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This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Graduate and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

Dr. Joey Cope, Dean of the College
of Graduate and Professional Studies

Date 07 / 06 / 2020

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School of Educational Leadership

Designing Leadership Development Program Curriculum: A Narrative Research Study

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Monica N. Moray

July 2020

Dedication

To my mother, whose love and support has been unconditional and immeasurable. Even when I doubted myself, she has always been a source of inspiration, encouragement, and support. Instilling in me the values of persistence, commitment, and never giving up, my mother has been the guiding force behind my achievements and success. I am grateful to have such a strong woman in my life who has been there every step of the way in helping to make my dreams a reality.

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Thank you to my work organization and team who have been supportive in pushing me to stay focused and complete my doctoral journey. Many thanks to my professors that have guided me along the way and provided invaluable feedback to increase my knowledge base and skills. Finally, thank you to my family and friends who have encouraged me when I felt overwhelmed and who served as cheerleaders in my journey.

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Abstract

A high priority is placed on developing leadership skills because of its importance to organizational performance and growth. Since 2010, significant investment has been put into leadership programs by companies globally with the goal of producing more effective leaders. Despite the expenditure into leadership development, most training efforts fail to meet learners' needs because they do not include participant perspectives in the content decision-making process, using outdated leadership theories as a framework for content development, or failing to evaluate training efforts. These failures result in a mismatch between the challenges leaders face in their roles and the content of a leadership program. Therefore, to successfully design programs that meet learners' needs, an understanding of an audience's challenges is critical. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. In this study, the researcher specifically used narrative inquiry to understand the stories of past participants in a leadership development program. The researcher collected data by retrospective analyses of open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12 months for the purposes of identifying challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and understanding perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. The researcher intends the findings to help the organization identify to what extent the content of their current leadership program addressed the challenges of the participants.

Keywords: leadership development, leadership development program, leadership education, leadership curriculum

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Leadership has been a topic of scholarly interest since the 1930s, and even though research has produced numerous theories and perspectives, popularity in the subject continues to grow (Allio, 2013; Brown et al., 2016; Collinson & Tourish, 2015). For example, *Leadership Quarterly*, a peer-reviewed trade journal, has produced more than 800 articles on leadership since its initial issue in 1990 (Dionne et al., 2014). In addition, a 2019 keyword search in Google Scholar for *leadership* yielded more than four million results and the keyword *leadership development* yielded more than 300,000 results. Also, since the early 1960s, courses on leadership can be found globally at most universities and educational institutions (Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Rosch, 2018). However, despite the volume of literature produced on leadership since the 1930s, there is still no general agreement on critical issues, such as how to translate theory into practice and how to design programs that effectively build leadership skills (Allio, 2013; Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Seidle et al., 2016).

Since 2010, the need of businesses for effective leaders has grown significantly because of technological advances, globalization, and disrupted supply chains (Abrell et al., 2011; Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Glamuzina, 2015). In addition, companies of all sizes and industries face increasing complexity, widespread change, and new competitors (Abrell et al., 2011; Brown & Posner, 2001; Culpin et al., 2014). Therefore, developing leadership skills has become critical to organizational performance and growth (Brown et al., 2016; Glamuzina, 2015; Nunes et al., 2011).

Since the goal of leadership development is to improve performance and prepare leaders to take on more complex roles, spending on leadership development globally has been substantial (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Glamuzina, 2015; Sørensen, 2017). For example, as of

2018, some estimates place investment into leadership development by organizations to be over $50 billion a year globally (Prokopeak, 2018). These expenditures show that developing leaders is a high priority for companies, with leadership development currently comprising approximately 25%–35% of the total training budget at companies of all sizes and industries (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Seidle et al., 2016). Despite the focus on and investment into leadership development, most programs leave companies and researchers questioning whether training efforts are effective (Broucker, 2015; Brown et al., 2016; Seidle et al., 2016).

Background

Leadership development is implemented through a variety of methods—classroom training, workplace development, coaching, mentoring, and feedback—with face-to-face training being the primary way content is delivered (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Collinson & Tourish, 2015). Additionally, topics of focus in leadership programs vary based on who selects content and what is determined to be important in a context (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014; Holt et al., 2018).

In many organizations, executive leaders are responsible for choosing the topics of a leadership program (King & Nesbit, 2013; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). In other instances, internal staff assigned to a learning department decide what is important for leaders to learn. Still in some instances, content from a vendor is bought by a company to avoid the time and money it takes to develop a program internally (King & Nesbit, 2013; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). Regardless of who determines the curriculum in a leadership program, designing content that addresses learners' needs is a subjective process (Jasson & Govender, 2017; King & Nesbit, 2013; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Studies show that with a lack of established developmental methodology

on how to design content for leadership programs (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014; Sørensen, 2017), decisions on how to implement training is at best an educated guess (King & Nesbit, 2013; Sørensen, 2017).

Researchers in past studies have claimed that the challenges leaders face in their roles should be taken into consideration when designing leadership programs, although these challenges are rarely considered in the content decision-making process (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014; Grimm et al., 2015; Hite et al., 2014). To be effective, leaders need to develop the skills necessary to lead in their workplace (Brown & Posner, 2001; Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017). Therefore, implementing a leadership program without knowing what challenges leaders face in their roles results in minimally increased performance and leaves a company feeling that valuable time and money has been wasted (King & Nesbit, 2013; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Historically, studies in leadership have focused on theory; consequently, so has the practice of leadership development (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Day et al., 2014). To quickly decide what should be in a leadership program, some designers select a leadership theory and use it as a framework for content (Collinson & Tourish, 2015; Day et al., 2014; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). However, the study of leadership has yet to establish a connection between leadership theory and developing effective leadership programs (Peterlin, 2016).

Since the 1930s, leadership theory has evolved with changing societal views (Dionne et al., 2014). As a result, many leadership theories that were effective when they were originally published now contain outdated ideas that are not effective in a modern workplace (Latham, 2014; Peterlin, 2016). An example is the idea that leaders should command and control others,

which is not appropriate in current times where shared leadership has become the norm because of changing generational demographics and technology, and increased complexity in teams (Anderson et al., 2016; Latham, 2014). Moreover, researchers agree there is no universal leadership theory that is effective across all contexts, concluding that the process of leadership is complex, and skills critical in one context may be different in another (Carter, 2013; Grandy & Holton, 2013; Latham, 2014). Therefore, when the design of leadership programs is based solely on theory and does not take contextual factors into consideration, the content of a typical program is irrelevant and does not actually meet learners' needs (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014; Grandy & Holton, 2013).

There are significant issues with leadership training effectiveness and evaluation (Abrell et al., 2011; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Brown et al., 2016). According to Kirchner and Akdere (2014), only 10%–20% of all leadership training is evaluated for effectiveness before, during, and after a program is conducted. This means most programs have no method of measuring if a program is successful in improving performance and increasing leadership skills (Day et al., 2014; Grimm et al., 2015; Sørensen, 2017). In addition, when a program is evaluated, typically the focus is on a participant's overall satisfaction with a training experience, not an evaluation of content (Day et al., 2014; King & Nesbit, 2013; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). Therefore, in most programs, it is unknown whether content is relevant, timely, and addresses the challenges leaders face in their roles (Abrell et al., 2011; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Day et al., 2014). This often results in a program failing to show learning outcomes, such as improved performance or behavioral change (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Jasson & Govender, 2017).

Multiple studies show that developing effective leaders is a high priority, and leadership programs are critical to developing leadership skills (Brown et al., 2016; Burbaugh & Kaufman,

2017; Cowman & McCarthy, 2016; Heslin & Keating, 2017). At the same time, methodology on how to design successful leadership programs has not been established, often resulting in a mismatch between the challenges leaders face in their roles and the content of a training program (Ardichvili et al., 2016; McKim & Velez, 2017). Reasons for this mismatch include failure to include participant perspectives in the content decision-making process, using outdated leadership theories as a framework for content development, or failing to evaluate training efforts (Abrell et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2016; Collinson & Tourish, 2015). If leadership development is important to organizational success, and most programs do not meet learners' needs, it is necessary for research to continue to search for ways to build effective leadership programs (Abrell et al., 2011; Day et al., 2014; Seidle et al., 2016). Even so, successfully designing leadership programs cannot be done without understanding the challenges leaders face in their roles (Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Brown et al., 2016; Grimm et al., 2015). Then, this understanding can be used to determine what content should be taught to effectively address learners' needs (Abrell et al., 2011; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Brown et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Companies globally place high priority on developing leadership skills because it is critical to organizational performance and growth (Abrell et al., 2011; Holt et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2011). Since 2010, significant investment has been put into leadership programs to produce more effective leaders (Brown et al., 2016; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Culpin et al., 2014). Despite the expenditure into leadership development, most training efforts do not meet learners' needs, leaving companies and practitioners to question the effectiveness of a program (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Cowman & McCarthy, 2016).

The failure of leadership development is a result of the subjective nature in how content is selected, the use of outdated leadership theories, or a lack of effective evaluation (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Jasson & Govender, 2017; Peterlin, 2016). Consequently, there is often a mismatch between the challenges leaders face in their roles and program content (Hite et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2018; McKim & Velez, 2017). This disconnect between what a leadership program teaches and the challenges the participants face deserves further study because not addressing this problem results in wasted time, money, and a failure to increase leadership skills (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Holt et al., 2018; Jasson & Govender, 2017).

To address learners' needs, content should be relevant, timely, and help leaders to overcome difficulties they encounter (Abrell et al., 2011; Bhatti et al., 2014; Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014). Nevertheless, a universal methodology for designing leadership programs has not been agreed upon, and there is not enough research to provide a universal understanding of what leaders face in the modern workplace (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Latam, 2014; Peterlin, 2016). Moreover, because the challenges leaders face is situational, past studies cannot be relied on to determine the program content for a specific audience (Holt et al., 2018; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Peterlin, 2016). Therefore, a review of the literature indicates there is a need to better understand the challenges facing today's leaders and how to effectively design leadership content for a specific audience (Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Holt et al., 2018; McKim & Velez, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. I specifically used narrative inquiry to understand the stories of past participants in the company's leadership development program. I collected data by retrospective analysis of open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12

months. I gathered these surveys to identify challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and to understand perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. I intended for the findings to help the organization identify the extent their current leadership program addressed the challenges participants faced in their roles.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks provide the lens through which a study is viewed and a rationale that guides the development of research questions (Leavy, 2017). Also, a conceptual framework can help in organizing and framing the design of a study (Green, 2014). For this study, the conceptual framework I used was that leaders need to develop the necessary skills to effectively lead in their different contexts (Brown & Posner, 2001; Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017). Leadership researchers have shown in studies that well-designed training and education can develop effective leaders (Holt et al., 2018; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Peterlin, 2016).

In addition, I used the conceptual framework that different skills are needed in different situations as supported by situational leadership and contingency theories of leadership (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). Situational and contingency theories of leadership support the premise that there is no universal style of leadership effective for all contexts. Instead, leadership style and associated skills must adapt to the specific context and situation (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the challenges mid-level leaders face in a global technology company. Therefore, the concept that leadership is situational was appropriate as a conceptual framework for this study. In Chapter 2, situational leadership theories and contingency theories of leadership are discussed in detail in the section on the evolution of leadership theory.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were the following:

Q1: How do leaders who participated in a leadership program describe the challenges they face in their roles?

Q2: How well do leaders who participated in a leadership program feel the existing program prepared them to address the challenges they face in their roles?

Definition of Key Terms

The following are key terms and their definitions that I used in this study.

Challenge. In the context of this study, an obstacle, barrier, or difficulty related to a subject matter, skill, behavior, or knowledge in which an individual determines formal training is necessary to increase capability, potential, or performance to lead individuals or teams (Holt et al., 2018).

Content. In the context of this study, concepts, principles, facts, information, theories, and topics taught within a learning program for the purposes of increasing one's capabilities, potential, and performance (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Broucker, 2015).

Leadership development. A formal attempt by an organization with the purpose of growing, developing, and expanding knowledge, skills, or behaviors to increase one's capabilities, potential, and performance in leading individuals or teams (Day et al., 2014; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Leadership program. A formal attempt to train individuals through learning events, such as a series of topics, sequential in nature, with the purpose of growing, developing, and expanding one's knowledge, skills, or behaviors in leading individuals or teams (Day et al., 2014; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Mid-level leader. In the context of this study and in the study organization, this term refers to a leader in a management role with a span of control of a minimum of nine direct reports and a title of director or senior director. A mid-level leader has the key responsibilities of providing the strategic direction and leading the day-to-day operations of a business function. A mid-level leader reports to a vice president and leads employees who are front-line managers. A mid-level leader fulfills responsibilities by meeting performance objectives set by executive leaders, coaching and directing direct reports, managing multiple projects, ensuring cross-functional collaboration and strategic alignment (Northouse, 2016).

Skills. In the context of this study, the interpersonal and operational capabilities, knowledge, competencies and expertise required to effectively lead individuals and teams (Holt et al., 2018; Northouse, 2016).

Summary

This chapter discussed leadership development and raised questions about the mismatch between the challenges leaders face in their roles and the content of a leadership program. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. In this study, I used narrative inquiry to understand the stories of past participants in a leadership development program. I intended the findings to help the organization identify the extent their current leadership program met learners' needs. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the evolution of leadership theory, the background of leadership training, and a review of leadership challenges in the modern workplace.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. This literature review is divided into three major sections that provide an overview of the evolution of leadership theory, a background of leadership training, and a review of leadership challenges in the modern workplace. I accessed the literature in this review through the Abilene Christian University (ACU) library and includes scholarly peer-reviewed articles, journals, and books utilizing OneSearch, SAGE™ Journals, SAGE™ publications, ProQuest™, and EBSCO Host™ databases.

Leadership Theories

Since the 1930s, the study of leadership has evolved from something a person is born with to a structured process conceptualized through various leadership theories (Dionne et al., 2014; Hoffman et al., 2011; Nunes et al., 2011). Even though the topic has produced a large volume of studies, leadership research lacks agreement and universal understanding (Allio, 2013; Day et al., 2014; Seidle et al., 2016). Although theory and perspectives have changed over time, what remains true is that leadership is complex (Latham, 2014; Lord et al., 2017; Nunes et al., 2011).

The modern workplace has become more follower-focused and so has the study of leadership (Allio, 2013; Lord et al., 2017). Current studies acknowledge the role of followers in the leadership process and their impact on performance (Allio, 2013; Avolio et al., 2009). Therefore, in research, followers have become just as important as leaders. In the workplace, followers have gained more control, power, and knowledge (Allio, 2013; Carter, 2013). As a result, leadership perspectives that require leaders to command and control others have become

outdated (Anderson et al., 2016; Latham, 2014). The role of leadership requires guiding, directing, empowering, and developing followers to achieve goals and sustain performance (Allio, 2013; Carter, 2013).

Great Man Theory

In the 1840s, before the formal study of leadership began, the great man theory was the accepted view of leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008; Hoffman et al., 2011; Northouse, 2016). This theory developed from the personal beliefs of society at the time (Hoffman et al., 2011; Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Society believed people could not develop leadership skills through training or mentorship, and that leaders were born, not made (Bass & Bass, 2008; Hoffman et al., 2011; Lord et al., 2017). The main idea of the great man theory is that leadership should be reserved for a select few born with special attributes (Hoffman et al., 2011). Also, the theory was the accepted view of leadership from the 1840s until the early twentieth century because women were not allowed to hold leadership roles and because of a lack of empirical studies on leadership during this period (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016).

A study by Galton (1869) on the great man theory reinforced the view that leaders are born and not made. Galton (1869) concluded leaders have special attributes that are passed genetically from parent to child. Therefore, leadership should be reserved for those that possess the right genes (Northouse, 2016). Galton's work echoed the writings of Thomas Carlyle, a prominent writer of the 1800s (Hoffman et al., 2011; Northouse, 2016). Carlyle believed leaders were predetermined from birth and great leaders could be identified by looking at military, social, and political heroes (Hoffman et al., 2011; Lord et al., 2017).

Trait Theories

In the 1930s, researchers produced the first formal studies of leadership (Northouse, 2016). Turning the great man theory into principle, the idea that leaders are born with special attributes became the main premise of the trait theory (Hoffman et al., 2011; Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Trait theory research focuses on identifying the traits and personality characteristics that would define a born leader (Colbert et al., 2012; Hoffman et al., 2011; Lord et al., 2017).

By the 1940s, trait theory research failed to produce a list of traits that would universally define a born leader (Colbert et al., 2012; Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Research conducted by Stogdill (1948) was the first to challenge trait theory and conclude there was no one set of traits that defined who should lead across a variety of contexts. Stogdill's study proposed that traits necessary in one context may differ in another (Northouse, 2016). Consequently, his research changed the way leadership was conceptualized by modifying trait theory to include the consideration of context in defining necessary leadership traits (Colbert et al., 2012; Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Stogdill's research became the basis for future leadership theory on behaviors and situations (Northouse, 2016).

Stogdill presented a list of eight traits that represented how people became leaders within a situation (Northouse, 2016). These eight traits were intelligence, self-confidence, sociability, responsibility, insight, alertness, persistence, and initiative (Northouse, 2016). Stogdill (1974) went on to publish a second study adding tolerance, influence, achievement, and cooperativeness to the list of traits a leader should possess.

A few years after Stogdill's initial study, Mann (1959) published a similar study differentiating the traits of leaders from non-leaders. Mann claimed that masculinity, adjustment,

intelligence, conservatism and dominance were necessary leadership traits (Northouse, 2016). Table 1 lists later studies that produced variations of the original trait list identified by Mann and Stogdill (Northouse, 2016).

Table 1

Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord et al. (1986)	Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)
Intelligence	Intelligence	Achievement	Intelligence	Drive
Alertness	Masculinity	Persistence	Masculinity	Motivation
Insight	Adjustment	Insight	Dominance	Integrity
Responsibility	Dominance	Initiative		Confidence
Initiative	Extroversion	Self-confidence		Cognitive ability
Persistence	Conservatism	Responsibility		Task knowledge
Self-confidence		Cooperativeness		
Sociability		Tolerance		
		Influence		
		Sociability		

Note. Adapted from Northouse, P. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage. Copyright 2016 by Sage.

In the 1990s, researchers modified trait theory again and proposed that leaders can be born or made (Northouse, 2016; Zhu et al., 2019). A study conducted by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) argued there are distinct trait differences in leaders and non-leaders. Still, individuals who want to become leaders can be successful by developing the traits necessary to lead (Hoffman et al., 2011; Northouse, 2016). Kirkpatrick and Locke's research changed societal views from believing leadership is only for a select few to a view that leadership ability could be developed through training and education (Northouse, 2016).

A century of trait theory research provides practitioners with a variety of traits to look for in leaders and those who desire to lead (Northouse, 2016; Zhu et al., 2019). A strength of trait theory is its focus on a leader's role in the leadership process (Northouse, 2016). In contrast, a

criticism of trait theory is that despite the volume of research published, researchers have failed to identify a conclusive set of universal leadership traits (Northouse, 2016). Also, trait theory is criticized for not considering followers in the leadership process (Northouse, 2016). Therefore, at best, trait theory has resulted in lists of traits that are subjective in nature (Northouse, 2016; Nunes et al., 2011).

Skills Approach

The skills approach echoes the work of Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) by proposing that leadership ability can be developed. Conversely, unlike trait theories, the skills approach focuses on identifying a set of skills leaders can develop (Northouse, 2016).

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) proposed that effective leadership was achieved by developing skills in three areas: technical, human, and conceptual. They concluded that anyone can develop leadership skills in these three areas regardless of personality or innate qualities (Northouse, 2016), and that all skill areas were important for effective leadership. Still, leaders should focus development on the skill areas most critical to their role (Northouse, 2016).

The skills approach advises at the frontline-level of leadership, and that it is important to develop human and technical skills (Northouse, 2016). At the mid-level leadership level, the skills approach proposed that all three skill areas were important to develop (Northouse, 2016). At the highest levels of leadership, the skills approach proposed that development should be focused on human and conceptual skills (Northouse, 2016).

Since Katz and Lazarsfeld's original research, the skills approach has expanded. The names of the categories of skills have changed many times over and the focus of research has expanded from three categories to five (Northouse, 2016). Presently, theorists of the skills

approach have widened their focus to consider the impact of context, a leader's career experience, attributes, and the outcomes a leader receives from followers (Northouse, 2016).

The skills approach opens leadership to anyone willing to develop and learn the skills necessary to be effective (Northouse, 2016). It is praised for providing explanations of what skills are required for effectiveness at each level of leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Even so, the skills approach is criticized for its broad scope (Northouse, 2016). Some critics argue it overreaches into areas of focus beyond leadership, such as conflict resolution, creativity, motivation, and personality theory (Northouse, 2016). Also, some criticize the approach for failing to explain how development of the three skill areas guarantees leadership success (Northouse, 2016). Last, researchers have primarily conducted studies on the approach in military settings causing some to question the generalizability and applicability of the approach to other industries and types of organizations (Northouse, 2016).

Behavioral Theories

Unlike trait theories and the skills approach, behavioral theories focus on how a leader behaves (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Behavioral theories expand views of leadership by taking followers and context into consideration (Northouse, 2016; Nunes et al., 2011).

In the 1940s, studies conducted by Ohio State University and the University of Michigan proposed that actions of a leader should be considered (Northouse, 2016; Nunes et al., 2011). A group of researchers at Ohio State University concluded that leadership can be categorized into two sets of behaviors: task-oriented and relationship-oriented (Northouse, 2016). Through these two categories, leaders influence others to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2016).

At the same time, a group of researchers at the University of Michigan, conducting similar studies, concluded that leadership can be categorized into two similar sets of behaviors:

employee orientation and production orientation (Northouse, 2016). Like the study conducted at Ohio State University, researchers at the University of Michigan defined employee orientation as focused on relationship and production orientation as focused on tasks (Northouse, 2016). On the contrary, unlike the study conducted at Ohio State University, researchers at the University of Michigan argued that leaders excel at either being relationship-oriented or task-oriented, not both (Northouse, 2016). Additional studies have found that a leader can excel at both simultaneously (Northouse, 2016).

Blake and Mouton (1964) expanded behavioral theory by renaming the two categories of behaviors identified in previous studies and developed five associated leadership styles. Each leadership style defined the level of a leader's orientation towards people or results (Northouse, 2016). Blake and Mouton's five leadership styles were the following: authority-compliance (high concern for tasks, low concern for people); country-club management (low concern for tasks, high concern for people); impoverished management (low concern for both tasks and people); middle-of-the-road management (medium concern for both task and people); and team management (high concern for both tasks and people). Blake and Mouton (1964) put their findings into a model called the managerial grid that assigned numerical scores for different levels of concern for results and for people (Northouse, 2016).

Behavioral theorists take context and followers into consideration in the leadership process, changing how leadership is conceptualized (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). On the other hand, behavioral theories are not without criticism (Northouse, 2016). Critics argue that behavioral theorists have not considered leadership outcomes such as employee engagement, satisfaction levels, and worker productivity (Northouse, 2016). Also, behavioral theories have

been criticized for failing to provide a universal set of leadership behaviors that define who should lead across a variety of contexts (Gupta & Singh, 2013; Northouse, 2016).

Contingency Theory

In the 1960s, research by Fielder extended the skills approach by theorizing that leadership requires different actions in different contexts (Lord et al., 2017; Nunes et al., 2011). The main idea of contingency theory is that different leadership styles, actions, and behaviors are needed based on the context and requirements of a role (Andibo, 2012; Northouse, 2016). Contingency theory was the first leadership theory to take a leader's role, the role of followers, and the organizational context into consideration (Andibo, 2012; Nunes et al., 2011). Also, Fielder's work was first to claim there is no universal leadership style, set of leadership skills, traits, or behaviors effective across all contexts (Lord et al., 2017; Nunes et al., 2011).

Situational Theories

Extending contingency theory, the idea that leaders should act according to a context and be flexible in their leadership style defines situational leadership theory (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Northouse, 2016). Like contingency theory, situational leadership theorists argue that a leader should respond to followers (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). In contrast, unlike contingency theory, situational leadership focuses on the development level of followers, instead of a follower's role (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Situational theorists proposed that a leader should lead through one of four leadership styles depending on a follower's development level (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996). In Blanchard and Hersey's (1996) initial study, the four leadership styles were telling, participating, selling, and delegating. Since then, the authors have updated the names of the four leadership styles to delegating, supporting, coaching,

and directing (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). These were included in a situational leadership model called the SLII model (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016).

In the SLII model, Hersey et al. (2012) suggested that an approach to leadership had two dimensions—directive leadership and supportive leadership. The SLII model proposed that a leader must analyze their context to determine which dimension was most appropriate to lead through (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). Moreover, to determine which dimension was best fit to lead through, a leader must consider a follower's maturity and commitment level to a specific task (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). Hersey et al. (2012) proposed that follower needs and organizational environments change over time. Therefore, a leader's approach to leadership should be adaptable to changing situations, and effective leaders are those who can flex their leadership approach based on the contextual factors that impact a leadership environment (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016).

A leader's style is the way a leader influences people to complete tasks and achieve goals (Northouse, 2016). Leading through a directive leadership style is characterized as directing others in an authoritative way (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). A directive leader provides instructions to others, determines the roles of members on a team, decides which goals and tasks a team will achieve, and determines how a team will work together in a set timeframe (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). Moreover, directive leaders influence through position and hold formal authority of a group (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016).

On the other hand, a supporting leadership style is characterized as a leader who empowers others and supports others' growth and development (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). Supportive leaders create open dialogue with followers and show empathy and social support (Northouse, 2016). Also, supportive leaders influence by gaining buy-in, asking for

feedback, showing vulnerability and emotion, and actively listening to others (Northouse, 2016). Supportive leaders are likely to have authority because they are respected for their intrapersonal skills, unlike a directive leader who often has formal authority based on a title or position (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016).

The SLII model of situational leadership proposed that the two leadership dimensions of directive and supporting could be further categorized into four different styles (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). These four styles each contained a unique set of behaviors (Hersey et al., 2012; Northouse, 2016). The S1 style, called a directing style, was defined as high directive, low supportive. The S2 style, called a coaching style, was defined as high directive, high supportive. The S3 style, called a supporting style, was defined as low directive, high supportive. Last, the S4 style, called a delegating style, was defined as low directive, low supporting (Hersey et al., 2012).

In addition to determining the most appropriate leadership style, situational leadership theory considers followers' maturity or development level (Hersey et al., 2012). According to situational theory, understanding the extent to which a follower mastered a specific task and committed to a task determines a development level of high or low (Hersey et al., 2012). The level is high if the follower has mastered a task and is highly committed to an assigned task (Hersey et al., 2012). In comparison, the level is low or developing if the follower has minimum mastery of a task but is highly committed to achieving a task assigned. Importantly, development levels in situational leadership theory vary based on a specific goal or task (Hersey et al., 2012). Therefore, it is common for a follower to have a high development level on some tasks and a developing or low development level on others (Hersey et al., 2012).

In the SLII model, development level was further broken into four categories—D1 to D4 (Hersey et al., 2012). The D1 level was high commitment and low competence. The D2 level was low commitment and some competence. The D3 level was variable commitment and high competence. Finally, D4 level was high commitment and high competence (Hersey et al., 2012). According to Hersey et al. (2012), followers moved along the development continuum from low to high based on the task or goal assigned. Thus, effective leaders could both evaluate where followers were on the development continuum and adapt their style (Hersey et al., 2012).

Unlike other leadership theories that are abstract and descriptive, situational leadership is recognized as practical and prescriptive (Northouse, 2016). The SLII model clearly defines actions a leader should or should not take based on the situation (Northouse, 2016). In addition, situational leadership theory provides guidelines for leaders to follow instead of a set of conceptual, philosophical principles that are difficult to translate into an organizational context (Northouse, 2016).

A strength of situational leadership is its supporters' claim that there is no universal style or approach to leadership effective in all situations (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Situational leadership theorists stress that leaders need to be flexible in their approach and consider not just themselves, but also contextual factors and followers' needs (Northouse, 2016). Hersey et al. (2012) pointed out that followers and a context are important to leadership, differing from other leadership theories that focus solely on the leader alone. Also, situational leadership theory emphasizes the role of followers (Northouse, 2016). Situational leadership theorists propose every follower is unique, has different goals, and may be on different development levels (Northouse, 2016). Therefore, they argue that effective leadership and

influence occurs when a leader understands the factors outside of themselves that impact the leadership environment (Hersey et al., 2012).

Although situational leadership theory has proven to be useful, it is not without limitations (Northouse, 2016). One of the criticisms of situational leadership is that despite its popularity there have been relatively few studies that test the theory's premises and assumptions (Northouse, 2016). According to Northouse (2016), situational leadership has been used as the theoretical framework for numerous doctoral dissertations, but more empirical studies are needed to test the theoretical basis of the model.

Another criticism of situational leadership theory is its subjectivity about how leaders determine the development level of followers (Northouse, 2016). Some critics claim the theory does not account for the development level of a leader and how this impacts a leaders' ability to determine a follower's development level (Northouse, 2016). Moreover, the descriptive language and characteristics of each development level have changed with each version of the theoretical framework with little explanation from authors (Northouse, 2016). For example, the 2012 study by Hersey et al. does not provide an explanation of the theoretical basis for the changes made to the SLII model (Northouse, 2016). Thus, Hersey et al. (2012) call for more research on how to conceptualize the SLII model because of the lack of clarity of what defines commitment and competence objectively.

Situational leadership theory is also criticized for not considering demographic factors (Northouse, 2016). Critics argue that demographic factors could impact a leader's maturity and a follower's development level (Northouse, 2016). Further research is needed to determine how factors such as age, educational background, and gender impact development levels and match to a directive or supporting leadership approach (Northouse, 2016).

Additionally, there is no explanation in situational leadership models on whether a leader should adapt a leadership style to an overall group need or focus on learning how to adapt to each member of a team (Northouse, 2016). This lack of clarity can be overwhelming and unrealistic for a leader leading a large team (Northouse, 2016).

Last, the questionnaire assessment developed to measure situational leadership has been criticized for being biased toward the four leadership styles of the SLII model (Northouse, 2016). Critics claim that if the questionnaire only measures the four leadership styles from the SLII model, there is no opportunity to assess if there are different leadership styles outside the model that followers need (Northouse, 2016).

Path-Goal Theory

In the 1970s, path-goal theory emerged as an alternate view of leadership (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016). Path-goal theory incorporates ideas from behavioral and situational theories proposing a leader's actions should match a context (Hughes et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016). However, unlike previous theories, path-goal theorists focus on identifying the motivations of followers and do not focus on a leader's role in the leadership process (MacDonald & Luque, 2013). Path-goal theorists claim that how a leader rewards, communicates, and eliminates obstacles in relation to followers determines performance (House, 1996; Hughes et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2016). Moreover, path-goal theorists suggest that leaders must understand follower motivations to be effective (House, 1996; Hughes et al., 2015).

House and Mitchell's (1974) study added a significant contribution to path-goal theory, claiming that motivation is increased when a leader provides rewards to followers (Hughes et al., 2015; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). House and Mitchell's work also stated that a leader's primary responsibility is to remove obstacles preventing followers from accomplishing goals and

to direct others through coaching (MacDonald & Luque, 2013; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Path-goal theorists seeks to explain how leaders can influence followers, predict behaviors, and analyze performance (MacDonald & Luque, 2013). According to the theory, leadership effectiveness is achieved when a leader chooses a leadership style that matches the motivations of followers (MacDonald & Luque, 2013; Northouse, 2016). House's study provides four leadership styles a leader can choose depending on the needs of followers: achievement-oriented, supportive, directive, and participative (Phillips et al., 2016).

An achievement-oriented leader sets goals and challenges followers to work at their highest performance level (House, 1996; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Achievement-oriented leaders trust followers and believe in their skill levels. Consequently, achievement-oriented leaders have a high focus on results (House, 1996; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Therefore, an achievement-oriented leadership style is best used when followers have a high skill level and results can be measured (House, 1996; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011).

In contrast, supportive leaders have a high concern for people and relationships (House, 1996; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Supportive leaders influence and motivate followers by gaining commitment through relationships (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Therefore, a supportive leadership style is best used when followers have roles with high stress (Northouse, 2016).

On the other hand, directive leaders have a high concern for tasks and focus on creating structure for a team (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Directive leaders influence and motivate followers by providing clarity and direction (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Thus, a directive leadership style is best used

when followers lack certainty or clarity about how to achieve goals or what specific tasks to achieve (Northouse, 2016).

Last, participative leaders motivate and influence followers by creating a shared leadership environment (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Participative leaders include followers in the decision-making process, creating trust and mutual respect (House, 1996; Northouse, 2016; Saccomano & Pinto-Zipp, 2011). Therefore, a participative leadership style is best used when followers have expertise and input to share on tasks and goals (Northouse, 2016).

Since House and Mitchell's (1974) study, additional leadership styles have been added to path-goal theory, including work facilitation, group-oriented decision-making process, value-based leadership, and work-group representation and networking (MacDonald & Luque, 2013; Northouse, 2016). Although the number of leadership styles have increased, the focus of path-goal theory remains the same (Northouse, 2016).

A strength of path-goal theory is the acknowledgement that leadership behavior impacts follower performance and satisfaction levels (Northouse, 2016). Also, path-goal theory was the first to incorporate motivational theories into the field of leadership (Northouse, 2016). The theory situates followers' needs and motivations at the center of the leadership process, which deviates from previous theories that disregard followers (MacDonald & Luque, 2013; Northouse, 2016).

Critics argue that path-goal theory is too complex (Northouse, 2016). Choosing which leadership style to choose to match a follower's motivations is subjective and confusing (Northouse, 2016). In addition, path-goal studies have produced limited results in support of the theory (Northouse, 2016). Research on path-goal theory has been skewed toward a focus on

directive and supportive leadership styles, leaving a void about the other styles identified by House's work (Northouse, 2016). Finally, path-goal theory has been criticized for viewing leadership as a one-way relationship—the leader's style affects the followers, but it fails to account for how followers may impact the leader (Northouse, 2016).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

Differing from other leadership theories, leader-member exchange theorists conceptualize leadership as a process occurring in the relational dynamic between leader and follower (Avolio et al., 2009; Lord et al., 2017). Leader-member-exchange theory emphasizes a requirement to treat each follower as an individual with unique needs, unlike other leadership theories that view followers the same (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016).

Leader-member exchange theory proposes that a team has two types of relational dynamics between leader and follower—as either an in-group or out-group dynamic (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). In-group followers have a close relationship with a leader and receive more communication, special treatment, and information (Northouse, 2016). In contrast, out-group followers are treated with lower concern and do not have a close relationship or high involvement with a leader or a team (Northouse, 2016).

Leader-member exchange theorists argue that the quality of the relationship between a leader and follower determines follower performance and satisfaction level (Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2016). Also, theorists argue that followers who feel empowered have a higher quality of relationship with a leader that affects satisfaction levels and follower commitment (Lord et al., 2017). Therefore, to achieve goals and increase performance, a leader should create an in-group relationship with every follower (Northouse, 2016).

Leader-member exchange theory describes the leadership process differently from other leadership theories by placing the relationship between a leader and follower at the center (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016). This is a strength of the theory and is helpful for leaders to understand how individual relationships with followers impact performance (Northouse, 2016). Another strength of leader-member exchange theory is its highlight of how communication between a leader and follower impacts the quality of the relationship (Northouse, 2016). Leader-member exchange theory was first to point out the relationship between communication and trust in a team (Northouse, 2016). In addition, leader-member exchange theory is practical and easy for a leader to understand in comparison to more complex theories (Northouse, 2016).

In contrast, critics argue that leader-member exchange theory does not take the idea of societal fairness into consideration (Northouse, 2016). They contend that societal norms are to treat everyone equally, which is the opposite of the view of leader-member exchange theory (Northouse, 2016). Critics also maintain that leader-member exchange theory fails to explain how to create in-group relationships with followers (Northouse, 2016). What defines a high-quality relationship is left up to a leader's interpretation, which leaves opportunity for error and subjectivity (Northouse, 2016). In addition, leader-member exchange theory is limited in its explanation of how to measure an in-group or out-group relationship and how other factors impact a leader-follower relationship (Northouse, 2016).

Transformational Theory

Since the 1980s, transformational theory has become the most popular and widely practiced leadership theory (Dionne et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). The main idea of transformational theory is that leaders can change their behavior and inspire actions in others

(Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016). Like path-goal theory and leader-member-exchange theory, transformational theorists proffer that relationships, motivations, and emotions play a factor in goal achievement (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016). In addition, transformational leadership focuses on a leader's affective elements and charisma (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016).

The rise of transformational leadership may be due to the change in the way an organization works and its focus on followers (Lord et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2019). Transformational leadership focuses on viewing followers holistically and understanding follower motivation and needs (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016). Also, transformational leadership emphasizes understanding how to change not only individuals but also organizations and systems (Avolio et al., 2009; Brown & Posner, 2001; Northouse, 2016).

Downton (1973) and Burns (1978) are the authors of transformational leadership theory. Burns's (1978) study presented two types of leadership: transformational and transactional. Transactional leadership is an exchange between leader and follower. Leaders provide rewards while followers provide work accomplishments (Northouse, 2016; Rosch, 2018). Transformational leadership is created by developing a relationship between leader and follower. Transformational leaders connect with followers, build trust and mutual respect resulting in work accomplishments (Northouse, 2016; Rosch, 2018).

Transformational leadership is connected to charismatic leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016). House argued that charismatic leaders have personality characteristics that allow them to transform people and organizations (Lord et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2019). Bass's (1985) study extended the work of House and Mitchell (1974) proposing that transformational

leaders need to be charismatic to be effective. Since then, charismatic and transformational leadership theory have become intertwined (Northouse, 2016).

A strength of transformational leadership is its popularity in large organizations around the world, and this is growing interest in the theory (Northouse, 2016). Another strength of transformational leadership is that it highlights the importance of quality relationships between a leader and follower (Northouse, 2016; Rosch, 2018). Also, transformational leadership emphasizes follower wants and needs, along with follower values, which expands previous views of leadership (Northouse, 2016; Rosch, 2018).

However, some criticize transformational leadership for its lack of clarity about how a leader can become a transformational leader (Northouse, 2016). A questionnaire to measure transformational leadership has been developed, but researchers challenge the validity of the instrument (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, transformational leadership has been criticized for its similarities to trait theories and its dismissal of the ability for a leader to develop behaviors and skills to become more transformational (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership builds upon the great man theory and the belief that leadership is reserved for a select few. Moreover, there is little empirical evidence that validates the effectiveness of transformational leadership and it can be abused by unethical leaders (Northouse, 2016).

Authentic Leadership

In the 1990s and early 2000s, society had high interest in the trustworthiness of leaders because of public corporate scandals like Enron and the events of September 11, 2001 (Auger, 2014). Demanding to have more trust in leaders resulted in the rise in popularity of authentic leadership (Auger, 2014; Day et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). The main idea of authentic leadership is that leaders should be transparent and sincere in leading and communicating with

others (Avolio et al., 2009; Day et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). Although authentic leadership has not been widely researched, its popularity as a theory has made it an important part of the history of leadership research and programming (Day et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016).

Authentic leadership has been loosely defined by different researchers (Avolio et al., 2009; Day et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). For example, Shamir and Eilam's (2005) work defined authentic leadership as a leader who leads from their heart and is genuine. In contrast, Eagly's (2005) study defined authentic leadership as leaders who master the leader-follower relationship. Still, a study by Avolio and Gardner (2005) defined authentic leadership as a lifelong process of self-development. In this process, a leader develops a strong sense of self and how to behave ethically (Avolio et al., 2009; Day et al., 2014).

Authentic leadership has two conceptual approaches: practical and theoretical (Northouse, 2016). The practical approach focuses on explaining how leaders can become true to themselves (Northouse, 2016). According to Northouse (2016), leaders should develop five qualities to become more authentic: purpose, relationship skill, value-centeredness, compassion, and self-discipline. On the other hand, the theoretical approach to authentic leadership focuses on why the theory is effective as a leadership style (Northouse, 2016). The theoretical approach claims that authentic leaders have self-awareness, balanced processing, an internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency developed over a lifetime (Northouse, 2016).

A strength of authentic leadership is that its adherents provide prescriptive ways that leaders can become more authentic (Northouse, 2016). Another strength of authentic leadership is its focus on morality and ethics, similar to the components of leadership in transformational leadership theory (Northouse, 2016). In addition, authentic leadership is praised for its recognition that leader development happens over time, not instantly (Northouse, 2016). Last, the

authentic leadership questionnaire (ALQ) presents a method to measure the authenticity of a leader, which is another strength of the theory (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016).

Conversely, authentic leadership is criticized for being underdeveloped and not substantiated by a large volume of research (Northouse, 2016). Despite the practicality of its questionnaire, some researchers argue that authentic leadership lacks clarity and question whether the theory is too abstract (Northouse, 2016). Also, authentic leadership fails to account for how authentic leaders impact organizational outcomes and performance (Northouse, 2016).

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership highlights the importance of ethics and acting for the common good rather than for a leader's personal desires and goals (Avolio et al., 2009; Liden et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). By providing this unique view of leadership, servant leadership focuses on leaders' actions, their concern for followers, and their ability to empathize with followers (Liden et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). Servant leaders place followers in high regard and act in response to followers' wants and needs, nurturing others rather than directing (Northouse, 2016).

Servant leadership has been loosely defined by several researchers but was originally defined by Robert Greenleaf, who compiled a list of characteristics that define a servant leader (Avolio et al., 2009; Liden et al., 2014). The 10 characteristics identified by Greenleaf were healing, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, commitment to the growth of people, listening, empathy, building community, awareness, and listening (Northouse, 2016). According to Greenleaf, these characteristics represent a human approach to leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2016). Greenleaf's (1970) study claimed that effective leaders should be concerned with the welfare of followers and driven by the need to help others. Since Greenleaf's original writings, the characteristics that define a servant leader have been modified. Russell and Stone

(2002) created a model of servant leadership that describes nine behaviors, 20 attributes, and 11 characteristics of servant leaders. Patterson (2003) extended the view of servant leadership by creating a model based on values instead of behaviors. Each of these models are based on the work of Greenleaf's 1970 study.

Servant leadership has both adherents and critics. Servant leadership has been praised for placing followers as the focus of the leadership process (Latham, 2014; Northouse, 2016). Also, servant leadership is praised for its view that leaders should not dominate or direct followers but instead allow followers to influence leaders (Northouse, 2016). Another strength of servant leadership is the measurement questionnaire by Liden et al. (2008), which reinforces components of servant leadership theory. However, servant leadership has also been criticized for defining leadership as serving others, which deviates from perspectives of other leadership theories (Northouse, 2016). Also, servant leadership theorists have not come to a consensus on defining what a servant leader is (Northouse, 2016). To add, although servant leadership is based on altruism, some researchers question the connection between serving followers and leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Adaptive Leadership

Heifetz (1994) published *Leadership Without Easy Answers* that developed the theory of adaptive leadership. Heifetz's goal was to develop a theory that emphasized a leader's role in change (Northouse, 2016). Hence, the main idea of adaptive leadership is that leaders are responsible for helping others adapt to change (Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leaders take action to help followers through challenging, changing situations (Allio, 2013; Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leadership focuses on how leaders help followers and support others rather than focusing on the leader as the center of the leadership process (Heifetz, 1994; Northouse, 2016).

Moreover, based on the writings of Heifetz (1994), adaptive leadership theorists advocate that leaders should focus on actions that motivate, mobilize, orient, organize, and focus the attention of others.

Adaptive leadership incorporates elements from other leadership theories, such as trait, behavioral, and situational theories (Northouse, 2016). Also, adaptive leadership theory views leadership from several perspectives: systematic, psychotherapeutic, biological, and service oriented (Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leadership theory proposes that followers face challenges because of the system and context they operate in (Northouse, 2016). From a psychotherapeutic perspective, adaptive leadership suggests that leaders are responsible for creating a supportive environment to allow followers to accomplish a goal (Northouse, 2016). A biological perspective proposes that internal and external factors cause followers to adapt and change (Northouse, 2016). Last, a service orientation view contends that leaders are responsible for identifying problems and developing solutions to the challenges followers face (Northouse, 2016).

Heifetz's (1994) study found that adaptive leadership involves identifying challenges in a context, behaving based on the challenges identified, and helping others to adapt to change. Heifetz (1994) concluded that the leadership process is complex and involves multiple dimensions. Therefore, adaptive leaders should continually adjust to a context and help others through challenging situations (Heifetz, 1994).

A strength of adaptive leadership is its emphasis that leadership is not a one-time event (Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leadership theorists acknowledge that leadership is complex and multilayered (Northouse, 2016). Another strength of adaptive leadership theory is that it highlights of the role of followers and contexts in relation to the leader (Northouse, 2016). According to adaptive leadership theory, leaders must react and adapt based on a situation and

challenges followers face, instead of followers adapting to a leader (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, adaptive leadership takes a holistic view about how leaders should interact with followers and considers four different viewpoints (Northouse, 2016). Last, adaptive leadership is practical, describing the behaviors a leader should take based on the challenge identified (Northouse, 2016).

In comparison to other leadership theories discussed, adaptive leadership is underdeveloped and has not been studied enough to provide empirical evidence of its validity (Northouse, 2016). Adaptive leadership theory needs additional research to provide clarity to its proposed model (Northouse, 2016). Also, some researchers have criticized adaptive leadership for being too broad in scope because the theory incorporates elements from several other fields of study (Northouse, 2016). Finally, adaptive leadership theorists fail to acknowledge the relationship between the leadership values they propose and societal values (Northouse, 2016).

Future of Leadership Theory

In summary, leadership is a topic that appeals to individuals, academic institutions, researchers, practitioners, and organizations alike, which has resulted in a multitude of books, articles, theories, and journals since the start of formal study in the 1930s (Northouse, 2016). Researchers have studied leadership in almost every context and in organizations large and small (King & Nesbit, 2013). Even so, researchers and practitioners continue to seek better understanding of the essence of leadership (King & Nesbit, 2013; Latham, 2014; Northouse, 2016). Thus far, studies have only agreed that the process of leadership is complex with many dimensions (King & Nesbit, 2013; Latham, 2014; Northouse, 2016).

This section reviewed the evolution of leadership theories, from the great man theory up to the present-day adaptive leadership theory. Although leadership theories have evolved, each

has importance in providing guidance and explanation to who should lead and how (Allio, 2013). As workplaces becomes more complex and the expectations of followers change, leadership theory will undoubtedly continue to evolve (Ardichvili et al., 2016). In addition, as practitioners move away from traditional leadership theories, new perspectives on leadership will develop to resonate with modern leaders who face different challenges than leaders of past, such as globalization and rapid change (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Latham, 2014; Peterlin, 2016).

Leadership Development

Defining Leadership Development

Despite the popularity of leadership training, there is much criticism of the effectiveness of programs in improving performance and changing behavior (Abrell et al., 2011; Gupta & Singh, 2013; Seidle et al., 2016). Some of this criticism comes from the lack of understanding what leadership development is and what it is not (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014). In addition, past studies have pointed out that the lack of clarity about the definition of leadership development contributes to the challenge of showing program effectiveness (King & Nesbit, 2013).

In the literature the term *leadership development* is often used synonymously with the term *leader development* (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017). But there are differences between the two terms that are critical to understand (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017). The main difference between leader development and leadership development is the intended audience (Lacerenza et al., 2017). In the literature, *leader development* is defined as efforts to develop the leadership skills of an individual (Lacerenza et al., 2017). In contrast, the term *leadership development* is defined as efforts and systematic processes to develop leadership skills within groups (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014).

Hence, leadership development is complex and considers contextual needs and human relationships between individuals and groups of people (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Brown & Posner, 2001; King & Nesbit, 2013). According to Day et al. (2014), leadership development is often overly simplified to denote selecting and gaining buy-in on a leadership theory. However, leadership development is more than the selection of theory, it is a systematic process of understanding an organization's goals (Ardichvili et al., 2016; McKim & Velez, 2017). Additionally, effective leadership development considers the situational needs of participants and incorporates a curriculum that addresses the identified needs (King & Nesbit, 2013). Moreover, to implement an effective leadership development program, the science and strategy of development theory must be considered (Day et al., 2014).

How leadership development is implemented in a workplace varies (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017; McKim & Velez, 2017). In some organizations, leadership development consists of a series of self-development activities, such as reading materials from a recommended reading list (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017; McKim & Velez, 2017). In other instances, classroom training is the standard method. (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017). Still, in some workplaces, leadership development continues to be focused on long-term plans for leaders that incorporate mentoring and coaching (Kim & Thompson, 2012; McKim & Velez, 2017). Nevertheless, no matter how efforts and methods are implemented, the goal of all leadership development is to increase leadership skills, change behaviors, and improve performance (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Glamuzina, 2015; Sørensen, 2017).

Implementing Leadership Development

Leadership development is implemented through a variety of methods—classroom training, workplace development, coaching, mentoring, and feedback (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Collinson & Tourish, 2015). According to Kirchner and Akdere (2014), leadership training is not restricted to one type of environment or location, it occurs anywhere and at any time.

Classroom Training. Training in a face-to-face environment can be an effective method for teaching leadership topics (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017). However, often classroom training fails to change behavior or increase leadership skills because the learning environment is different from a learner's everyday context (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Therefore, to close the gap between face-to-face training and the everyday environment, classroom training should ideally be used in combination with other methods of leadership development to increase the training's effectiveness (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

When leadership development is implemented through classroom training, the content that is taught should be relevant, timely, and explained in a context of the trainee's normal working environment (Broucker, 2015; Cowman & McCarthy, 2016; Grandy & Holton, 2013). Hence, classroom training should be used after participants have gained an understanding of the specific challenges of their organizational roles to facilitate meaningful discussions and increase leadership skills (Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Although classroom training has produced mixed results, if appropriately implemented, this method has a place in leadership development (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Face-to-face training

can be an effective method for creating a learning environment, teaching content, and scaling leadership programs to large numbers of people at one time (Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the costs to set up classroom trainings—travel expenses, securing a location, food and beverage costs, printing, and hiring and scheduling a facilitator—has resulted in a decline of the method (Freifeld, 2018). In 1995, 85% of all training was delivered through face-to-face training (Day, 2000). Currently, less than 35.5% of all training is delivered in a classroom format (Freifeld, 2018).

Workplace Development. Past studies found that workplace development methods—on-the-job training, action learning, and day-to-day work experiences—have been effective in developing leadership skills (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Heslin & Keating, 2017; Holt et al., 2018). According to Day et al. (2014), the most effective way to develop leadership skills is in the context of a normal work environment. According to Brown and Posner (2001), leaders learn through the observation of others, trial and error, and training. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the learning occurs through on-the-job training and observation (Brown & Posner, 2001).

On-the-job training refers to the development of skills at the actual job site that are necessary to successfully perform a job (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Heslin & Keating, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017). On-the-job training is used to describe several types of activities, including just-in-time training, development or "stretch" assignments, personal development plans, job enrichment, and job rotation (Hutchinson, 2017; McNamara et al., 2014; Seidle et al., 2016).

Just-in-time training refers to skill development that occurs when a situation or challenge arises (Lacerenza et al., 2017). The benefit of just-in-time training is that it is based on the most immediate needs of a participant (Kim & Thompson, 2012). Therefore, content is relevant and

timely, increasing the likelihood new knowledge will be applied (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Just-in-time training is commonly delivered though classroom training, webinars, video, or feedback (Kim & Thompson, 2012; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Development assignments, sometimes referred to as "stretch" assignments, are assigned to an individual to grow leadership skills (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Kim & Thompson, 2012). A development assignment extends an individual's role and provides an opportunity to learn and practice new skills (Holt et al., 2018). Even so, if a participant in a development assignment does not receive adequate support throughout the project, poor outcomes and lower job satisfaction can result (Bush & Glover, 2004; Day et al., 2014).

Implementing a development assignment for an individual is an inexpensive form of leadership development (Bush & Glover, 2004; Day et al., 2014). Also, designing a development assignment is easy once skill areas have been identified for the specific trainee (Kim & Thompson, 2012). Moreover, development assignments are often included in a personal development plan, an individual action plan a learner develops on their own based on the skill areas they want to grow (Kim & Thompson, 2012; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Another method of workplace development is job enrichment and job rotation (Kim & Thompson, 2012). Job rotation temporarily changes the role of an individual providing exposure to a different position with different tasks (Allen & Hartman, 2008). Similarly, job enrichment extends an individual's current role by changing the scope, responsibilities, or tasks of a position (Allen & Hartman, 2008; Kim & Thompson, 2012). Both job enrichment and job rotation are commonly utilized in the medical, manufacturing, and banking industries (Allen & Hartman, 2008).

Past studies have shown that action learning is another effective tool in developing effective leaders (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Leonard & Lang, 2010; Marquardt & Banks, 2010). Unlike other forms of workplace development, participants choose the objectives of action learning projects, not facilitators or managers (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Action learning is a learning project or process designed to engage participants in solving business challenges and developing actionable solutions (Ardichvili et al., 2016). According to Conger and Toegel (2003) and Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004), the process of action learning includes a project team, learning by doing, selecting a business challenge to solve, and developing and presenting solutions to decision makers in the organization. The goal of action learning is to build leadership skills in critical thinking and analysis, communication skills, and problem solving (Marquardt & Banks, 2010).

Over the last decade, interest in action learning has grown and is a popular way to develop leadership in a workplace (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Reasons why action learning is a popular method include its focus on active learning and its ability to produce clear, positive results from projects (Conger & Toegel, 2003; Marquardt & Banks, 2010). In addition, it is easy for learners to understand the connection between an action learning project and the challenges faced in a role (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Conger & Toegel, 2003). Moreover, action learning allows participants to choose what challenge to solve and the power to control the learning process (Conger & Toegel, 2003).

Despite the popularity of action learning, the method is not without criticism (Leonard & Marquardt, 2010; Marquardt & Banks, 2010). Action learning projects are typically based on a specific work context when a project is started and implemented with small groups or with individual leaders (Marquardt & Banks, 2010). Although this method increases the applicability

of development to a leader's current role, organizations struggle with scaling action learning initiatives across large groups of leaders (Leonard & Marquardt, 2010). Also, action learning projects take considerable time, effort, and expenses when financial resources may be unavailable (Leonard & Marquardt, 2010). In addition, most action learning projects are not evaluated because outcomes are individualized based on the project chosen by the participant (Leonard & Marquardt, 2010). To demonstrate the effectiveness of an action learning project, an evaluation of outcomes judged against business objectives needs to be part of an overall implementation plan (Ardichvili et al., 2016). When action learning includes evaluation and reflection, it is more effective (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Marquardt & Banks, 2010). According to Marquardt and Banks (2010), when action learning is appropriately implemented, participants develop leadership skills, and the returns far exceed costs.

Coaching and Mentoring. In the study of leadership development, the term *coaching* and *mentoring* are often used interchangeably (Day et al., 2014), but they are different (Day et al., 2014). A coaching relationship focuses on addressing an individual's role challenges and developing leadership skills (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014). Coaching is goal-focused and focuses on actionable solutions (Day et al., 2014; Kim & Thompson, 2012). As a method of leadership development, research on coaching has produced mixed results (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014). Some research has indicated coaching is not an effective method of leadership development (Day et al., 2014; Moen & Federici, 2012). Although coaching is widely used in organizations, there has been little evidence showing its value in developing leadership skills and is better categorized as a method of leader development (Ardichvili et al., 2016).

In contrast, there is some evidence that coaching is effective in helping individuals achieve goals, particularly at the executive level (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Also, some studies

have found that coaching provides one-on-one help to an individual struggling with aspects of a role (Lacerenza et al., 2017). The personalized focus of coaching can provide support to a leader where leadership training does not (Bond & Naughton, 2011). Coaching can help a leader better understand the content learned in a leadership program and how to apply concepts to an individual's role (Bond & Naughton, 2011). Finally, using coaching techniques, such as questioning, brainstorming, and solution development, can help a leader increase self-confidence and help to motivate a leader to perform (Bond & Naughton, 2011; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Even with limited evidence, mentoring is considered a more effective method of leadership development (Heslin & Keating, 2017; Kim & Thompson, 2012). Mentoring is a process of matching a less-experienced worker with a more-experienced worker, in the same or a higher role (Kim & Thompson, 2012; McNamara et al., 2014). Mentoring has been found to have benefits for a mentee, including leader identity development, self-development, and developing problem-solving skills and a better understanding of an organization (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Kim & Thompson, 2012). When the mentor has a higher, more responsible role, a mentee benefits from gaining exposure to a different role and provides an opportunity to make connections with others working in more senior positions (Kim & Thompson, 2012; Muir, 2014). From this perspective, mentoring is valuable to a leader and an organization (Kim & Thompson, 2012; Muir, 2014). At the same time, even though mentoring may be part of an overall leadership development strategy, it does not replace the need for formal training (Kim & Thompson, 2012).

Although mentoring has been found to be an effective method of leadership development, organizations need to consider the challenges that can arise in a mentoring relationship (Klinge, 2015; McDonald & Hite, 2005). According to McDonald and Hite (2005), a mentoring

relationship can cause harm when the goal is to change a mentee's attitudes or behaviors to fit into the status quo of an organization instead of growing leadership skills. Another challenge of mentoring is ensuring that a leader to be mentored is chosen based on fair criteria (Klinge, 2015; McDonald & Hite, 2005). Mentoring is often only available to those leaders who are favored within an organization or have strong internal networks, which may leave out underrepresented populations such as women and minority groups (Klinge, 2015; McDonald & Hite, 2005). Also, as virtual teams become more regularly used in the workplace, how to mentor across geographic distances and time zones is a challenge (Hart, 2016). Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal and are often built from friendships or networking (Hart, 2016). In a virtual environment, leaders may not have the face-to-face opportunities to build relationships with persons who could be potential mentors (Hart, 2016). Last, when implementing mentoring initiatives, organizations must ensure that mentors are not taking advantage of their role in the mentoring relationship because they are in a position of power. Abuse of power can result in co-dependency and inappropriate behavior between mentor and mentee resulting in a negative experience (McDonald & Hite, 2005). Organizations who consider these potential challenges upfront and determine ways to evaluate the progress of mentoring relationships can ensure the effectiveness of a mentoring program.

Feedback. In leadership development literature, feedback is a distinct and valuable method for providing perspective to leaders about skills and behavior (Abrell et al., 2011; Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Day et al., 2014). For feedback to be effective, it must be relevant, timely, specific, and delivered in a way that prompts discussion (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Day et al., 2014). Otherwise, feedback can cause confusion and frustration for a leader (Abrell et al.,

2011; Ashford & DeRue, 2012). In turn, when feedback is delivered appropriately, it is an effective means to increase leadership skills and change behaviors (Day et al., 2014).

Selecting Participants for Leadership Development

Leadership development is used to develop all levels of leaders, from frontline to executive (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Since challenges at each level of leadership differ, development should be tailored to each participant's role (Holt et al., 2018; Jasson & Govender, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Content in a leadership program should be timely and relevant, allowing participants to easily connect what is being taught to their work environment (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Bhatti et al., 2014). In addition, if development is designed to prepare leaders for future roles, how participants will use the knowledge and skills in a program should be clear (Broucker, 2015; Cowman & McCarthy, 2016; Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014).

In selecting who should receive leadership development, there are two different perspectives (Lester et al., 2011). One perspective is that all leaders should be developed (Jasson & Govender, 2017). Researchers argue that an organization benefits the most when all leaders receive development (Day et al., 2014; Lester et al., 2011). Additionally, according to Beer et al. (2016), organizations consist of systems that work together to achieve goals. From this perspective, for all systems to work together effectively, all leaders should be developed to maximize contribution and individual abilities (Lester et al., 2011).

In contrast, another perspective is that only carefully chosen leaders should participate in leadership development (Hutchinson, 2017). From this perspective, only leaders who have a positive attitude, a strong motivation to learn and potential for growth, and a strong regard for ethics should be offered development (Hutchinson, 2017).

According to Kirchner and Akdere (2014), what is more important than who can participate in leadership development is how an organization promotes individuals into leadership roles. Modern leadership requires leaders to adapt quickly to change and lead in complex environments (Holt et al., 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Latham, 2014). Still, many organizations have not changed promotion practices (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). In many organizations, promotions are based on how long an individual has been employed (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). Still other organizations promote based on how well individuals perform in a role (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). However, performance in a current role does not guarantee success in a future role (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014).

Therefore, in leadership programs, most often participants have obtained a leadership role by different methods (Kirchner & Akdere, 2014). As a result, researchers question whether the method of how a participant became a leader impacts the effectiveness of development efforts (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Researchers also question if there are differences in leadership outcomes between participants who have requested to receive development and participants who were mandated to attend training (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Cowman & McCarthy, 2016).

Critiques of Designing Leadership Training

In the literature, there is no universal model for designing leadership programs (Rosch, 2018; Sørensen, 2017). According to Bush and Glover (2004), although developing leadership skills is a top priority for organizations globally, there is a lack of research on how to tailor content to different contexts and levels of leadership. In addition, there has been little focus in the literature on connecting theory to the teaching of leadership (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Rosch, 2018; Seidle et al., 2016).

Leadership training is also criticized for the lack of consensus on how to develop the focus of content (Beer et al., 2016; Hutchinson, 2017; Pearce, 2007). According to Pearce (2007), content is often developed based on the roles of participants, the values or skills identified by an organization, or a specific leadership theory. Although each of these methods can result in an effective leadership program, researchers call for more studies on how to select and design content based on a specific audience and context (Hutchinson, 2017; Seidle et al., 2016).

Leadership training is primarily designed using obsolete development models, such as treating leadership as a top-down approach, taking the perspective that leaders should command and control followers (Kalman, 2012; Rowland, 2016; Wahat et al., 2013). Formal classroom training has been the focus for most leadership development, which takes learners away from their normal environment and treats learning as an isolated event (Beer et al., 2016). Neither of these methods have been proven to increase performance long-term (Beer et al., 2016).

Improving Leadership Training Design. To improve the design of leadership training programs, several researchers have suggested developing action-oriented programs that allow participants to work through challenges hands-on, translating theory into practice (Seidle et al., 2016). Sample recommendations are that leadership training should consider each context and what is required of participants to successfully lead (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Another recommendation is to use a 70-20-10 approach where 70% of the learning is on-the job, 20% is through coaching, mentoring, and feedback, and 10% is formal training (Hutchinson, 2017).

Another suggestion to improve leadership training is to make learning experiential (Wahat et al., 2013). Experiential learning allows participants to work through challenges and experience what it feels like to lead in a setting (Wahat et al., 2013). Also, instead of using a

classroom format, leadership training should occur in a participant's work environment (Hutchinson, 2017; McNamara et al., 2014). Experiential learning allows participants to see the connection between content and a role, which further improves leadership training (Wahat et al., 2013).

Researchers have concluded that the most effective way to improve leadership training design is to ensure that content is focused on participants' needs and an organization's goals (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Also, leadership training should have clear objectives and goals and demonstrate learning outcomes (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Although numerous topics can be included in a program, it is important for content to demonstrate how it can be applied after training is completed (Peterlin, 2016). Applying concepts learned in a program is critical to increasing leadership skills and changing behaviors long-term (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014).

Finally, studies have proposed that leadership training include ways for participants to learn from each other, discuss what they have learned, share stories, and provide examples based on experiences (Heslin & Keating, 2017). Moreover, allowing participants to learn from each other and to reflect on their development increases engagement and makes content practical (Heslin & Keating, 2017). Therefore, learning between participants turns training into an active process (Heslin & Keating, 2017).

Evaluating Success of Leadership Training. To determine the return on investment, leadership training should be evaluated for effectiveness in a systematic way (Brown et al., 2016; Holt et al., 2018; Seidle et al., 2016). Organizations can measure the success of leadership training by determining key performance goals and creating ways to evaluate and improve a program (Holt et al., 2018; Jasson & Govender, 2017; Karami, 2017). Also, programs can be

evaluated by determining learning outcomes, such as employee retention rates, changes in behavior, and the promotion rates of participants (Day et al., 2014; Karami, 2017). Last, leadership training programs should include comprehensive evaluations to determine if objectives have been met (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014).

Some studies suggest satisfaction surveys can be used to evaluate leadership training (Abrell et al., 2011; Lacerenza et al., 2017). In most instances when organizations use satisfaction surveys, the focus is on the overall experience instead of more important metrics, such as content relevance and the usefulness of the program to address the challenges faced (Phillips et al., 2016). Additionally, it is critical to measure learning outcomes regularly and over time and not treat evaluation as a one-time event (Abrell et al., 2011; Jasson & Govender, 2017). Factors such as learner motivation, readiness to lead, and learning agility contribute to participant satisfaction with leadership training and whether the content is applied after training is completed (Aziz & Selamat, 2016).

Studies indicate many organizations do not have a formal evaluation process in place for leadership training (Abrell et al., 2011; Ardichvili et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2016; Grimm et al., 2015). Yet, evaluating leadership efforts is critical to ensure that training addresses learner needs and an organization's goals (Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017; Jasson & Govender, 2017). Also, research indicates leadership development can improve the performance of participants and organizations (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Therefore, evaluating leadership training is important in determining the return on investment and quality improvement (Abrell et al., 2011; Avolio et al., 2016; Jasson & Govender, 2017).

The Future of Leadership Training. Although the practice of leadership development requires additional studies to demonstrate effective methods of designing, measuring, and

implementing programs, there are areas of agreement on the future of leadership training. For example, researchers have agreed that using multiple methods increases the effectiveness of leadership training (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Seidle et al., 2016). In addition, classroom training can be used in conjunction with workplace development methods to increase the application of concepts and engagement (Abrell et al., 2011; Lacerenza et al., 2017). At the same time, alternate methods of development—simulations, service learning, journaling, assessments, and networking—should be considered when designing leadership training to close the gap between classroom content and its application into a context (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Seidle et al., 2016).

Researchers also agree that development efforts should clearly demonstrate a connection between content and learner needs and which connect to an organization's goals (Abrell et al., 2011; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Seidle et al., 2016). Leadership training should be intentional and allow participants to learn through experiential methods (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Additionally, training should consider how to translate theory into practice instead of exposing learners to philosophical theories that may not fit into participants' contexts (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Another area of agreement is that the future of leadership training will recognize that development is not a one-time event, but something that occurs over time (Allio, 2013; Heslin & Keating, 2017). Therefore, leadership training should be part of greater strategy to develop leadership skills over the span of a career (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Holt et al., 2018; King & Nesbit, 2013).

Finally, studies agree there is a need to continue to refine the practice of leadership development (Culpin et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2018; King & Nesbit, 2013). Because there are no requirements or certifications for who can develop, sell, or teach leadership, program quality

varies (Ismail et al., 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017). There is more research needed on how to effectively structure leadership training, identifying differences between organizations that purchase content or services from an external vendor and organizations that build their own programs (Ismail et al., 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Above all, the future of leadership training recognizes that participants are faced with increased challenges different from the past, which requires programs to continuously update content to address learners' changing needs (Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Leadership Challenges

Generational Differences

In a 21st-century workplace, leaders must learn how to interact and lead multiple generations (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Anderson et al., 2016). As workplaces shift from being composed of one generation to the next, attitudes, expectations, and values change (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2014). In most workplaces, there are four generations in the workforce, each with different needs. Of these four generations, millennials are now the largest population (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2014).

Millennials bring different personalities and attitudes to a workplace, requiring leaders to change the way they communicate and influence followers (Anderson et al., 2016; Ardichvili et al., 2016). Also, millennials are tech-savvy and have different values about work than other generations, which leaders need to be taken into consideration (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Moreover, millennials grew up with technology and use it to communicate (Kaifi et al., 2012). To adapt to changes in communication, leaders of older generations often need to learn new technology, which can be difficult (Kaifi et al., 2012).

Equally important, millennials value work-life balance (Ferri-Reed, 2012). As a result, many millennials choose positions that allow them the freedom to pursue outside interests, unlike older generations who more highly value security (Ferri-Reed, 2012). In addition, millennials require a shared leadership environment where they have more control over decisions (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Ferri-Reed, 2012). Therefore, command and control leadership practices are obsolete and an unacceptable way to influence or lead (Anderson et al., 2016; Ardichvili et al., 2016).

Adapting to Change

Changing demographics and technology has increased the complexity in organizations across all contexts (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). Leading in a more complex environment requires skills to readily adapt to change (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). Understanding how to lead others through change and initiate change are critical skills in a leadership role (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). Although the types of change leaders face are varied, change impacts organizations across all industries (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). A rapidly changing workplace requires leaders to think and act differently to sustain performance (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). Yet, developing leadership skills in the midst of change is a challenge for many organizations (Lamm et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2016).

Transparency

Leadership in the 21st century also requires transparency because of the growth of social media and the increasing number of public scandals exposing unethical practices (Auger, 2014; Bennis, 2013; Press & Arnould, 2014). For organizations, it is no longer enough to report positive financial results, there is a public expectation of transparency to report how results have been achieved (Auger, 2014; Farrell, 2016). This is a shift from the perspective that

organizations should only report positive results even if it means falsifying information (Kundeliene & Leitoniene, 2015).

Transparency has benefits for organizations, such as increasing followers' commitment and engagement to roles (Farrell, 2016). Additionally, transparency is shown to increase follower performance and increase operational efficiency (Farrell, 2016). At the same time, transparency can also bring about significant change as followers demand greater corporate responsibility (Farrell, 2016). Therefore, transparency can be difficult for organizations and for leaders to adhere to (Auger, 2014; Farrell, 2016).

Virtual Leadership

Another challenge leaders face is virtual teams (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Avolio et al., 2009). Technology and globalization have opened opportunities for work to be done anywhere, anytime (Sudha et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). Work is no longer limited to an office environment, and many organizations hire remote or work-from-home workers who do not commute or have a set schedule (Sudha et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). Hence, leaders must understand how to lead a virtual, global workforce (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Avolio et al., 2016; Latham, 2014). In addition, leaders must adapt their style and consider cultural background, time zones, and geographic differences when planning work (Lilian, 2014; Sudha et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015).

Virtual teams have provided opportunities for increased collaboration and communication between followers (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Avolio et al., 2009; Cowan, 2014). Fostering collaboration with a geographically dispersed team is critical to sustain performance (Lilian, 2014). Therefore, leaders must figure out how to collaborate with followers in a virtual environment using new technology and communication tools (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Leaders

must also understand how to delegate, build trust, and create a shared leadership environment without face-to-face interaction, which proves to be a challenge for many (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Avolio et al., 2009; Hart, 2016).

Summary

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. The first section of this literature review provided a historical overview of the evolution of leadership theory from the great man theory up to the present-day adaptive leadership theory. All theories have influenced the practice of leadership development and have provided guidance and explained who should lead and how. The first section of the literature review discussed the future of leadership theory and pointed out that theory will continue to evolve as workplaces change and leadership becomes more complex.

The second section of this literature review provided an overview of leadership training within the context of historical and current trends in the practice of leadership development. The second section discussed the future of leadership training and pointed out the consensus in the literature on these issues: using multiple methods to increase program effectiveness, connecting training to learner needs, recognizing development is not a one-time event, and refining the practice of leadership development.

The third section of this literature review discussed challenges leaders face in a modern workplace, including generational differences, adapting to change, transparency, and virtual training, all which create leadership roles with more complexity.

The literature I reviewed supports the premise that often there is a mismatch between the challenges leaders face in their roles and the content in a leadership program because of the failure to include participant perspectives in the content decision-making process, using outdated

leadership theories as a content framework, or failing to evaluate training efforts (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Day et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2018; Sørensen, 2017). Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology of the study, data collection methods and analysis, procedures, the target population, and the sample selected for the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. I used qualitative methods and narrative inquiry to understand the stories of past participants in a leadership development program. I collected data and retrospectively analyzed open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12 months. I gathered the surveys to identify the challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and understand their perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. The open-ended internal survey data were gathered by the study organization between one day and 30 days after the program ended. The intent of the survey was to help the organization gain insight on its current leadership program and if it addressed the challenges faced by participants. After the survey was completed, the organization did not have a follow-up plan on how to interpret data or to survey participants postprogram. Survey data were de-identified prior to my request for access. In addition, I requested that the organization only provide survey data of participants who met the study's inclusion criteria.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

Q1: How do leaders who participated in a leadership program describe the challenges they face in their roles?

Q2: How well do leaders who participated in a leadership program feel the existing program prepared them to address the challenges they face in their roles?

Research Design and Method

In this study, I employed a qualitative methodological approach using a narrative inquiry research design. I used qualitative methodology to explore participants' perspectives and develop

a comprehensive description of the challenges mid-level leaders face in their roles (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Qualitative research is useful to discover the perceptions and experiences of a phenomenon from the perspective of study participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). From qualitative data, commonalities and themes can be extracted to understand the complete picture of a phenomenon that cannot be identified by predetermining themes of what to measure (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Utilizing qualitative methods, a researcher can develop a holistic understanding and thick description of a phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

A narrative inquiry research design was appropriate because the study examined a phenomenon by focusing on the stories that account for the personal experiences of people (Creswell, 2013; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). According to Creswell (2013), narrative research is appropriate when a researcher is trying to capture the experiences of a single person or a small group of people. Also, narrative inquiry is best used when trying to derive meaning of a phenomenon through the lived experiences of others (Creswell, 2013). Narrative research is useful for capturing the stories of others to analyze and interpret meaning to gain a greater understanding of a specific research question or area of study (Creswell, 2013). For these reasons, employing a qualitative methodological approach using a narrative inquiry research design was appropriate for the study to answer the central research questions in alignment with the nature of the research problem and the purpose of the study.

Population and Sample

The sample population was participants who completed an open-ended survey within the last 12 months of the study organization’s current leadership development program. I used

purposive sampling to identify and obtain archival data of the survey responses of leadership program attendees who met the following inclusion criteria:

1. Attended the leadership program within the last 12 calendar months.
2. Was a full-time employee in a leadership role at the time of survey completion.

I utilized the inclusion criteria to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Being a full-time employee of the organization was important to being able to provide a complete description of challenges leaders face in their roles at the organization. To obtain participant data, I requested de-identified survey data from a repository stored by the study organization.

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness, I analyzed archival open-ended internal survey data in its entirety to maintain objectivity and accuracy and used interpretive validity by using the data to determine participants' perspectives. Using qualitative methods and a narrative inquiry research design helped me understand the stories of participants and allowed reflexivity to prevent bias.

Researcher's Role

I am currently a full-time employee of the organization of study in its leadership development and human resources department. As an employee of the organization, I had an interest in the results of the study to develop an internal leadership program. To prevent any bias of the results and to protect the confidentiality of participants, I used only de-identified data. I had no part in the survey completion process. Hence, I was unable to add to the data or select participants based on familiarity, which counteracted any potential bias. Also, I allowed reflexivity to maintain objectivity in the analysis.

Assumptions

I assumed participants answered survey questions openly and without bias at the time of completion. The survey data reported participants' perceptions and were subjective. This may have invited bias into results. Because I was not present when the survey was completed, there was a risk that survey conditions could have impacted participant responses. I obtained information about the survey conditions from the organization to ensure that participants' completed surveys openly and without bias.

I also assumed the archival survey data I received was complete and accurate without omissions. Complete and accurate data were critical to my ability to develop a comprehensive description of leadership challenges of the sample population. To minimize risk, I verified with the organization that all questions and answers during survey completion were provided and to indicate where, if any, there were omissions from the data and why.

Limitations

A limitation of the study was the potential that perceptions between individuals or groups that participated in the study would differ from another. The study focused on leaders in the organization of study who attended a leadership program intended for those in a mid-level management role. Hence, the study results may be limited in transferability to other levels of leadership in the organization.

I analyzed archival open-ended survey data from the last 12 calendar months. A limitation of the method of data collection was the inability to add to the line of inquiry or to the data. I analyzed survey data only by what was asked previously in the survey, which could have presented challenges or gaps in the description.

Another limitation of the study was the potential that external or internal factors may have impacted the organization's environment since the time participants completed the survey. Participants' responses represent the point in time in which they completed the survey. In addition, the leadership program and survey occurred at a global technology company. Therefore, the study results may not generalize to other industries or to organizations of smaller size or less complexity.

Delimitations

Using inclusion criteria for participant selection was a delimitation of the study. I used these criteria to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by including a sample population that had direct experience and knowledge of the challenges leaders faces in their roles. I did not use survey data collected over 12 calendar months ago to avoid the potential of responses being obsolete to the current organizational environment.

Instruments

I collected data by a retrospective analysis of open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12 months. I gathered the data to identify challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and understand their perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. Survey data were de-identified prior to requesting access. In addition, I requested that the organization provide only the survey data of participants who met the study's inclusion criteria.

Data Collection and Analysis

I obtained archival open-ended internal survey data of participants by working with the human resources and learning and development departments of the company. With permission, I obtained de-identified survey data over the last 12 months of study participants who met the

inclusion criteria of the study. To protect the identity of the participants, I requested de-identified data from the organization. I assigned a code letter for each survey. These code letters associated the survey to the participant and secured the information on file. To protect anonymity and maintain confidence, I have not used the organization's name in the study. I obtained approval through the Abilene Christian University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before research commenced.

The goal of analysis was to understand the challenges leaders face in their roles at the study organization. I analyzed the collected data using qualitative data-driven coding. According to DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011), qualitative coding is a multistep process. Because the study was exploratory in nature, I began my analysis using open coding (Baxter & Jack, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The first step was to simplify and reduce the data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011) to identify relationships, themes, and patterns. Next, I conducted axial coding to analyze any themes between the data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). I revisited and redefined the codes, because coding is an iterative process (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). During the coding process, I determined how to label the data and decided on whether to code on the sentence-, phrase-, or paragraph-level (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). From the identified labels, I converted the data into meaningful units.

To organize and record data, I developed a codebook using qualitative analysis software called MAXQDA. A codebook served to formally operationalize the coding process and categorize data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). As relationships, patterns, and themes became clearer, I revisited and redefined the codebook.

Ethical Considerations

Before commencing this study, I gained approval from Abilene Christian University's IRB. I submitted the study for exempt status and the IRB reviewed the study design. I collected all data anonymously and in an ethical manner. I protected both participants' rights and the anonymity and confidentiality of the study organization. Ethical concerns were the de-identification of data and the participants' consent for the results to be published outside of the organization. To minimize ethical concerns, I ensured the organization had informed consents for each completed survey on file and could source archival data if needed. I ensured the eight elements of informed consent were adhered to when I collected the data and made participants aware of the following:

1. The completion of the study involved information that would be used for purposes of research, received an explanation of the study purpose, and was provided with an explanation of the procedures and expected duration of their participation.
2. An explanation of any discomforts or risks involved with the study.
3. Participants would not receive any benefits for participation or be penalized for not participating.
4. Disclosure of alternative methods of data collection, if applicable.
5. Information provided was confidential and a description of how confidentiality would be maintained.
6. Participants would not receive any compensation for participation or be penalized financially for not participating.
7. Contact information of who participants could reach out to for any questions of concerns as it relates to the study.

8. Participation is voluntary, and a participant may wish to discontinue their participation at any time without penalty.

Summary

This chapter described the research design and methodology of the study, including data collection methods, procedures, and a definition of the sample population selected for the study. I employed a qualitative methodological approach using a narrative inquiry research design. The sample population consisted of past participants in a leadership program at the study organization. I collected data by retrospectively analyzing open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12 months. I analyzed the survey data to identify challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and understand perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. In addition, I requested the organization to provide only the survey data of participants who met the study's inclusion criteria. I used the data to develop a comprehensive description of challenges leaders face at a global technology company.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose in this qualitative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. I used qualitative methodology and narrative inquiry to understand the stories of past participants in a leadership program. A key aspect of the study is that it provided the perspectives of mid-level leaders and their leadership development needs in their current role. I intended to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing today's leaders and how to effectively design leadership content for a specific audience (Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Holt et al., 2018; McKim & Velez, 2017). The research questions that guided the study were the following:

Q1: How do leaders who participated in a leadership program describe the challenges they face in their roles?

Q2: How well do leaders who participated in a leadership program feel the existing program prepared them to address the challenges they face in their roles?

To answer the research questions, I collected data by retrospectively analyzing open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12 months. I analyzed the survey responses to identify challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and understand their perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. Open-ended internal survey data were gathered by the study organization with participants who had completed a leadership program between one day and thirty days after program completion. My purpose was to help the organization gain insight on whether the current leadership program addressed the challenges faced by participants. Survey data were de-identified prior to my request for access. In addition, I requested that the organization only provide survey data of participants who met the study's inclusion criteria.

This chapter opens with the study's purpose, the statement of the problem, and the research method. Next is a description of the demographic data of participants detailing their leadership level, tenure in their current role, and geographic region. Also, the chapter presents the results, additional findings, and the themes that emerged from my analysis of data relevant to each research question.

Demographic Data

The sample population consisted of past participants of the study organization's existing leadership program who had completed an open-ended survey within the previous 12 months. I used purposive sampling to identify and obtain archival data of leadership program attendees who met this study's inclusion criteria. There were 70 participants in the sample population. In total, 22.9% of the total number of attendees, equating to 16 respondents, completed the open-ended survey and met the study's inclusion criteria. Two participants did not complete four out of five survey questions and only provided a one-word answer of "great" to the first survey question, so I did not include their responses in my data analysis. Therefore, a total of 14 participants made up the sample for this study.

All participants were mid-level leaders at the study organization who self-selected to attend the leadership program as a part of their individual professional development plan. Participants reported the number of years in their current leadership role in the following categories: three (21.4%) between zero and two years in their current role, six (42.8%) between three and five years, three (21.4%) between six and nine years, and two (14.2%) more than 10 years in their current role. Participants' geographic regions were also reported in the following categories: six (42.8%) were located in North America, four (28.6%) were located in Europe, two (14.2%) were located in Australia or Asia, and two (14.2%) were located in Central or South

America. Survey data were de-identified by the organization prior to requesting access. I did not include any additional participant demographics in this study. Table 2 presents the participants' tenure, leadership levels, and geographic region categories.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Leadership Level	Tenure (years) in Current Role	Geographic Region
P1	Mid-level	6–9	North America
P2	Mid-level	6–9	North America
P3	Mid-level	3–5	North America
P4	Mid-level	10+	Central or South America
P5	Mid-level	3–5	North America
P6	Mid-level	3–5	North America
P7	Mid-level	3–5	Europe
P8	Mid-level	3–5	Australia or Asia
P9	Mid-level	10+	Central or South America
P10	Mid-level	0–2	North America
P11	Mid-level	0–2	Europe
P12	Mid-level	6–9	Europe
P13	Mid-level	0–2	Australia or Asia
P14	Mid-level	3–5	Europe

Results

I retrospectively analyzed the open-ended surveys gathered by the study organization to identify challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and better understand their perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. I used qualitative data-driven coding to help analyze the data. Because the study was exploratory in nature, analysis began with open coding to simplify and reduce the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), identifying preliminary categories and patterns. Then I conducted axial coding to aggregate the data into broader themes (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). To organize and record data, I developed a codebook using qualitative analysis software called MAXQDA. The codebook served to

formally operationalize the coding process and categorize data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

There were three parts of the open-ended survey (Appendix A) with a total of five questions. Part A of the survey asked participants to describe their learning experience in the leadership program. Part B asked participants to describe any challenges or obstacles they face in their current roles and how the leadership program addressed or failed to address these current challenges. Part C asked participants to describe any challenges or obstacles they anticipate they will face in their roles over the next 12 calendar months and how the leadership program addressed or failed to address these anticipated challenges. I analyzed each survey to determine which questions associated with the research questions of this study.

I assigned and attached a pseudonym consisting of code letters to each participant's survey responses to associate the survey to the participant and secure the information on file. Survey responses varied in length; some were brief, others were more in-depth. To provide the meanings of participants, I directly quoted from the surveys where possible. I framed the direct quotes to consider whether the response was a full response to a question or only a portion of a larger response. When participant responses included more than one theme, I categorized keywords and phrases according to multiple themes. In addition, I did not edit direct quotes to correct grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Moreover, the number of times I cited a reference equaled the number of times the participant used the specific phrase or keyword.

Table 3 presents the themes that emerged and the volume of responses as they related to the study's two research questions. A total of nine themes emerged, of which seven directly tied to the two research questions.

Table 3

Themes From an Analysis of the Data

Research Question	Theme	Number of Responses by Theme
Q1	Planning and executing strategy	7
Q1	Change leadership	10
Q1	Leading diverse groups	5
Q1	Leading remote individuals	5
Q1	Stress management	5
Q2	Peer-to-peer feedback	11
Q2	Challenge level of content	6
N/A	Executive interaction	5
N/A	Postcourse guidance	6

The next section of this chapter presents the participants' responses to the open-ended survey questions as they applied to each research question.

Themes and Findings Related to Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was the following: How do leaders who participated in a leadership program describe the challenges they face in their role? I used participant responses to survey questions 2 and 4 to address this question. The themes that emerged were as follows: planning and executing strategy, change leadership, leading diverse groups, leading remote individuals, and stress management.

Planning and Executing Strategy

Participants used phrases and keywords that indicate that a challenge and obstacle faced in their roles was understanding how to plan and execute strategy. Keywords and phrases included *strategy, strategic thinking, strategic leadership,* and *forward thinking*. There were seven references to planning and executing strategy.

When describing their perspectives on challenges faced, P1 stated, "There needs to be more focus on strategic thinking and planning," while P2 explained that "we need help on how to be forward thinkers, better strategic leaders, and understanding what's operational vs. day-to-day

vs strategy future thinking. My two cents." P3 expanded and responded, "Collaboration and executing on strategy is a challenge, we have complicated structures and matrixed." Similarly, P8 used the keywords *forward-thinking* and *strategic leadership*. P10 used the keyword *strategy and forward-thinking*. P11 mentioned, "My challenge is putting strategy into action." P14 stated, "I want to understand some of the business model and how to plan for the decisions that are being made, how to I plan strategy." I coded references to strategy in responses to a description of current challenges and anticipated future challenges over the next 12 calendar months. Of the total responses, 50% described planning and executing strategy as a challenge faced in their roles.

By geographic region, participants in Australia or Asia (50%), Europe (50%), and North America (66.6%) referenced planning and executing strategy as a challenge faced in their roles. None of the participants in Central or South America referenced these themes as a challenge they faced. In addition, when examining responses by tenure, participants who had been in their current leadership role less than two years (66.6%), three to five years (50%), and six to nine years (66.6%) referenced planning and executing strategy as a challenge they faced in their roles. No participants with 10 or more years in their current leadership role referenced planning and executing strategy as a challenge.

Change Leadership

In the theme of change leadership, participants used phrases and keywords that indicate the challenge of how to lead others through change. Keywords and phrases included *change*, *change leadership*, and *change management*. In response to Research Question 1, there were 10 references to change leadership. P1 explained, "I need to know how to help my team with constant change. Everyday there is something new and I do not know the difference between

change leadership and change management." P4 stated, "How do I handle all of the complexity, complex changes happening in the organization." P5 added that "the section on leading change needs to be expanded, this is where I have the most challenge. We need to talk about how to help my team with change—more depth, more substance needed." Similarly, P6, P13, and P14 also indicated "leading change" to be a challenge for mid-level leaders. P7 and P8 identified "too many changes" as being a challenge faced in their roles. P11 indicated "there has been a lot of basic change management stuff done, but we need more, more advanced help." Last, P10 explained:

> Change is an area where I am challenged and most are in the same room: or persuading change to several VP and Sr. VP's when restructuring, implementing massive cost reductions, or reorganizations are required. When making conscious decisions about whether we're prepared to make the tough calls when multiple leaders are involved, and to have them take the steps required to get from here to there to influence the VP's decision.

Some references to change leadership were brief while others were detailed. I coded references to change leadership as both current and future challenges faced by mid-level leaders.

Participants in Central or South America (50%), Europe (75%), and North America (66.6%) referenced change leadership as a challenge they faced in their roles. All participants in Australia or Asia referenced change leadership as a challenge they faced. Also, participants who had been in their current leadership role less than two years (100%), three to five years (83.3%), six to nine years (33.3%), and 10 years or more (50%) referenced change leadership as a challenge they faced. Overall, 71.4% of participants mentioned the theme of change leadership in their responses.

Leading Diverse Groups

Through keywords and phrases, participants expressed a lack of understanding how to effectively lead employees that differ in age and cultural background. The keywords included *diversity, intergenerational, culture,* and *cultural*. There were five references to leading diverse groups in response to the two survey questions related to Research Question 1. P2 believed that a challenge was understanding how to lead teams of "different culture backgrounds. We need more time allocated to discussing diversity and why it's important, and the benefits." P5 also believed "diversity and how to lead diversity" was a challenge for mid-level leaders. P6 added,

> In the class there is a lot of time left over, why don't we spend the time talking more about diversity and inclusion, and how to work with people of different ages and backgrounds. My team is mostly millennials and I don't know what they want.

In addition, P9 and P12 said that "managing millennials" is a challenge for mid-level leaders.

Out of the five references to leading diverse groups, I coded three as a challenge currently faced by leaders in their roles. Participants in Central or South America (50%), Europe (25%), and North America (50%) referenced leading diverse groups as a challenge. None of the participants in Australia or Asia referenced leading diverse groups as a challenge. In contrast, when examining participant responses by time in current leadership role (tenure), participants who had been in their current leadership role three to five years (33.3%), six to nine years (66.6%), and 10 years or more (50%) referenced leading diverse groups as a challenge for mid-level leaders. None of the participants who had been in their leadership role less than two years referenced leading diverse groups. Out of all participant responses, 35.7% indicated that leading diverse groups was a challenge faced by mid-level leaders.

Leading Remote Individuals

Through keywords and phrases, participants expressed a lack of understanding about how to effectively lead employees that differ in geographic location from that of the leader. Words and phrases included *virtual teams* and *remote*. There were five references to leading remote individuals in response to the two survey questions related to Research Question 1. P2 believed that "a major challenge is knowing how to manage a team that is spread out globally." P3 felt there is a need for "more guidance on virtual teams and how to lead them remotely." In addition, P9 and P12 used the keywords *remote* and *virtual teams* when describing challenges for mid-level leaders. P13 expanded on that and said, "There is a need to better know how to lead remote teams and communications for remote teams (lead virtually with different types of people)."

Out of the five references to leading virtual teams, I coded three as a challenge that will be faced over the next 12 calendar months. Examining the data by geographic region, participants in Central or South America (50%), Europe (25%), Australia or Asia (50%), and North America (33.3%) referenced leading remote individuals as a challenge they faced in their roles. In contrast, when examining participant responses by time in their current leadership role, participants who had been in their current leadership role less than two years (33.3%), three to five years (16.6%), six to nine years (66.6%), and 10 years or more (50%) referenced leading remote individuals as a challenge for mid-level leaders. Out of all participant responses, 35.7% of participants indicated that leading remote individuals was a challenge faced by mid-level leaders.

Stress Management

In the theme of stress management, participants indicated the challenge of balancing work and life stressors through keywords and phrases. Phrases included *manage stress*, *work-life*

balance, and *stress management*. There were five references to stress management in response to the two survey questions tied to Research Question 1. P1 and P4 both used the keyword *stress management* in describing challenges faced by mid-level leaders. P7 added that "how do I manage stress with so much work I have to do." P11 explained that "our leaders need help with managing their own wellbeing—the balance of work-life in their own life." In addition, P14 explained, "I'm so stressed out sometimes I don't know how to manage stress."

I coded references to stress management in the context of the ability to manage multiple challenges concurrently resulting in stress as described by participants in their survey responses. However, since participants consistently described stress management as a unique challenge in addition to other challenges, stress management emerged as a recurrent theme. Participants in Central or South America (50%) and Europe (75%) referenced stress management as a challenge, while only one of six participants in North America indicated that it was a challenge. None of the participants in Australia or Asia referenced it. Participants who had been in their current leadership role less than years (33.3%), three to five years (33.3%), six to nine years (33.3%), and 10 years or more (50%) referenced stress management as a challenge faced by mid-level leaders. Overall, 35.7% of participants indicated that stress management was a current and an anticipated challenge over the next 12 calendar months for mid-level leaders.

Themes and Findings Related to Research Question 2

Research Question 2 is the following: How well do leaders who participated in a leadership program feel that the program prepared them to address the challenges they face in their roles? I used participant responses to survey questions 3 and 5 to address this research question. The themes that emerged were (a) peer-to-peer feedback and (b) the challenge level of content.

Peer-to-Peer Feedback

Participants used phrases and keywords that indicated that they had the opportunity to receive peer-to-peer feedback while in the leadership program and that it was important to them to feel that the program prepared them to address their leadership challenges. These included phrases such as *learning from peers*, *learning from others*, and *peer feedback*. There were 11 references to peer-to-peer feedback.

P1, P2 and P3 used the keywords *learning from others* and *peer feedback* in their responses. P5 felt there is a need to "shift the content to be more participatory and active to include more peer-to-peer feedback. I would have liked to hear more from other people who also work in the same job as me on how they handle issues." P6 and P7 both indicated that "more discussion with others in the room" was important to the existing leadership program. P8, P9, P10, and P11 agreed that "group projects" and "the opportunity to hear from others" were important to feeling the existing program prepared them to address leadership challenges. Finally, P13 explained that "the best way for me to be best prepared is to learn about the experiences of my peers and networking."

References to peer-to-peer feedback were coded in both survey questions 3 and 5 in the context of having the opportunity to discuss with and learn from other leaders across geographic regions and business units as a means for addressing challenges they faced in their roles. This indicated that peer-to-peer feedback was important to participants to feel the existing program prepared them to address challenges faced currently and over the following 12 calendar months. Participants in Central or South America (50%) and Europe (50%) said peer-to-peer feedback was important to them. Peer-to-peer feedback was referenced by all participants in North America (100%) and Australia/Asia (100%) as important. Moreover, participants who had been

in their current leadership role less than two years (100%), three to five years (100%), six to nine years (66.6%), and 10 years or more (50%) referenced peer-to-peer feedback as important. In summary, 78.5% of participants mentioned peer-to-peer feedback as helping them feel the program prepared them to address their leadership.

Challenge Level of Content

About the challenge level of content, participants indicated that the content in the existing leadership program was not challenging enough to prepare them for the challenges they faced in their roles. Keywords included *too basic, junior, substance,* and *depth*. There were six references to the challenge level of content in response to the two survey questions related to Research Question 2. P3 felt that:

> the content was too focused on stuff that is basic information, not stuff I need right now to help me. I felt that we should have dig in more to certain areas vs moving so fast on all areas. I didn't feel challenged enough.

P4 believed "there was a lack of foundational development (substance) on what we learned, the content is very junior and doesn't represent reality of our jobs." Also, P7 explained, "I would use this program as more of a refresh, the content was basic info. The learnings need to be more detailed so we can be more clear and prepare for what to expect for real life." P8 added that the program "needs more challenge that is aimed at tenured folks (be aware of what leaders have already been through and know)." P10 stated, "It could have been more advanced, more challenging, my every day is more complex than the class. Need more depth." At the same time, P12 mentioned the content was "outdated and hasn't kept pace with business and reality. I would change it. Doesn't help me with what I deal with right now." These participants described the content in the program as not being at a sufficient level of level necessary to address the

challenges mid-level leaders face in their roles currently and in the near future. Participants mentioned the disconnect between the tasks and responsibilities in their roles and the topics addressed in the leadership program.

Participants in Central or South America (50%), Europe (50%), and Australia or Asia (50%) said that an appropriate challenge level of content was important to feeling that the existing program prepared them to address their leadership challenges. In North America, the challenge level of content was referenced by two of six participants (33.3%) as important. Additionally, participants who had been in their current leadership role less than two years (33.3%), three to five years (50%), six to nine years (33.3%), and 10 years or more (50%) referenced the challenge level of content as important. In total, 42.8% of participants mentioned the challenge level of content in their responses to the survey questions that aligned to Research Question 2.

Additional Findings

The first question in the participant survey was not directly tied to either of the two research questions. However, this question provided additional insight into the perspectives and experiences of the participants, which I used to further understand the meanings of Research Questions 1 and 2. I coded responses to this first question using the same qualitative data-driven analysis process as the rest of the data. The themes that emerged were the following: (a) executive interaction and (b) postcourse guidance.

Executive Interaction

Through keywords and phrases, participants indicated the importance of having interactions with executive leaders and those leaders at the highest levels of the organization

during the learning experience. These phrases included *executive engagement, time with executives,* and *executive exposure*. There were five references to executive interaction.

P1 stated, "I would like more executive guest speakers and more time with executives. I think it would be good to hear their stories and have face-to-face time with them." P6 added that "more time having time with executives. It would have been great to have the Exec Panel provide more advice to us about things we deal with." P8 mentioned, "More executive engagement." P10 explained that "a continued focus on executive discussions and networking with executives would be good. I got great value from this. We just needed more time." Similarly, P14 stated that "having more time with executives, rotating them in groups would have been better."

Executive interaction was referenced in the context of having time with experienced leaders, and that high-ranking leaders added value and a means for addressing the challenges they faced in their roles. Participants desired to have an opportunity to speak with and question executives. Participants in Europe (25%), Australia or Asia (50%), and North America (50%) referenced executive interaction and that it was important to the participant experience. However, no participants working in Central or South America referenced executive interaction as important. Also, participants who had been in their current leadership role less than two years (33.3%), three to five years (50%), and six to nine years (33.3%) referenced executive interaction as important. None of the participants who had been in their current role 10 or more years mentioned this as important to their learning experience. In total, 35.7% of participants mentioned keywords and phrases associated to executive interaction.

Postcourse Guidance

Participants used phrases and keywords that indicated that knowing what to do after the completion of the program and how to apply concepts within the program was important to the learning experience. These included phrases such as *what's next, action planning,* and *postcourse.* There were six references to postcourse guidance. P2 mentioned the need for "an ongoing set of training and development activities after the course is over." P4 stated, "I'm trying to still figure out the value of the course and what to do when I get back to work." P5 expanded on that and said, "I need help on how to be held accountable to learning; what am I supposed to do next. No action plan." P7 added that "maybe some homework? It's good to enjoy the town afterwards but an action item/assignment could be an idea." P9 believed that "how to apply all of this to my daily role is missing." Last, P11 explained, "I would like to see more emphasis on what's next? Action plans and a strategy to hold each other accountable."

References to postcourse guidance had a commonality of how to apply content and concepts presented in the program to the roles of mid-level leaders. Participants lacked understanding on how to translate program topics into actionable steps that would prepare them to face the challenges in their roles.

Participants in Europe (50%) and North America (33.3%) referenced the lack of postcourse guidance on how to translate topics into actionable steps. In Australia or Asia, none of the participants referenced postcourse guidance. In Central or South America, all participants (100%) referenced the lack of it. In addition, participants who had been in their current leadership role less than two years (33.3%), three to five years (33.3%), and six to nine years (33.3%) referenced postcourse guidance as important and lacking in their participant experience in the leadership program. All participants who had been in their current leadership role 10 years

or more referenced lacking postcourse guidance on how to translate program topics into actionable steps that would prepare them to face the challenges faced in their roles. To conclude, 42.8% of total participant responses mentioned postcourse guidance in the description of their learning experience.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. In this chapter, I presented a description of the study's results and additional findings. Chapter 5 will discuss the study's implications, conclusions, limitations, and present recommendations for practical applications and future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company. Participants were mid-level leaders at the study organization who self-selected to attend a leadership program as a part of their individual professional development plan. In this study, I used a qualitative methodological approach and a narrative inquiry research design to better understand the challenges mid-level leaders faced in their leadership roles and understand their perceptions of how well a leadership program addressed their perceived challenges. This chapter opens with the study's purpose, an overview of the problem statement, research questions, and the research method. Then, this chapter discusses the findings through the lens of previous literature as it pertains to each research question. Also, the chapter includes the limitations of the study, recommendations for practical application, and recommendations for future research.

This study findings are supported by other research, and that, despite significant expenditure by businesses into leadership development programs, there is often a disconnect between the content and intended program outcomes. Often these programs fail to adequately address the challenges the participants face in their roles (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Holt et al., 2018; Jasson & Govender, 2017). This disconnect deserves further study, because not addressing this problem results in wasted time, money, and a failure to increase leadership skills. Moreover, because the challenges leaders face is situational, past studies cannot be relied on to determine what content should be in a leadership program for a specific audience (Holt et al., 2018; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Peterlin, 2016). Therefore, my review of the literature indicates there is a need to better understand the challenges facing today's leaders and how to effectively design leadership content for a specific audience (Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Holt et al., 2018;

McKim & Velez, 2017). In this study, I attempted to address the mismatch between challenges leaders face in their roles and the content of a global corporation's leadership development program by using narrative inquiry to understand the challenges mid-level leaders face. The research questions that guided the study were the following:

Q1: How do leaders who participated in a leadership program describe the challenges they face in their roles?

Q2: How well do leaders who participated in a leadership program feel the existing program prepared them to address the challenges they face in their roles?

Because this study explored the perceptions and experiences of a phenomenon from the perspective of study participants, a qualitative methodological approach was appropriate (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). I employed a narrative inquiry research design because I wanted to examine a phenomenon by focusing on the stories and experiences of people (Creswell, 2013; Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). To answer the research questions, I retrospectively analyzed open-ended internal surveys gathered by the study organization during the last 12 months. I analyzed the surveys to identify the challenges leaders face in their leadership roles and understand perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges. Open-ended internal survey data were gathered by the study organization with participants who had completed a leadership program between one day and thirty days after program completion. The intent of the survey was to help the organization gain insight about the current leadership program and if it addressed the challenges faced by participants.

In total, 14 participants completed the survey. Participants reported the number of years in their current leadership role in the following categories: three (21.4%) less than two years in

their current role, six (42.8%) between three and five years, three (21.4%) between six and nine years, and two (14.2%) above 10 years in their current role. Participants' geographic regions were also reported in the following categories: six (42.8%) were located in North America, four (28.6%) were located in Europe, two (14.2%) were located in Australia or Asia, and two (14.2%) were located in Central or South America. Survey data were de-identified by the organization prior to my requesting access. Therefore, I did not collect any additional participant demographic data.

I used a conceptual framework that leaders need to develop the skills necessary to lead in their context to be effective (Brown & Posner, 2001; Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017). I also used the conceptual framework that different skills are needed in different situations as supported by situational leadership and contingency theories of leadership (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). Through these conceptual frameworks, I analyzed mid-level leaders' perspectives about the challenges they face in their roles and how well a leadership program addressed their perceived challenges.

I analyzed the data using qualitative data-driven coding. The goal of analysis was to understand the challenges leaders face in their roles and understand their perceptions of how well a leadership program prepared them to respond to these challenges.

Nine themes resulted from my analysis. Of the nine total themes, seven directly tied to the two research questions of the study. I formulated research Question 1 to help understand the challenges mid-level leaders face in their roles. Five themes emerged: (1) planning and executing strategy, (2) change leadership, (3) leading diverse groups, (4) leading remote individuals, and (5) stress management. I formulated Research Question 2 to help understand mid-level leaders' perspectives of how well a leadership program addressed their perceived challenges. Two themes

emerged: (1) peer-to-peer feedback and (2) the challenge level of the content. An additional two categories emerged that were not directly tied to the research questions. Additional findings were the themes of (1) executive interaction and (2) postcourse guidance. The next section of this chapter discusses the findings through the lens of previous literature as it pertains to each research question.

Interpretation and Discussion of the Findings

Researchers have found that although leadership theory and perspectives have changed over time, what remains true is that leadership is complex (Latham, 2014; Lord et al., 2017; Nunes et al., 2011). Modern leadership requires that leaders adapt quickly to change and lead in complex environments with differing challenges unique to the context (Holt et al., 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Latham, 2014). Mid-level leaders in this study demonstrated the importance of identifying the differing challenges and complexity they face through the high number of responses that mentioned challenges specific to their work context.

Research has indicated that there is no universal leadership style, set of leadership skills, traits, or behaviors effective across all contexts (Lord et al., 2017; Nunes et al., 2011). However, to be effective, leaders must understand that leadership requires different actions in different contexts (Lord et al., 2017; Nunes et al., 2011). Different leadership styles, actions, and behaviors are needed based on the context and requirements of a role (Andibo, 2012; Northouse, 2016). Therefore, individuals who want to become leaders can become successful by developing the traits and skills necessary to lead based on the challenges and contextual factors leaders face in their work environment and roles (Hoffman et al., 2011; Northouse, 2016). In this study, participants demonstrated their role requirements were important to consider as many of their responses centered on the main tasks and responsibilities of mid-level leaders in the organization.

Discussion Related to Research Question 1

Planning and Executing Strategy

Overall, the perspectives of participants on the challenges they face in their roles contained five themes. The first was planning and executing strategy, which included keywords or phrases connoting the challenge of understanding how to lead strategically in the context mid-level leaders work in. There were seven references to this theme. Planning and executing strategy was an unexpected theme as it did not emerge in the literature as a common challenge reported by leaders in the modern workplace. However, at the study organization, a key responsibility of a mid-level leader's role is to drive the strategic direction and lead the day-to-day operations of some aspect of a business. Therefore, consistent with role requirements of mid-level leaders, participants found it important to understand how to meet the performance expectations of planning and executing strategy. Using the lens of the literature, it is important for an organization to help leaders understand their roles and utilize leadership development for building the skills necessary to lead in their context to be effective (Brown & Posner, 2001; Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017).

The evidence from the research in this study indicated that understanding how to plan and execute strategy in a complicated and changing environment was critical. In addition, the findings showed that planning and executing strategy is not a challenge faced equally by leaders across all geographic regions, but that leadership tenure was important to the identification of planning and executing strategy. The findings suggest that, although the role tasks and responsibilities of mid-level leaders is consistent across years of tenure and geographic location, there are differing challenges and perspectives of leaders that need to be addressed based on experience level and regional factors.

Through the lens of the study's conceptual framework, I expected that perspectives on challenges would differ based on the context and roles of a leader (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). Also, in alignment to the conceptual framework, the evidence in this research study indicated there are different contexts and situational factors that impact the importance of planning and executing strategy as a challenge for mid-level leaders. Participants in North America, Europe, and Australia or Asia believed that planning and executing strategy was a challenge they faced in their roles. However, none of the leaders in Central or South America reported this as a challenge for them. Additionally, leaders across the tenure categories of less than two years, three to five years, and six to nine years indicated that planning and executing strategy was a challenge they faced, but leaders with 10 or more years in their current roles did not report it as a challenge. These findings suggest that the existing leadership program may need to be modified or expanded to account for the specific regional needs and tenure-level to help leaders feel better prepared to address the challenge of planning and executing strategy.

Change Leadership

The second theme was change leadership. Participants used phrases or keywords that indicated the challenge of how to lead others through change. There were ten references to change leadership.

Using the lens of the literature, in modern organizations leaders must adapt quickly to complex and changing environments (Holt et al., 2018; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Latham, 2014). At the same time, change leadership was an expected theme as changing demographics and technology has increased the complexity in organizations across all contexts (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). As a result, leading in a more complex environment requires skills to readily adapt to change (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018). Consistent with the literature,

participants reported the challenge of understanding how to lead complex change in an environment that is constantly changing. In the organization, the complicated nature of how quickly change happens presented a challenge for mid-level leaders who were responsible for leading others.

The findings indicated that mid-level leaders found it important to have additional guidance on how to address this challenge. It is known that developing leadership skills in change is a challenge for many organizations (Lamm et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2016). However, using the lens of the conceptual framework and situational leadership theory, follower needs and organizational environments change over time and require a leader to understand how to adapt to changing situations to be effective (Hersey et al., 2012). Evidence in the research of this study suggest that the content in the existing leadership development program may need to be expanded or modified to help leaders feel prepared to address the challenge of change leadership. Also, the findings also indicated that leaders across all geographic regions faced the challenge of change leadership. In addition, leaders across all years of service in their current leadership role reported change leadership as a challenge for mid-level leaders. This supports the literature that asserts that, although the types of change leaders face are varied, change impacts all organizations and leaders (Holt et al., 2018; Lamm et al., 2018).

Leading Diverse Groups

The third theme was leading diverse groups, which included keywords or phrases connoting the challenge of understanding how to effectively lead employees that differ in age and cultural background from that of the leader. There were five references to leading diverse groups. I expected that this theme would emerge because research has found that in a 21st-century workplace, leaders must learn how to interact and lead multiple generations (Ardichvili

et al., 2016; Anderson et al., 2016). Mid-level leaders in this study demonstrated the importance of discussing the topic of diversity and how to lead workers from different generations. The literature reported there are generally four generations working in most organizations around the world, all with different needs. Of these four generations, millennials are the largest population (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2014). In this study, mid-level leaders reported the need for further development on how to effectively lead teams in which members are from different cultures and of varying ages. Additionally, the findings of this study indicated that, as workforce demographics of the organization change, how to lead diverse groups is of immediate concern. Consistent with the literature, it is important for mid-level leaders to understand how, as workplaces shift from being made up of one generation to the next, how attitudes, expectations and values will change (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Lyons et al., 2014).

However, the evidence from the research in this study indicated that leading diverse groups is not a challenge faced by leaders from all geographic regions. Also, the findings showed that the identification that leading diverse groups was a challenge differed by years of leadership tenure. The findings showed that, although the overall workplace demographics of the organization may be changing, in Australia or Asia, leading diverse groups was not an identified challenge. In addition, the findings indicated that leaders with less than two years of experience did not perceive leading diverse groups as a challenge. These findings suggest there are differing challenges and perspectives of leaders that need to be addressed based on experience level and regional factors. Through the lens of the study's conceptual framework, I expected that perspectives on leadership challenges would differ based on the context and roles of a leader (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). The evidence in this research study suggest there

may be different contexts and situations regionally and by years of tenure that impact the challenges mid-level leaders face.

Leading Remote Individuals

The fourth theme was leading remote individuals, which included keywords or phrases connoting the challenge of understanding how to effectively lead employees that differ in geographic location from that of the leader. There were five references to leading remote individuals. I expected this emergent theme using the lens of the literature as research has found that leaders must learn how to interact and lead virtual teams in a 21st-century workplace (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Avolio et al., 2009). The evidence in this study indicated that mid-level leaders in the organization perceived that leading remote individuals was a challenge and will continue to increase over the next 12 calendar months. As technology and globalization continue to open opportunities for work to be done anywhere, anytime, virtual teams will become the norm (Sudha et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). Researchers have found work is no longer limited to an office environment and many organizations hire remote or work-from-home workers who do not commute or have a set schedule (Sudha et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). Hence, leaders must understand how to lead a virtual, global workforce (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Avolio et al., 2016; Latham, 2014).

The findings in this study suggest that mid-level leaders found it important to understand how to develop their skills in leading teams that are geographically dispersed. This finding supports research that found that leaders in a modern workplace must adapt their style and consider time zones and geographic differences when planning work (Lilian, 2014; Sudha et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 2015). Additionally, the findings of this study indicated that leaders across all geographic regions face the challenge of leading remote individuals in their roles. Moreover,

leaders across all years of service in their current leadership role reported this as a challenge. These findings support the literature that asserts a common challenge of leaders in the modern workplace across all industries is to figure out how to collaborate with followers in a remote or virtual environment (Ardichvili et al., 2016).

Stress Management

In the theme of stress management, participants used phrases or keywords that indicated the challenge of balancing work and life stressors. There were five references to this theme. I did not expect this theme would emerge as it did not directly tie to the literature as a common challenge reported by leaders in the modern workplace. However, research has found companies of all sizes and industries face increasing complexity, widespread change, and new competitors (Abrell et al., 2011; Brown & Posner, 2001; Culpin et al., 2014). As a result, the role of leadership has become more complex and multi-layered (King & Nesbit, 2013; Latham, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that mid-level leaders struggle with the demands of their role that include complex tasks. Consistent with research, increasing complexity makes it critical for leaders to be able to easily adapt and flex their leadership approach based on the contextual factors that impact a leadership environment, which proves to be difficult for some (Hersey et al., 2012).

Yet, the findings of this study indicated that stress management was not a challenge faced across all geographic regions. Stress management was referenced by only one of six participants in North America as a challenge. None of the participants in Australia or Asia referenced this. These findings suggest that, although the tasks and responsibilities of a mid-level leader is consistent regardless of geographic location, the perceptions of how to handle demands, the time it takes to complete work, and geographic attitudes about work stressors differ regionally.

Through the lens of the study's conceptual framework, I expected that perspectives on challenges faced would differ based on the context and roles of a leader (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). The evidence in this research study suggest that there may be different contexts and situations regionally that impact the perceptions of stress management as a challenge mid-level leaders face.

To summarize, I expected the themes of change leadership, leading diverse groups, and leading remote individuals based on the literature and using the lens of the conceptual framework of the study. Moreover, generational differences, virtual teams, and adapting to change in the modern workplace were common challenges facing leaders as reported in the literature. I did not expect that the theme of strategic planning and execution would emerge as it did not directly tie to the literature as a challenge reported by leaders in the modern workplace. However, at the study organization, a key responsibility of mid-level leaders is to drive the strategic direction and lead the day-to-day operations of a business function. This role requirement aligns with the importance participants placed on understanding how to plan and execute strategy. Additionally, I did not expect the theme of stress management as it also did not directly tie to the literature as a challenge reported by leaders in the modern workplace.

The findings of this study indicated that identified challenges were not faced equally across all categories of tenure and geographic regions. The findings suggest that, although the role responsibilities of a mid-level leader is the same regardless of tenure and geographic location, there are differing challenges and perspectives of leaders that need to be addressed based on experience level and regional factors. Using the lens of the conceptual framework of contingency and situational theories, I expected that perspectives on challenges faced would differ based on the context and roles of a leader. The evidence in this research study

demonstrated that there may be different contexts and situations regionally and based on years of tenure that determine the perceived challenges of mid-level leaders.

The findings of this study pertaining to Research Question 1 adds to the literature that advocates that the future of leadership training recognizes that participants are faced with increased challenges different from the past, which requires programs to continuously update content to address learners' changing needs (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Also, these findings add to the literature indicating that what is critical but missing from the design of leadership programs is the perspectives of those who will participate in the training, often resulting in a disconnect between a program's content and the learning needs of the audience (Brown et al., 2016; King & Nesbit, 2013). Past studies have claimed that the challenges leaders face in their roles should be taken into consideration when designing leadership programs, although they are rarely considered in content curricula (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014; Grimm et al., 2015; Hite et al., 2014). Therefore, implementing a leadership program without knowing what challenges leaders face in their roles results in a minimal increase in performance and leaves a company and participants feeling that valuable time and money has been wasted (King & Nesbit, 2013; Kirchner & Akdere, 2014; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Additionally, the findings of this study support literature that asserts the process of leadership is complex, and skills critical in one context may be different from another (Carter, 2013; Grandy & Holton, 2013; Latham, 2014). Therefore, when the design of leadership programs does not take contextual factors into consideration, the content of a program typically is irrelevant and does not actually meet learners' needs (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014; Grandy & Holton, 2013).

Discussion Related to Research Question 2

In the literature, there is no universal model for designing leadership programs (Rosch, 2018; Sørensen, 2017). Researchers have found that, regardless of how leadership development programs are implemented, the goal of all leadership development is to increase skills, change behaviors, and improve performance (Burbaugh & Kaufman, 2017; Glamuzina, 2015; Sørensen, 2017). When leadership development is implemented through classroom training, content taught should be relevant, timely, and explained in the context of a participant's normal work environment (Broucker, 2015; Cowman & McCarthy, 2016; Grandy & Holton, 2013). In addition, according to King and Nesbit (2013), effective leadership development considers the situational needs of participants and incorporates a curriculum that addresses the needs identified. Because challenges at each level of leadership differ, development should be tailored to participants' roles (Holt et al., 2018; Jasson & Govender, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Therefore, classroom training should be used after participants have gained an understanding of role challenges they will face to facilitate meaningful discussions and increase leadership skills (Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Peer-to-Peer Feedback

The perspectives of participants on how well the existing leadership program prepared them to address the challenges they face in their roles contained two themes. The first was peer-to-peer feedback, which included keywords or phrases connoting the need to receive feedback and learn from peers while in the program. There were 11 references to this theme. I expected this emergent theme using the lens of the literature as research has found feedback is a distinct and valuable method for providing perspective to leaders about skills and behavior in leadership development (Abrell et al., 2011; Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Day et al., 2014). The findings

indicated that mid-level leaders found it important to have the opportunity to hear the experiences, stories, and examples from other leaders while in the program as a means to address the challenges they faced in their roles. Also, participants across all geographic regions and years of leadership service in their current roles identified peer-to-peer feedback as critical to feeling prepared to address their perceived challenges. These findings support research by Heslin and Keating (2017) that asserted that effective leadership training should include ways for participants to learn from each other and have the opportunity to discuss learning, share stories, and provide examples based on experiences.

Moreover, allowing participants to learn from each other and reflect on development increases engagement and makes content practical (Heslin & Keating, 2017). The evidence from the research in this study indicated that participants found it critical to be able to have discussions with peers in the program to prepare them to face challenges of immediate concern and perceived challenges over the next 12 months. The findings support research that has concluded that feedback is most effective when it is relevant, timely, specific, and delivered in a way that prompts discussion (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Day et al., 2014). In turn, when feedback is delivered appropriately, it is an effective means to increasing leadership skill and changing behaviors (Day et al., 2014).

Challenge Level of Content

In the theme of the challenge level of content, participants used phrases or keywords that indicated that the content in the existing leadership program was not challenging enough to prepare them for the challenges they faced in their roles. There were six references to this theme. Using the lens of the literature, I expected this theme as researchers have demonstrated that there is no universal methodology for designing leadership programs, and there has not been enough

research to provide a universal understanding of what leaders face in the modern workplace (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Latham, 2014; Peterlin, 2016). Consequently, because the challenges leaders face are situational, past studies cannot be relied on to determine what content should be in a leadership program for a specific audience (Holt et al., 2018; Lacerenza et al., 2017; Peterlin, 2016). Mid-level leaders in this study demonstrated the importance of considering the organizational context when determining what content to teach in a leadership development program. The findings in this study indicated participants felt there was a need to provide different content to different experience levels. Participants reported the challenge level of content should be different for leaders new to the role in comparison to the advanced learning needs of tenured leaders. According to Bush and Glover (2004), although developing leadership skill is a top priority for organizations globally, there is a lack of research on how to tailor content to different contexts and levels of leadership.

The findings of this study suggest that the lack of research on tailoring content extends to misunderstanding how to customize learning based on the experience level of leaders within the same leadership level. Researchers have concluded that topics of focus in leadership programs vary based on who selects content and what is determined to be important in a context (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014; Holt et al., 2018). Moreover, studies have shown that with the lack of an established methodology on how to design content for leadership programs (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Day et al., 2014; Sørensen, 2017), decisions on how to implement training is at best an educated guess (King & Nesbit, 2013; Sørensen, 2017). The findings of this study indicated that leaders across all geographic regions and years of service felt the challenge level of content was important to feeling the existing program prepared them to address their leadership challenges. Therefore, evidence in the research of this study suggest that the content in the

existing leadership development program may need to be expanded or modified to help leaders feel prepared to address the challenges they face. In addition, the findings suggest that the objectives of the existing leadership program may need to be adjusted to address the learning needs of the level of leaders the program intends to train.

In summary, participants reported peer-to-peer feedback and the appropriate challenge level of content as lacking in the existing leadership program. This lack resulted in the feeling that the existing leadership program did not prepare participants to address the challenges they faced in their roles. Using the lens of the literature and the study's conceptual framework, both peer-to-peer feedback and the challenge level of the content are critical elements in the effectiveness of leadership development, and I expected these themes. They align with leadership literature that has argued that there is a need to better understand the challenges facing today's leaders and how to effectively design leadership content for a specific audience (Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Holt et al., 2018; McKim & Velez, 2017).

The findings of this study pertaining to Research Question 2 adds to the literature that has shown that leaders need to develop the skills necessary to lead in their workplace to be effective (Brown & Posner, 2001; Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017). However, in most programs, it is unknown whether the content is relevant, timely, and addresses the challenges leaders face in their roles (Abrell et al., 2011; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Day et al., 2014). The findings of this study add to the literature that calls for more studies on how to select and design content based on a specific audience and context (Hutchinson, 2017; Seidle et al., 2016).

Additional Findings

In addition to the seven themes that emerged from the study's research questions, two themes emerged from the first survey question that provided additional insight into the

perspectives and experience of participants. These themes were executive interaction and postcourse guidance. According to Day et al. (2014), to implement an effective leadership development program, the science and strategy of development theory must be considered. To add, Brown and Posner (2001) concluded that leaders learn through multiple ways: by observing others, trial and error, and training, and their research showed that 75% of learning occurred through on-the-job training and observation (Brown & Posner, 2001).

Executive Interaction

The theme of executive interaction included keywords or phrases connoting the importance of having interactions with executive leaders and leaders at the highest levels of the organization during the learning experience. There were five references to this theme. Using the lens of the literature, researchers have found that learning from others, sharing stories, and providing examples based on experience should be included in leadership training (Heslin & Keating, 2017). Participants reported in this study that executive interaction would have provided learners the opportunity to learn from those higher and more experienced in the organization. Consistent with the literature, evidence in this study demonstrated that learning from others would have helped to increase engagement, make content practical, and turn training into a more active process for participants (Heslin & Keating, 2017).

However, the evidence in this study demonstrated that executive interaction was not equally important to leaders across all geographic regions. Also, the findings indicated that the importance of executive interaction differed by years of leadership tenure and that leaders in Central or South America did not place much importance on executive interaction. In addition, the findings indicated that leaders with more than 10 years in a leadership role did not perceive this as important to their learning experience. These findings suggest there could be differing

perspectives of leaders on what is of value in the learning experience based on experience level and regional factors.

Postcourse Guidance

In the theme of postcourse guidance, participants used phrases or keywords connoting that what they should do after the completion of the program and how they should apply concepts should be an important aspect of the program. There were six references to this theme. Relating the theme to the literature, leadership training should have clear objectives and goals and demonstrate learning outcomes (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017). Also, although numerous topics can be included in a program, it is important for content to demonstrate how it can be applied after training is completed (Peterlin, 2016). In this study, participants demonstrated that the application of learning concepts was important to the learning experience and valued as a way to build leadership skills. This research finding is consistent with literature on leadership development implementation and the transfer of training that states that when content is relevant and timely it increases the likelihood new knowledge will be applied (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Consequently, learners understanding how to apply concepts learned in a program is critical to increasing leadership skills and changing behaviors long-term (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2014).

The evidence in this study indicated that postcourse guidance was not equally important to leaders across all geographic regions. Participants in Australia or Asia did not place high importance on postcourse guidance as it related to the learning experience. This finding suggests there are differing perspectives of leaders on the learning experience that need to be addressed based on geographic region. Overall, the additional findings of this study add to the literature suggesting leadership training should consider each context and what is required of participants

to successfully lead (Ardichvili et al., 2016). Also, the additional findings add to the literature suggesting the most effective way to improve leadership training design is to ensure content is focused on participant needs and an organization's goals (Ardichvili et al., 2016; Aziz & Selamat, 2016; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Limitations

The method of data collection contained a limitation. Retrospective analysis of archival data prevented me from adding to the line of inquiry or to the data. As a result, the data I analyzed only involved what had been asked in the survey, which may have resulted in gaps in the description of participants' perspectives. In addition, I was not able to member check responses to ask participants to review, clarify, or revise their data during narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013).

The narrative inquiry research design contained another limitation. When participants completed the open-ended survey, definitions of terms were not provided. Participants were asked to self-describe their perspectives and experiences. The nature of narrative inquiry requires the researcher to analyze and interpret the meanings of participant responses to determine commonalities and themes. In this study, the lack of this ability may have resulted in my misinterpretation or categorization of participant responses.

This study focused only on leaders who attended a leadership program intended for mid-level managers. The study results may be limited in transferability to other levels of leadership in the organization. Also, results may not generalize to other industries or to organizations of smaller size or less complexity.

In addition, external or internal factors may have impacted the organizational environment since the time the respondents completed the survey. Open-ended survey data and

participants' responses represented only that period of time. To remain current on the challenges of the sample population, additional studies are needed.

Recommendations for Practical Application

Based on the identified themes, I have several recommendations for practical application for the study organization and those in charge of designing leadership programs. The findings are supported by much of the literature that suggest that the challenges faced by mid-level leaders is specific to their role and context in which they lead (Brown et al., 2016; King & Nesbit, 2013). In addition, the findings suggest that the existing leadership program can be improved. Effective leadership development considers the situational needs of participants and incorporates a curriculum that specifically addresses those needs. Because the challenges at each level of leadership differ, development should be tailored to participants' roles (Holt et al., 2018; Jasson & Govender, 2017; Lacerenza et al., 2017).

Based on this information and the themes identified, I recommend the following:

1. Encourage and allow leaders to provide perspective and input in determining the content, topics, and associated skills-training in a leadership development program intended to address the challenges faced by leaders in their roles. The content of a leadership program should consider the contextual factors such as tenure, geographic region, and the particular situational needs of participants. To address the needs of leaders and to increase leadership skills, designers of leadership development efforts should understand the challenges faced by the audience they intend to train prior to selecting content and the level of complexity of a program.
2. Consider underlying external or internal factors that contribute to the challenges faced by leaders. To address learning needs and meet program outcomes, designers of leadership

development efforts should identify the root cause of difficulties or barriers in the organizational environment that hinder leaders. The content of a leadership program should focus on the skills and the knowledge leaders need to be effective in their roles in alignment with job tasks and responsibilities. Barriers to effective leadership that exist in the organizational environment should be addressed prior to selecting the content topics of a program.

3. Provide clarity on the roles, responsibilities, and performance evaluations of leaders and compare to the known challenges faced by leaders. The content of a leadership program should consider learner needs and organizational goals. To increase leadership skills and meet business objectives, the course description, learning objectives, and content in a leadership program should align the skills and knowledge needed to be effective in a specific leadership role.
4. Give ample opportunity for leaders to learn from others within the structure of a leadership program. Allowing leaders to receive feedback, discuss learning, share stories, and provide examples based on experiences increases engagement and helps leaders translate classroom concepts into practical insights and apply learning to their roles.
5. Clearly demonstrate how learning is to be applied after the completion of a program. The learning objectives of a leadership program should be clear, and outcomes should show learners how content is to be applied in their roles. Content should be relevant, timely, and useful in providing skills, knowledge, and solutions to the challenges leaders face. Creating a postcourse plan for leaders to obtain feedback on course concepts and gain managerial support is important to the likelihood that the training will be applied after program completion.

These recommendations may remove the disconnect between what a leadership program teaches and the challenges a training's intended audience faces. These recommendations may also help the organization identify how successfully the content of their current leadership program addressed the challenges of the intended audience.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Repeat this study using an alternative method of capturing the perspectives and experiences of leaders instead of self-reporting to gain a more comprehensive description of challenges leaders face and their perceptions of their experience in a leadership program. If qualitative interviews are used, they can create the opportunity to further explore participant responses and allow for member checking of responses for meaning and interpretation.
2. Conduct this study again with additional leaders of different tenures and geographic locations. This would allow researchers to create a more comprehensive description of learning needs specific to a geographic region or leadership experience level.
3. Address the limitations of this study by repeating it on a periodic basis in the future to maintain the accuracy of the study's findings. Repeating this study again in the future with a similar audience could allow researchers to assess how to improve a leadership program and ensure content is relevant, timely, and useful in addressing the challenges faced by leaders a program intends to train.

Conclusion

I conducted this qualitative narrative study to understand the challenges leaders face in a global technology company and to identify perceptions of how well an existing leadership

program prepared leaders to respond to the challenges. Specifically, I used narrative inquiry to better understand the stories of past participants in a leadership development program. Consistent with the literature, this study found that mid-level leaders faced five specific challenges based on their roles and their situational contexts at the study organization. In addition, the findings identified two themes that were important to leaders to feel that the program prepared them to address perceived challenges they faced in their roles. I presented two additional findings that provided additional insight into the overall perceptions of the participants. The findings of this study are consistent with contingency and situational leadership theories that propose that different leadership skills are needed in different situations (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). I expected many of the themes that emerged from my analysis of the participant surveys. However, I did not anticipate all of them, which suggests there were challenges that were specific to the study organization, the participants' mid-level leadership roles, and their situational contexts.

Situational and contingency theories of leadership support the premise that there is no universal style of leadership that is effective in all contexts. Instead, leadership styles and associated skills must adapt to the specific context and situation (Blanchard & Hersey, 1996; Lord et al., 2017). Many participants reported the need for the existing leadership program to change the types of topics and challenge level of the content. These findings align with the conceptual framework that leaders need to develop the skills necessary to lead in their context to be effective (Brown & Posner, 2001; Holt et al., 2018; Ismail et al., 2017). Based on the findings of the study, I was able to provide recommendations for practical application and for future research.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Retrospective analysis of archival data was conducted from the following survey questionnaire to understand the challenges faced by mid-level leaders in a global technology company.

Pre Interview Questions

A. What is your current leadership level?
    a. Individual Contributor
    b. Manager
    c. Director
    d. Executive

B. How long have you worked in your current leadership role?
    a. 0-2 years
    b. 3-5 years
    c. 6-9 years
    d. 10 or more years

C. What geographic region are you located in?
    a. North America
    b. Central or South America
    c. Europe
    d. Australia or Asia

Your Learning Experience

1. Describe your learning experience as a participant of the director leadership program.

Thinking of Your Current Role

2. Describe any challenge(s) or obstacle(s) you face in your leadership role.

3. Describe how the director leadership program addresses (or fails to address) your learning needs.

Thinking of Your Role Over the Next 12 Calendar Months

4. Describe any challenge(s) or obstacle(s) you will face in your leadership role.
5. Describe how the director leadership program will address (or fail to address) your learning needs.

Appendix B: IRB Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

April 15, 2020

Monica Moray
Department of Education
Abilene Christian University

Dear Monica,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Designing Leadership Development Program Curriculum: A Narrative Research Study",

(IRB# 20-046)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs