

1-1-2019

## A Grounded Theory Study: How a Virtual Organizational Leadership Program Impacts Employee Leadership Development

Charlene Banta  
Concordia University - Portland, [banta.charlene@mayo.edu](mailto:banta.charlene@mayo.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup\\_commons\\_grad\\_edd](https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup_commons_grad_edd)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Banta, C. (2019). *A Grounded Theory Study: How a Virtual Organizational Leadership Program Impacts Employee Leadership Development* (Thesis, Concordia University, St. Paul). Retrieved from [https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup\\_commons\\_grad\\_edd/281](https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cup_commons_grad_edd/281)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia University Portland Graduate Research at DigitalCommons@CSP. It has been accepted for inclusion in CUP Ed.D. Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSP. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csp.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csp.edu).

1-2019

# A Grounded Theory Study: How a Virtual Organizational Leadership Program Impacts Employee Leadership Development

Charlene Banta

*Concordia University - Portland*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## CU Commons Citation

Banta, Charlene, "A Grounded Theory Study: How a Virtual Organizational Leadership Program Impacts Employee Leadership Development" (2019). *Ed.D. Dissertations*. 226.

<https://commons.cu-portland.edu/edudissertations/226>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Theses & Dissertations at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ed.D. Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact [libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu](mailto:libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu).

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE  
CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Charlene Banta

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Christopher Maddox, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Cherri Barker, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Jill Bonds, Ed.D., Content Reader

A Grounded Theory Study: How a Virtual Organizational Leadership Program Impacts  
Employee Leadership Development

Charlene Banta

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Transformational Leadership

Christopher Maddox, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Cherri Barker, Ed.D., Content Specialist

Jill Bonds, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University–Portland

2019

## Abstract

Leadership development programs prepare candidates for roles, equipping them with the skills and competencies to lead in organizations. In this study, I explored the effectiveness of a virtual organizational leadership development program. A grounded theory research design was chosen as a method of analysis to systematically obtain and analyze data for research and generate theory from the data. The servant leadership model served as the framework for the research. The purpose of this study was to explain how a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership efficacy. The research questions addressed how the program affected participant promotions, how the program learning objectives were implemented by participants, and how the program impacted participants. Collection tools included satisfaction surveys, interviews, and data reflecting promotion rates. Satisfaction rates with the organizational virtual leadership development program were high. Participants appreciated the advantages of the virtual format of the program and the quality of the instructors. They completed the program with enhanced communication skills, the ability to influence positive change, and increased self-awareness. Thirty-one percent of participants received promotions after the program. Opportunities for program improvement included incorporating real-world projects to give participants the ability to practice the leadership skills taught, the ability to be paired with a mentor, and a second part to the program to explore the leadership competencies at a more advanced level. The findings of this study may contribute to the existing body of literature with insights into the experiences and perspectives of participants of a virtual organizational leadership development program.

*Keywords:* leadership, virtual, technology, corporate, organizational, education

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my children—the inspiration for my love of education and leadership.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my family for their love and support throughout this journey. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my dissertation chair, Dr. Christopher Maddox, whose guidance was instrumental to my success. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Jill Bonds and Dr. Cherri Barker, members of my dissertation committee who continually offered feedback to improve this body of work. I must acknowledge my manager, Dr. Scott Tabor, who experienced this process alongside me and offered valuable insights along the way. I am also thankful for my colleagues who made it possible for me to focus this research on the trinity of topics that was the study of my dreams—education, leadership, and technology. I would like to thank the participants of the study who openly shared their perspectives with me. I am forever grateful for my cohort of classmates who have become friends and served as cheerleaders to keep me going. Finally, I thank God, who is represented at the core of the servant leadership principles to guide the building up of people, organizations, and society.

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of Tables .....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Problem Statement .....	9
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Research Questions .....	10
Conceptual Framework .....	11
Nature of the Study .....	12
Definition of Terms .....	14
Assumptions .....	15
Scope and Delimitations .....	16
Limitations .....	16
Significance of the Study .....	17
Summary .....	17
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	20
Literature Search Strategy .....	21
Conceptual Framework .....	22
Greenleaf: Servant Leadership as a Model .....	23

Spears: Servant Leadership as an Organizational Framework for Leaders .....	29
Review of Literature .....	39
Background .....	40
Additional Leadership Theories.....	40
Leadership: Nature or Nurture .....	46
Learning to Lead .....	47
Leadership Development Programs .....	48
Leadership Development Through Mentoring and Coaching .....	51
Virtual Technologies in Leadership Development Programs .....	52
Measuring the Success of Leadership Development .....	55
Summary .....	56
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	58
Research Questions .....	59
Research Design of the Study .....	60
Role of the Researcher .....	65
Participant Selection Logic .....	67
Instrumentation .....	70
Data Collection .....	72
Data Analysis Procedures .....	82
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	86
Ethical Issues .....	89
Summary .....	89

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results.....	91
Description of the Sample.....	92
Methodology .....	94
Analysis.....	96
Summary of the Findings.....	99
Presentation of the Data and Results .....	100
Survey Results .....	101
Interview Results .....	114
Promotion Rate Results.....	124
Summary .....	128
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....	129
Summary of the Results .....	129
Discussion of the Results .....	133
Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature.....	134
Limitations of the Study.....	138
Implications of the Results for Transformation .....	139
Recommendations for Further Research.....	141
Conclusion .....	142
References.....	144
Appendix A: Authorization for Research .....	167
Appendix B: Email Invitation to Program Participants for Interview .....	168
Appendix C: Follow-up Survey for Participants .....	169

Appendix D: Follow-up Survey for Supervisors .....	169
Appendix E: Program Post Survey .....	171
Appendix F: Interview Questions .....	173
Appendix G: Participant Consent to Interview .....	175
Appendix H: Participant Interview Results .....	177
Appendix I: Statement of Original Work.....	180

