who persevere. "As workers who tend a fig tree are allowed to eat the fruit, so workers who protect their employer's interests will be rewarded" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Proverbs 27:18). Employees need to work together as one organization. "So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up" (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Romans 14:19). Employees and departments are interdependent upon one another. 1 Corinthians 12 compares the church organization to parts of a human body. Just as the body is made up of different types of cells, an organization is a group of people who need to work collaboratively to perform at its best. These parts have different functions but cannot work effectively without one another.

Summary of Reflections

The ability to enhance collaboration requires time to reflect and learn from what has transpired. Scripture also teaches, “To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance” (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Matthew 25:29). This abundance can include results which exceed expectations (New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Ephesians 3:20-21). While the focus of this study was to remediate gaps in extant literature, more was gained. The researcher grew personally and professionally through the course of this study. The results also provide advice to other organizations which could help improve their performance. In addition, the findings of this study validated the continued relevance of scripture in the current business environment.

Summary of Section 3

The purpose of this study was to examine a problem in the current business environment. The specific problem to be addressed was the inability of leaders to change the organizational culture during a governmental agency transformation project located in Virginia resulting in lower-than-expected results. To obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon, a fuel application implementation project was selected with a Commonwealth of Virginia agency. During the study, interviews were conducted with 13 agency employees who were engaged on the project. These interviews were conducted over Google Meet, recorded, and transcribed. The transcripts were analyzed and coded after being validated by participants. From this analysis five themes emerged. These themes were Theme One - Leadership Expectations, Theme Two - Effective Communication, Theme Three - Lessons Learned, Theme Four - Project Perspectives, and Theme Five - Future Agency Success. The themes were consistent with the participants, enabling saturation and meaningful data to contribute to existing literature.

The extant literature, summarized in the Literature Review section of this paper, provided validation of the data collected during the study. The triangulation between the data collected and the extant literature provided the researcher with a more robust contribution to the current body of knowledge. In addition, these findings can provide insights for other organizations to enhance their current business practices. The conclusion of this study allows business leaders to gain a better understanding of employee expectations and perspectives. These expectations and perspectives should foster a productive discussion in organizations regarding values, tools, and process which could enhance organizational performance and the achievement of shared goals and objectives.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The achievement of high goals is a desire of leaders. The inability of organizations to fully achieve their goals was the problem which guided this study. From initially examining the current business environment and needs, this study was designed to gain a better understanding of the organizational phenomenon. An examination of extant literature and scripture provided a foundation to design the study and validate the findings. The fuel application implementation project provided a natural boundary from which to examine the phenomenon. This fuel application was developed for a Commonwealth of Virginia agency. This cell phone application automated activities in the fuel management program. This project aligned with the future state of the agency to increase technology fluency within the agency as well as modernize processes.

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with the project team and other stakeholders. Gathering the perspectives of participants enabled a more robust understanding of how leaders influence organizations to achieve their goals. From these perspectives, five themes emerged. These themes included expectations of leaders, effective communication, lessons learned from the project, perspectives on the project, and ideas for future agency success. The interpretation of these themes have applicability to other agencies.

In the organization, relationships are important. These relationships need mutual trust and respect. The communication between members of the organization should be clear, honest, bi-directional, and through appropriate channels. Leaders should develop and empower employees to be their best as they work toward shared organizational goals. These factors contribute to an organizational culture which fosters collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement which leads to higher levels of performance.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. How long have you been employed at the agency?
2. How many project teams have you participated on at this agency? In career?
3. When you think about effective leadership, what actions or behaviors come to mind?
4. How has senior leadership influenced this project?
5. How do you define effective communication? How effective has the communication been on this project?
6. Empowerment is defined as an employee being enabled to influence what work they perform and how it is performed (Chhotray et al., 2018). In your experience on this project, how empowered did you feel? Why?
7. One definition of organizational/corporate culture is an accepted pattern of actions, beliefs, and behaviors (Martinez et al., 2015). How has this project changed the corporate culture in the agency?
8. As a representative for your department, did you receive any feedback from your colleagues regarding their opinions about this project? Overall, how receptive to the changes were your colleagues?
9. How well do you believe the project achieved its expected results?
    a. What went well?
    b. What could have been done differently?
10. In your opinion, how can the agency be more successful in achieving organizational initiatives?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title of the Project: Enhancing Success Through Leadership

Principal Investigator: Wendy Jewell, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a VDOT employee or contractor. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to examine how leadership actions influence the culture of the organization of a public sector agency. This study seeks to observe how a leader communicates and empowers employees during a transformation project. The project should change a current business process to become more efficient or effective through the use of technology.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Grant permission to attend and record project meetings.
2. Grant permission to interview you to obtain your perspective/opinion. No personally identifiable information will be gathered. Please be honest and transparent in your responses. Your name will not be used. You will be assigned a participant number. The Principal Investigator will have sole access to the names and participant numbers.
3. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. The transcription will be emailed to you for your review and validation. You may provide clarifications or updates to the transcription.
4. After your review, please notify the Principal Investigator that your review is complete and if any changes are necessary.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of how public sector agencies can effectively implement changes in their organization to improve performance.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher[s] will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data are shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a password-protected NVivo account. This data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and meetings will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. The participant will be given the opportunity to review and validate the transcription of their interview. Only the researcher[s] will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher[s] at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you apart from group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Wendy Jewell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at (XXX) XXX-XXXX and/or xxxxxxx@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. John Borek, at xxxxxxxx@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____

Printed Subject Name

____

Signature & Date

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Dear:

As a graduate student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the impact of leadership actions on organizational culture and performance.

Participants must be employees or contractors working on an agency-sponsored transformation project. Participants, if willing, will be asked to permit me to interview them, and they will be asked to review their interview transcripts for accuracy. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be recorded. I will transcribe the interview and email the file to you for your review and approval (The file will be password protected using the code below). Taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, you will have three days to review, make edits, or clarifying statements during the review process. Your name will be collected as part of the participation, but your identity will be kept confidential through a coding system.

A consent document is attached. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and email it to me at the time of the interview.

Best Regards,

Wendy Jewell
Doctorate of Business Administration Leadership Candidate

Code: xxxxxxx

Appendix D: Transcription Review Email

Dear:

Thank you again for participating in the interview and sharing your perspective with me for my dissertation. I enjoyed our conversation. Attached is the transcript from our conversation for your review. It is password protected to preserve the confidentiality of the information that you shared. Your password was provided in my email with the consent form. The Code is listed below my name at the bottom of the email. Please review the document and make any necessary edits. Please email me any changes within three (3) business days.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information. I can be reached via email (xxxxxx@liberty.edu) or by phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Have a great day!

Best Regards,

Wendy Jewell

Doctoral Candidate

Liberty University