## **List of Tables**

Table 1. <i>Program Participants by Geographic Location</i> .....	93
Table 2. <i>Interviewed Participants by Geographic Location</i> .....	94
Table 3. <i>Follow-up Survey to Participants Results</i> .....	102
Table 4. <i>Follow-up Survey to Supervisors Results</i> .....	108
Table 5. <i>Post Program Survey to Participants Results</i> .....	109

## List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Constructing Grounded Theory</i> .....	71
Figure 2. <i>Follow-up Survey for Participants</i> .....	74
Figure 3. <i>Follow-up Survey for Supervisors</i> .....	76
Figure 4. <i>Post Program Participant Survey</i> .....	77
Figure 5. <i>Participant Promotion Rates</i> .....	125

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Organizational leadership development programs are a significant component of preparing future leaders, and effective leadership development has been identified as a key metric of organizational success (Fernandez-Araoz, Roscoe, & Aramaki, 2017). Having strong leaders in organizations is important; therefore, leadership development matters (Phillips, Ray, & Phillips, 2015). Measuring the effectiveness of professional organizational leadership development initiatives in companies helps to ensure that the leadership development programs achieve the intended business goals and have the desired impact (Ray & Learmond, 2013). Evaluating the impact of leadership development initiatives involves understanding the evaluation function and process, planning and conceptualizing the evaluation, collecting and analyzing data, and interpreting and communicating the findings (Downs, Champion, Hannum, Stawiski, & Patterson, 2017). In this study, I evaluated the impact of a virtual organizational leadership development program on participant promotion and participant and supervisor satisfaction rates within one organization.

A large interdisciplinary educational healthcare organization was the study site where I explored how the use of a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership development by assessing the promotion rates of those who completed the program as well as the satisfaction rates of participants and their supervisors. For the purposes of this research, the study site and the leadership development program being evaluated remained confidential. This multi-site healthcare organization has been a leader in education, research, and clinical practice worldwide for over a century. The organization which served as the study site ascribes to the

servant leadership model. The specific area of interest for this study was a program offered by the organization's human resources department—a virtual leadership development program. This is not the formal name of the program; rather, a generic description to retain anonymity. The program targets employees who are interested in advancing their leadership skills but who do not have a leadership title. The study evaluated the effectiveness of this virtual organizational leadership development program by assessing participant promotion rates and participant and supervisor satisfaction rates.

### **Background of the Study**

Historically, leadership development at the organization has included learning programs, ongoing performance feedback, mentoring, and coaching. Investing in talent is one way leaders at the organization promote the organizational values and drive improvement in the workforce, the work environment, and technology. This investment in cultivating leaders ensures that the organization continues to lead the industry by developing the skills and competencies required for leadership in aspiring leaders currently within the organization. The leaders at the organization support the development of new leaders by fostering a learning culture and providing educational resources and opportunities such as the one which was the focus of this study—the virtual organizational leadership development program. Informal leaders and those who aspire to be leaders are encouraged to develop leadership skills and understand the concepts associated with servant leadership. Coaching and mentoring opportunities are available as well as access to leadership resources. Those who desire to lead take ownership of their careers, assess their individual interests and talents, and are accountable for developing their fullest

potential. According to the study site's leadership development program guide, investing in leadership development is critical to the organization's ability to achieve its mission of inspiring hope and contributing to health and well-being by providing the best services. The study site and related documentation will remain confidential in this study. It should also be noted that the information in this study lacks transferability to other sites as it is specific to a single organization's internally developed virtual organizational leadership development program.

The virtual leadership development program was developed and launched at the study site in the spring of 2016 to address organizational needs associated with leadership development. A division of the human resources department dedicated to organizational leadership development created the virtual leadership development program based on best practices within the organization and in the healthcare industry. Leaders at the organization are committed to developing new leaders at all levels. The virtual leadership development program was designed for participants to build leadership skills that can be helpful in their existing roles while gaining knowledge to prepare for upward movement within the organization, which is essential for the organization's continued success. As outlined in the leadership development program guide of the study site, this is accomplished by exposing participants to defined organizational leadership capabilities, introducing them to leadership competencies, and offering a forum for participants to virtually connect with fellow aspiring leaders using online technologies. Participants receive a certificate of completion after achieving all program requirements. Program completion does not guarantee a participant will be promoted to a

leadership position; rather, it equips participants with leadership skills and competencies to be better candidates for leadership positions.

The program was designed to create a talent pipeline for the organization with three learning outcomes. First, the program aims to prepare potential leaders for future leadership positions. Next, the program identifies those who are interested in leadership positions, but unsure, helping them ascertain if a leadership position is a right fit for them. Lastly, the program facilitates the development of skills for informal leadership positions—those who may not aspire to a leadership title but do hold leadership roles in an informal capacity within the organization. Participation in the program is voluntary.

The virtual leadership development program is offered via 8-week cohorts available to all staff who are not currently in a formal leadership role. The organization has alternative leadership training specifically for those already in leadership positions; hence, they do not qualify for the program which is the focus of this study. The program is offered virtually via WebEx Training Center to accommodate the geographically disperse staff across the enterprise. Yammer, another technology, is also incorporated into the program for participants to collaborate and communicate with instructors and classmates in between the live sessions. Instruction is conducted by members of the organization's human resources department. Classes are held weekly for the duration of the program for 60 minutes during the workday. As a result, supervisor approval is required for participants to enroll in this leadership education; all individuals who apply to the program and are not already in a leadership role will be accepted based on availability. The program averages 27 students per cohort offering. The minimum

registration to hold a cohort is 10 participants with a maximum of 30 participants per cohort. If the maximum number of participants is reached for a cohort, participants are waitlisted for the next offering. Cohorts are held as frequently as needed to meet the enrollment demand. In 2016, four cohorts completed the program. The program grew to eight cohorts in 2017. For the 2018 calendar year six cohorts were held. Of the 18 cohorts from 2016 to 2018, 16 were included in the study, as the final two cohorts of 2018 had not been completed at the time of the research study.

Throughout the 8-week program, participants engage in a live, synchronous virtual training experience led by multiple instructors where they develop skills and gain experiences that align with the following organizational leadership capabilities—inspiring values, engaging colleagues, bold and forward thinking, and driving results. The weekly synchronous sessions are complemented by asynchronous engagement in an online forum in between the live class time. During the program, participants identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics, and communicating effectively. In addition, those enrolled learn to differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership with a coaching mindset versus a management approach. By the end of the program, participants engage in self-assessment exercises to increase self-awareness in preparation for potential future leadership roles.

Prior to enrollment, participants are required to complete the learning covenant acknowledgement form as a prerequisite for acceptance into the program. The covenant acknowledges that attendance for all eight sessions is required for completion of the program.

The program also requires completion of assignments that supplement class time in support of participant learning. The learning covenant acknowledgement form states that participants will obtain approval from their supervisor prior to enrolling in the virtual leadership development program. Participants discuss the program requirements, the time commitment, and participation needs with their supervisor prior to enrolling. Participants agree to attend weekly class sessions which are one hour in length. If unable to attend due to illness, family crisis, or business responsibilities, participants will contact the human resources team to make the program facilitators aware of the planned absence. Should the participant be unable to attend, they commit to watching the missed class session, which will be recorded and made available to all participants, and complete the required assignments available via the program's Yammer page which is used for collaboration and communication among instructors and participants in between scheduled classes. Participants agree to take responsibility for their own learning and development which means they will complete the required assignments, be ready to discuss the material during the sessions and participate to the fullest extent in the learning experience. Participants understand the program may require that they complete assignments in support of their learning. Participants also agree to remain for the entirety of each class session. They recognize their fellow participants need them to stay engaged, to learn, to share, to think, and to challenge and be challenged. Participants must be dedicated to making the program a team learning environment. Participants commit to honor the candid and confidential conversations as opportunities to learn, and understand various perspectives and experiences which are important contributions to an adult learning environment within the organization.

Upon acceptance into the program, participants receive the virtual leadership development program workbook created by the human resources team outlining the program content which includes topics (a) outlining organizational values and leadership, (b) understanding the difference between leadership and management, (c) differentiating between a fixed and a growth mindset, (d) reflecting and journaling on the coaching mindset, (e) understanding the change process and emotional reactions to change, (f) an overview of the ADKAR model for change—awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement, (g) being an active listener, (h) participating in online group activities regarding leadership capabilities, (i) conducting a leadership self-inventory, and (j) identifying their strengths and areas for further development. All applicants to the program who complete the prerequisite requirements and meet the set criteria are accepted into the program based on availability. Automatic notification of enrollment is sent to the participant via the organization’s learning management system, Success Factors. Upon completion of the virtual leadership development program, participants and their supervisors complete anonymous online satisfaction surveys which they receive via email. These surveys are intended to measure the satisfaction rates of participants and supervisors 60 days after the program and again three months after program completion.

No review or analysis of the survey results had been conducted by the organization prior to the current effort; this research study was the first-time this survey data was reviewed. The effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program at the study site was measured in three ways. First, the existing satisfaction survey results from program participants and their supervisors were assessed. The surveys were administered by the organization via online

surveys and were sent to those who complete the program and their supervisor via email. Due to limited resources and competing priorities, this data had been captured but not reviewed. Second, for the first time, data from the human resource system was utilized to track participant promotions after completion of the program. While there is no promise of a promotion associated with the program, those who complete the program are encouraged to apply for leadership positions as they become available. The promotion rates existed in human resource systems, but had not been extracted to assess the promotion rates as it related to program participants. Third, participants were interviewed and given the opportunity to share their perspectives of the program. Interviews were conducted via a web-based video-conferencing tool. The assessment of participant and supervisor satisfaction surveys, the tracking of the number of promotions obtained by participants after completion of the program, and the interviewing of participants provided a comprehensive view of the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals based on multiple data sources.

Upon implementation of a leadership development program, ongoing assessment of the program is beneficial in determining its effectiveness. This study was helpful in assisting the human resources team with their understanding of whether they were achieving the goals associated with the virtual leadership development program they created. The goals included: (a) preparing potential leaders for future leadership positions; (b) identifying those who are interested in leadership positions, but unsure, helping them ascertain if a leadership position is a right fit for them; (c) facilitating the development of skills for informal leadership positions—

those who may not aspire to a leadership title, but do hold leadership roles in an informal capacity within the organization.

### **Problem Statement**

The virtual leadership development program was established in 2016. Its purpose was to prepare candidates for future leadership roles by equipping them with leadership skills and competencies. Since the program's inception, no formal assessment of its effectiveness had taken place prior to this study due to competing priorities. Even though there was available data for administrators to assess the effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program, other priorities had superseded the attention of resources. Without an exploration of the data associated with the program, it was not known if the program was successfully achieving its goals. This hindered continual improvement of the program without data to support enhancement. The problem was that data existed but had not been analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explain how an existing virtual leadership development program utilized at the study site impacted employee leadership efficacy. The program was developed to create an engaging learning opportunity for employees interested in leadership roles. The virtual leadership development program aims to equip future leaders with leadership skills, identify potential candidates for leadership roles, and provide participants with the skills to serve as informal leaders. Leaders at the organization which served as the study site are committed to developing future leaders at all levels and the virtual leadership

development program was designed to enhance leadership skills. This chance to grow leadership skills is not only beneficial for the participants, but also enhances their effectiveness with current colleagues and future teams, including ones they may lead someday. The participants' investment of time and attention to focus on the program curriculum shows that they value the organization and are committed to their personal leadership development. Leaders at the organization rely on this perpetual building of knowledge for continued organizational success.

In the virtual leadership development program, participants are exposed to the organization's leadership capabilities, expanding their leadership skills and competencies, as well as given an opportunity to participate in a virtual forum that connects them with other aspiring leaders, expanding their network. An exploration to determine how the virtual leadership development program was impacting employee leadership efficacy was beneficial for the human resources team to assess the achievement of the intended goals of the program. The program seeks to cultivate leaders by helping them (a) develop skills and gain experiences that align with the organization's leadership capabilities of inspiring values, engaging colleagues, bold and forward thinking and driving results, (b) identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and listening effectively, (c) differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership with a coaching mindset versus management, and (d) engage in self-assessment tools and opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site?
2. How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants?
3. How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective?
4. How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants?

### **Conceptual Framework**

In research, a conceptual framework provides a map for the study (Fulton & Krainovich-Miller, 2010). Frameworks can be used to serve as a guide for research and assist in the organization of the study. It helps frame the design and outcomes of a research project (Green, 2014). This grounded theory study utilized the servant leadership model as a framework for the research. In this study, I focused on a single organization's virtual leadership development program to analyze its effectiveness in training aspiring leaders who are promoted within the organization to leadership roles—either formally or informally. The servant leadership model provided the lens through which the framework for this research study was based. Servant leadership is based on ten characteristics central to the development of servant leaders: (a) listening; (b) empathy; (c) healing; (d) awareness; (e) persuasion; (f) conceptualization; (g) foresight; (h) stewardship; (i) commitment to the growth of people; and (j) building community

(Spears, 2010). It is a framework for leading which is defined as turning the hierarchy of leadership upside down and helping all in the organization develop effective relationships, get desired results, and provide excellent customer service (Blanchard, 2018).

The servant leadership model is the foundation of the virtual leadership development program which was the focus of this study. Contributions from two leading theorists on the topic of servant leadership were considered. The concept of servant leadership originated with Greenleaf (1970) after reading Hesse's fictional account of a great leader seen as a servant first. Spears (1998) built on the concepts of servant leadership resulting in the theory as it is known today. The ideas of Hesse (1956) were the foundation for the theorists and the development of the servant leadership model by Greenleaf and later Spears.

Chapter 2 discusses the conceptual framework in more detail and provides a review of literature. The work of theorists Greenleaf (1970) and Spears (1998) were explored as it relates to the origins and development of the servant leadership model. The review of literature was guided by the conceptual framework which focused on the method of leadership adopted at the organization which was the study site for the current research study. The research design, detailed in Chapter 3 and introduced in the next section, was also guided by the conceptual framework.

### **Nature of the Study**

Within this grounded theory study, I explored how a virtual organizational leadership program impacted employee leadership development. This research study focused on a leadership development program at a large, geographically disperse, healthcare organization.

Researchers in the social and health sciences have found grounded theory to be an effective design for conducting research (Francis & Taylor, 2013). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the grounded theory design to generate theory from research. Charmaz (2008) described grounded theory as inductive, comparative, emergent, and interactive. This study provided an interactive, comparative inquiry utilizing grounded theory to explore whether the virtual organizational leadership development program was indeed developing leaders.

In this study, I explored how a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership efficacy through (1) the review of the survey results from participants and their supervisors, (2) interviewing participants, and (3) assessing promotion rates of those who had completed the program. Using the grounded theory approach to research, theory is allowed to emerge from the data through data collection and analysis. As a result, grounded theory research offers insights, meaning, and enhanced understanding to serve as a guide for future decision-making (Francis & Taylor, 2013). Using grounded theory allowed the data to reveal whether the virtual leadership development program was achieving stated goals. While other qualitative approaches were considered, grounded theory was chosen because of its focus on (a) conducting data collection and analysis iteratively, (b) analysis of processes, (c) using comparative methods, and (d) searching for variation (Charmaz, 2010). This method allowed me to explore the experiences of the program participants and gain an understanding of their perspectives while assessing the program through the lens of servant leadership.

## Definition of Terms

A list of definitions is provided below to assist with understanding the organizational leadership development terms integrated throughout this study:

*Coaching:* The process of challenging and supporting a person or team to develop ways of thinking, being, and learning with the purpose of achieving personal and organizational goals (Thompson & Cox, 2017).

*Key performance indicators:* Financial and nonfinancial measurements used to define and evaluate the success of an organization, creating the basis for accountability, prioritization, and quality improvement (Karami, 2017).

*Leadership:* The process of defining the desired state, setting up the team to succeed, and engaging in discretionary efforts that drive value (Cooper, 2015).

*Leadership development program:* Designed to transform the worldview of program participants while helping them develop the skills necessary for organizational positions (Coloma, Gibson, & Packard, 2012).

*Mentoring:* Proactively seeking to advance the development and education of a mentee (Cobb, Zamboanga, Xie, Schwartz, Meca, & Sanders, 2018).

*Organization:* A group of people who collectively pursue an agreed-upon purpose or goal (Hatch, 2018).

*Program evaluation:* Applied research conducted to aid those who must make decisions about programs based on whether or not the program is accomplishing its objectives (Royse, Thyer, & Padgett, 2016).

*Servant leadership:* To turn the hierarchy of leadership upside down and help all in the organization develop effective relationships, get desired results, and provide excellent customer service (Blanchard, 2018).

*Stewardship:* Being responsible for the community the organization serves and contributing to society in a meaningful way (Barbuto, Gottfredson, & Searle, 2014; Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017).

*Virtual Training:* A highly interactive synchronous online instructor-led training class with defined learning objectives where participants are individually connected from geographically dispersed locations using a web-based classroom platform (Huggett, 2014).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions must be identified and understood in research (Wolgemuth, Hicks, & Agosto, 2017). The following assumptions underlie the study of how a virtual organizational leadership program impacted employee leadership development. I assumed that participants of the virtual leadership development program and their supervisors completed post-program satisfaction surveys. In addition, it was assumed that participants participated in semi-structured interviews with honest feedback regarding their experience in the program. Interviews were transcribed and coded by me. All interviewed participants had the option to opt out of inclusion in the study. Interviews were discontinued once saturation was reached. I also assumed that as researcher, I would have unencumbered access to the electronic systems housing required research data or given access to the data associated with the participant and supervisor

satisfaction surveys, the organizational learning management system, and participant promotion rates. All assumptions associated with the study were met.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study included participants of the virtual organizational leadership development program at the study site. Enrollment in the virtual leadership development program was only open to those who did not hold a formal leadership position in the organization. The study was delimited to data collection and analysis associated with participant and supervisor satisfaction survey results, participant interviews, and participant promotion rates. This study focused on a single virtual organizational leadership development program and its effectiveness as perceived by the participants and their supervisors in combination with promotion rates.

### **Limitations**

While the grounded theory research approach has many advantages, it also has some limitations. Research utilizing grounded theory tends to produce data in large amounts which can be challenging to manage (Charmaz, 2014). It is also an approach to research which is very flexible; that flexibility can become difficult when there are no standard rules for identifying categories and themes in the data (Charmaz, 2008). Other limitations in the study included the research study site, which was a single interdisciplinary healthcare organization and the participant pool was limited to individuals who were employees of the organization and who had completed the virtual leadership development program. The information in this study is nontransferable to other sites. The perspectives shared by the participants and their supervisors

were those from a single organization, having experienced a single leadership development program. The study was limited to survey results from participants of the program who chose to respond; not all participants were interviewed; wide varieties of organizations were not included in the study; nor were multiple leadership development programs reviewed.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study provided developers of the virtual organizational leadership development program insights into the effectiveness of this program which aimed to develop leaders. The results of this study helped to identify: (1) how the organizational virtual leadership development program effected participant promotions within the organization; (2) how the organizational virtual leadership development program effected participant satisfaction rates; (3) how the organizational virtual leadership development program effected participant supervisor satisfaction rates; and (4) how the organizational virtual leadership development program impacted participants? The findings will serve as a guide for the program developers in effective decision-making for future cohorts of the virtual organizational leadership development program and add to the body of literature on the topic of virtual leadership development program effectiveness.

### **Summary**

In this introduction, I provided an understanding of a virtual organizational leadership development program as the topic of this study and how its impact on employee leadership development was researched using a grounded theory approach. The research problem was identified as having a gap in knowledge—data existed but had not been analyzed to determine the

effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program. Competing priorities had led to the redirecting of resources to devote to collecting or reviewing performance data associated with the virtual leadership development program, resulting in a lack of knowledge related to the program's effectiveness. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore how the virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership efficacy. The conceptual framework provided an explanation of the leadership theory which was the approach to leadership adopted by the study site—servant leadership.

The research questions were presented with a focus on how the virtual organizational leadership development program effects participant promotions within the organization as well as participant and supervisor satisfaction rates and the impact on participants from the program. Using satisfaction surveys, participant interviews, and promotion rates, I, as researcher, collected and analyzed data to answer the research questions. This introduction also featured definitions of relevant terms, reviewed research assumptions, outlined the scope and delimitations, and discussed the limitations of the study. Finally, I explained the significance of the study by outlining that this research will benefit the developers of the organization's virtual leadership development program while contributing to the body of literature about the components of effective organizational leadership development programs from the perspectives of participants and their supervisors.

In the following chapters I provide a literature review, review the research method, outline data analysis and results, and discuss the research conclusions and recommendations. In chapter two, I address the historical background of leadership theories and trends in

organizational leadership development, review ideas surrounding whether or not leaders are born or made, and provide an overview of themes in the literature. In chapter three I outline the research methodology used to explore the effectiveness of the organizational leadership development program as it relates to participant and supervisor satisfaction and participant promotion rates after completion of the program. In chapter four I provide an overview of the data analysis and research results which included survey data, interview data, and promotion rates of those who completed the program. Finally, in chapter five I discuss the findings, their relation to the current literature, and conclude with recommendations.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The literature review is a significant component of research which explores and synthesizes the published research on a topic; it reveals trends, serves as a foundation for research, and can identify gaps in knowledge where further research would be beneficial (Neill, 2017; Polgar & Thomas, 2013; Scutt, 2008). Within this chapter, I provide an in-depth review of the topic of servant leadership, specifically as it applies to virtual organizational leadership development training programs. The servant leadership model is the organizational approach of the virtual leadership development program, and the focus of this research study. Effective leadership development programs have the potential to improve employee satisfaction, promote learning, increase promotion rates, and enhance organizational outcomes (Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017). Literature associated with leadership and organizational leadership development programs will be explored in this chapter.

I begin the literature review with a description of the literature search strategies utilized pertaining to the study. A conceptual framework outlines the leading theorists on the topic of servant leadership reviewing the works Greenleaf (1970) and Spears (1998). Following the conceptual framework, the literature review will offer a brief historical background of leadership theories and trends in organizational leadership development. While the current study focused on servant leadership, an outline of other approaches to leadership will be included. Next, a review of ideas surrounding whether leaders are born or made will be explored as this directly impacts organizational approaches to leadership development initiatives. Finally, themes in the literature are revealed including (a) learning to lead, (b) leadership development programs, (c)

the role of mentoring in leadership development, (d) virtual technologies and their use in leadership development initiatives, (e) measuring the success of leadership development programs, and (f) concluding with effective strategies for organizational leadership development programs.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

An effective literature search strategy is necessary to achieve goals associated with research (Song, Simonsen, Wilson, & Jenkins, 2016). In this section I will provide a comprehensive review of the literature search strategies I used when compiling articles for the literature review. I initially performed keyword searches using the following terms: *leadership education, virtual education, technology in education, corporate education, organizational leadership education, education for succession planning, succession planning, training leaders, live synchronous online education, healthcare leadership development, virtual instruction, technology based education, adult education, instructional practices, live synchronous online education, learning virtually, virtual collaboration, leadership education programs*. Libraries utilized included Concordia University-Portland, The College of St. Scholastica, and the library at the study site. Databases searched included ERIC, EBSCO, EMBASE, Google Scholar, MEDLINE, ProQuest, SAGE, and SOLAR. The searches were limited to include only academic journals, educational periodicals, and books from 2014 to 2018.

I utilized a Concordia University–Portland librarian to help identify additional sources for the literature review. The librarian provided 402 authors via the following four expanded searches using ProQuest: (a) *online instruction and training and workforce*; (b) *leadership and*

*training and online instruction*; (c) *online instruction and training and leadership*; and (d) *leadership and training and organizational change*. Articles were limited to years 2014 to 2018. In addition, the librarian was helpful in facilitating inner-library loan for access to those articles not fully available online.

I also utilized a librarian at the study site to help identify sources. As an instructor within the College of Medicine, I had direct access to the library staff. The librarian conducted five searches utilizing EMBASE with the following criteria: (a) *leadership*; (b) *organization*; (c) *leadership and organization*; (d) *education*; (e) *leadership and organization and education*. Articles were limited to years 2014 to 2018; these searches yielded 22 relevant results. Next, I searched the MEDLINE database with the same search terms and yielded 18 additional authors. References lists from textbooks were also used to identify sources pertaining to the conceptual framework; specifically, theorists associated with servant leadership, as this is the approach to leadership in use at the organization which will be the focus of this study. Greenleaf, Kotter, Malphurs, Northouse, Senge, and Spears were authors who were consistently cited throughout articles. Literature searches were expanded using their names and key concepts and additional sources were revealed. Research began with a comprehensive conceptual framework that addressed the foundational concepts of servant leadership as a model for organizational leadership development.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Research frameworks provide a map for the study and rationale for developing research questions (Krainovich-Miller, 2010). Frameworks can be used to serve as a guide research and

assist in the organization of the study. It helps frame the design and outcomes of a research project (Green, 2014). The following conceptual framework outlines the historical sequence of contributions from the two leading theorists on the topic of servant leadership. The concept of servant leadership originated with Greenleaf (1970) after he read Hesse's fictional account of a great leader seen as a servant first. Spears (1998) built on the concepts of servant leadership resulting in the theory as it is accepted today. As a foundation for this research I provided an in-depth overview of these two theorists of servant leadership. I start with the development of the servant leadership model by Greenleaf (1970), which was based on the ideas of Hesse, followed by the continued growth of the theory with the contributions of Spears (1998).

### **Greenleaf: Servant Leadership as a Model**

Greenleaf's model for servant leadership is based on the theoretical foundation provided in the fictional work of Hesse. The idea of a servant leader in *Die Morgenlandfahrt* which was later released in English as *Journey to the East* (1956). Greenleaf read and was inspired by this fictional account of a group of writers, artists, philosophers, poets, story-tellers and thinkers; this group goes on a journey together in search of truth. A servant became the leader of the group and all group members gravitated toward the servant's kind, nurturing, calm nature. This story of a servant who served as a leader became the foundation of Greenleaf's servant leadership model.

The central focus of Hesse's (1956) writings was the idea that great leaders are first servants. The servant met the needs of the group, took care of them physically and spiritually, was their friend and walked alongside them on the journey. As a result, the servant was one the

group listened to and sought advice from. The servant did not need the title of leader to lead the group; he was servant first and servant by nature. The emphasis was put on *who the servant was* rather than what he did; he was a servant who led. Hesse (1956) portrayed the servant leader as having a servant nature which was his true authentic self and could not be taken away.

Leadership as a separate component was characterized as something that could be bestowed and removed. These are the fundamental concepts that served as the genesis of the servant leadership model.

It is this leadership model which is ascribed to at the organization utilizing the virtual leadership development program, which was the focus of this study. The definition of servant leadership as adopted at the organization recognizes that leading by placing others first contributes to building a sense of community and joint ownership, creating a fair and caring community that achieves a purpose beyond ourselves. Servant leaders listen, respect, and motivate others for a greater purpose (Hesse, 1956). The organization's virtual leadership development program was designed to develop great leaders who are first servants of those they lead.

Greenleaf (1970) read Hesse's fictional account of a servant leader in 1958. Hesse's servant character was the catalyst that spawned the idea of the servant as leader. Greenleaf fused the terms servant and leader together and observed that to serve and to lead were synonymous terms. In coining the term servant leader along with the servant leadership model, Greenleaf became the grandfather of a new paradigm of thinking regarding what it meant to be an effective leader (Spears, 1995). He saw society in a leadership crisis, lacking skilled leaders, and decided

to contribute to a solution by writing about servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf's major concerns in developing the servant leadership model were helping people serve in society and serve as individuals committed to their own fulfillment and wholeness. Greenleaf viewed the servant leader as one whose primary motivation was a deep desire to help others. Greenleaf also recognized the significance of education in preparing individuals to be effective servant leaders; calling for rigorous preparation to build effective leaders for organizations and in turn producing a better society.

The servant leadership approach was developed with a focus on altruism and ethics. It is focused on the interests of those being led. Leaders who follow the servant leadership model empathize with followers and take care of them. Greenleaf (1977) suggested that effective leaders are servants by nature. As a servant leader, the leader focuses on the needs of their followers, assisting them in increasing in knowledge. Greenleaf (1970) viewed servant leaders as making followers more autonomous and free. The servant leader produces others who also serve. There is an emphasis on being a good listener, being empathetic, and unconditionally accepting followers (Northouse, 2016). In addition, the servant leader empowers followers and helps them reach their fullest potential; in a sense, the servant leader perpetuates a culture of service (Northouse, 2016).

Greenleaf (1970) valued the servant stature of leaders. He suggested that leaders are chosen because they have first proven themselves as trusted servants, and the most viable organizations would be those which are servant-led. According to Greenleaf (1970) leadership was not something to be sought, but one was to seek to serve and servants would emerge as

leaders. To serve first is a recurring theme of servant leadership. The servant leader takes care of followers by making their needs a high priority. The first test of a servant leader is whether those they lead are becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more servant-like themselves. The second test of a servant leader is how the leader affects the under-privileged in society; whether the under-privileged benefit is an indicator of effective servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970).

Servant leadership begins with the initiative of a trusted individual who inspires others to follow and is able to effectively communicate a goal, repeatedly if needed, to give others certainty and purpose in their achievement. Greenleaf believed that legitimacy begins with trust and that if trust is lacking then nothing will happen regardless of the level of competence or intentions (Greenleaf, 1972). Servant leaders give followers something to strive for and move toward to challenge them to work together to achieve a common goal they can be proud of. The servant leader is the dreamer who inspires others to make that dream come true (Greenleaf, 1970). In this context, Greenleaf was envisioning a servant-led society where not only would institutions be filled with servant leaders, but society would have a mindset of serving one another and promoting the personal growth and development of the population (Greenleaf, Fraker, & Spears, 1996).

Servant leaders are skilled at listening to and understanding those they lead. Greenleaf (1970) suggested that only natural servants respond to problems by listening first. Listening builds strength and trust while facilitating understanding of the situation being faced. Servant leaders listen with the intent to understand rather than to be understood. They are also

comfortable with silence and pauses in dialogue to allow time for thought and contemplation. They ensure that when they speak they will be improving the silence and adding positively to the collaboration. A servant leader should have the ability to cultivate an environment where followers are able to connect concepts to their own experiences through the use of language and imagination. Without the connection to personal experience, concepts lack meaning. According to Greenleaf (1970), the servant leader shares just enough to help followers make the leap in their imaginations to connect concepts with personal experience. They can find the balance between linguistics and experience. It is also important that the servant leader remain open to others and not be verbally closed off by not sharing; otherwise, they may become isolated and lose their leadership ability. This is not to be confused with a healthy, periodic withdrawal to reorient and refresh oneself, which is considered good self-care for the servant leader for optimum performance.

The servant leader, according to Greenleaf (1970), is accepting and empathetic towards followers. While followers can reject a leader, the servant leader may never reject a follower. They may reject the performance of a follower and help them move to a higher level of achievement, but they always accept the follower. This approach recognizes that acceptance of followers involves acceptance of imperfection because people are not perfect. Greenleaf (1970) indicated that great institutions are built by teams of typical people who can reach exceptional goals because they are lifted up by servant leaders.

Greenleaf (1970) recognized that servant leaders need to know the unknowable and foresee the unforeseeable. They have foresight and this helps servants lead the way. The servant

leader can bridge knowledge gaps with intuition and contribute value to the teams they lead and the organizations they serve. They must be creative and able to forge uncharted paths. A keen sense of awareness and perception are also components of servant leadership. The servant leader faces the unknown with confidence and maintains composure during stressful situations. They are also skilled in the art of persuasion—gently, clearly, persistently, and effectively without judgment. Servant leaders get things done; one action at a time. Servant leaders initiate; they go ahead and show the way (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998). Those who follow the servant leadership model lead with vision.

Finally, Greenleaf (1970) described the servant leader as having the ability to conceptualize and passionately communicate a vision in a way that arouses the spirits of followers. Ultimately, servant leaders are devoted to healing and serving those they lead, the organizations they serve, and society. The servant leader knows oneself and those they lead; they have an awareness of their influence on others and ensure that they are enriching others rather than diminishing or depleting them. The power of servant leadership is internal, it is found within, just as joy is. The quality of the servant leader's inner life will be manifest in their presence which has a direct impact on the making the journey possible for those they lead. The virtual leadership development program, the focus of this research study, teaches many of these concepts to potential leaders by focusing on organizational leadership capabilities which are based on these concepts—inspiring values, engaging colleagues, bold and forward thinking, and driving results—all while exhibiting servant leadership characteristics of empathy, kindness, and support to inspire loyalty.

## **Spears: Servant Leadership as an Organizational Framework for Leaders**

Spears (1998) built on his predecessor's foundation of servant leadership to create the theory as it is known today. Spears and Greenleaf only met once, spending a single half-day together eight days before Greenleaf died, but Greenleaf's work made a significant impact on him (Dittmar, 2006). The work of Spears helped to continue a shift from traditional, autocratic, hierarchical models of leadership to team-based communities of collaboration where decision-making is shared, ethics is paramount, and personal growth and development takes place. Servant leaders are authentic, vulnerable, present, and accepting while being useful as servants (Ferch, Spears, McFarland, & Carey, 2015). Spears viewed servant leadership as an approach to life and work that would be transformational and long-term; a way of being, to positively change society. Spears (1998) created a list of ten characteristics central to the development of servant leaders: (a) listening; (b) empathy; (c) healing; (d) awareness; (e) persuasion; (f) conceptualization; (g) foresight; (h) stewardship; (i) commitment to the growth of people; and (j) building community. While this list is not considered exhaustive, it provides a foundational framework for servant leadership (Spears, 2010).

**Listening.** The servant leader listens to understand. According to Schwantes (2015), "They respond by listening first, will listen before he speaks, as he speaks, and after he speaks" (p. 31). Spears (1998) recognized that effective leaders combine listening intently to others with strong communication and decision-making skills. Servant leaders identify and clarify the will of the group through a commitment to listening. The leader engages in receptive listening to purposefully hear both what is being said and what is not being said. Patient listening and

discussion is useful in understanding the perspectives of others (Jit, Sharma, & Sawatra, 2017). Listening well is an opportunity to release the ego and find a greater consciousness resulting in a greater good for others (Ferch, 2012). Beyond external listening, Spears (1995) also believed that effective listening began within. He suggested that leaders listen to their internal voice and gain greater self-awareness about what their own mind, body, and spirit was communicating. Servant leaders are skilled at listening both internally and externally in conjunction with regular reflection resulting in continued growth for both the leader and those being led.

**Empathy.** Empathy is a critical behavior characteristic for servant leaders (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). It is an extension of listening (Schwantes, 2015). Servant leaders work to empathize with and understand those they lead appreciating them for the unique individuals they are (Spears, 1998). They can calm and comfort those who are distressed through empathetic handling of situations (Jit, Sharma, & Kawatra, 2017). Effective leaders utilizing a servant leadership model are empathetic listeners who accept and recognize others while assuming good intentions. According to Spears (1995), servant leaders assume good intentions of those they lead. When undesirable behavior or performance occurs, the servant never rejects the person, rather makes a distinction between the person and the behavior. Empathy also involves the servant leader possessing an element of humility and acknowledging their own limitations as an individual while looking to and listening to the perspectives of others to overcome those limitations (Van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Greenleaf developed a receptive listening course during his study of servant leadership which continues to be a resource for leaders today (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). Spears (2002) indicated that the servant leadership

model offers a new leadership paradigm with moral principles for successful leadership. These moral principles are related to the idea that authority is granted to the leader by the followers. This approach to leading others facilitates caring and empathy which creates trust.

**Healing.** Greenleaf (1970) indicated that the search for wholeness is something that both the leader and follower share in servant leadership. Spears (1998) suggested that the greatest strength of servant leadership is that ability of leaders to promote the health of both self and those they lead. Servant leaders are committed to helping make others whole. They recognize healing as a critical component of transformation and integration (Spears, 1995). To do this, the leader lives and leads with authenticity, representing their true self both in private and in public (Van Deirendonck, & Nuijten, 2011). Servant leaders understand that human beings by nature have suffered hurts of various kinds and they view leadership as an opportunity to help bring healing to all those they encounter. Jit, Sharma, and Kawatra (2017), proposed a conceptual model linking servant leadership with emotional healing that incorporates the following elements: (a) servant leader's compassion and empathy; (b) awareness of follower's emotional turmoil; (c) feelings of concern; (d) behavioral characteristics of servant leader—emotional healing; altruism, service, listening; (e) gaining perspective through listening and discussion; (f) responding with compassion—listening patiently, handling empathetically, personal responsibility; (g) healing and restoration of emotional balance. When servant leaders engage in healing, the result is an organizational culture where failure is not feared and the work environment is dynamic, fun, and engaging (Schwantes, 2015).

**Awareness.** Servant leaders make a commitment to foster awareness, which can be unsettling because something negative might be discovered (Spears, 1995). According to Greenleaf (1970), awareness is not a giver of solace; rather, it makes leaders sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. Servant leaders do not seek solace, but have their own inner serenity. Spears (1998) recognized that awareness, including a keen self-awareness, made strong servant leaders. He indicated that cultivating an environment of awareness can cause fear because leaders do not know what may be discovered. Yet, it is in this environment of increased awareness that a more holistic view is cultivated to promote effective decision-making. Self-awareness is integral to emotional intelligence which is essential to effective leadership (Bowe & Jones, 2017). Goleman (1998) referred to emotional intelligence as the single most important characteristic for a leader; a learned process encapsulated by self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. This kind of awareness involves interpersonal acceptance; it is the ability for the servant leader to understand where followers are coming from and handle offenses, arguments, and mistakes effectively (Van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Greenleaf supported a kind of awareness that led to noble choices and ultimately enlightenment for challenging times (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). This kind of awareness allows the servant leader to view situations with a more integrated perspective (Spears, 1995).

**Persuasion.** Spears (1998) believed that servant leaders can persuade others in making organizational decisions rather than using position or authority to force compliance. This approach to leadership relies on building group consensus versus coercion. With group consensus, value is placed on convincing others rather than forcing compliance. This is distinctly

different from authoritative models of leadership. The servant leader does not take advantage of their power or role, rather uses influence to build consensus (Schwantes, 2015). Another element of persuasion is accountability and holding teams responsible for outcomes once a direction is determined (Van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Spears (1995) indicated that the focus on servant leaders using persuasion and consensus versus coercion was rooted in Greenleaf's religious beliefs; values that translated effectively in leading others well.

**Conceptualization.** According to Spears (1998) servant leaders can see the big picture; they look beyond the current, daily reality and can dream big. This visionary element and ability to offer broad-based conceptual thinking is an important component of servant leadership. It is balancing the focus on daily tasks with long term goals. Through conceptualization, the servant leader can see solutions to problems that may not presently exist (Schwantes, 2015). Servant leaders can focus on both conceptual and operational perspectives simultaneously (Spears, 1995).

**Foresight.** A component closely related to conceptualization is foresight; the ability to foresee situational outcomes (Spears, 1998). This characteristic empowers the servant leader to comprehensively consider past lessons, present realities, and future consequences related to decision-making. This takes courage and the willingness of the servant leader to challenge accepted models and take risks to discover new paths (Van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Through foresight, servant leaders can understand lessons learned from past experiences, apply them to the present reality, and foresee the most likely consequences that a decision may have on the future (Schwantes, 2015). This is the only characteristic of servant leadership that one is

typically born with rather than a developed skill as it is deeply rooted in the leader's intuitive mind. It is an innate ability to synthesize the past, present, and see the most likely future through intuition. All the other characteristics of servant leaders, except for foresight, can be developed through training. This is a topic that has opportunities for further research in leadership studies as not much has been contributed on the topic of developing leaders with foresight (Spears, 1995).

**Stewardship.** Block (1993) defined stewardship as holding something in trust for another. Greenleaf's (1970) definition was inclusive of all members of an organization playing significant roles in institutional trust for the good of society. Spears (1998), built on these ideals of stewardship with a servant leadership model that is committed to serving the needs of others. Stewardship inverts the focus on leaders to focusing on followers as the central point; the leader must earn the right to lead (Block, 2014). It is being responsible for the community the organization serves and contributing to society in a meaningful way (Barbutto, Gottfredson, & Searle, 2014; Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017). In this act of stewardship, the servant leader accepts responsibility for and acts as role model and caretaker of the organization as a whole (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Spears (1995) also viewed stewardship from a servant leadership perspective as emphasizing the use of openness and persuasion versus control.

**Commitment to the growth of people.** According to Spears (1998) servant leaders are committed to contributing to the growth and development of every individual they lead. There is a focus on nurturing the continued growth of followers—personally, professionally, and spiritually. While this can take many forms, some methods include ensuring funds are available

for development opportunities and involving everyone in sharing ideas for organizational decision-making. Another method is empowering followers by encouraging their continued development (Van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011). This results in a cycle of perpetual commitment, competence, and confidence within people (Spears, 1995). According to Spears (1995) this commitment to the growth of people recognizes the intrinsic value that followers bring to the team beyond the tangible work tasks that they accomplish. While the extrinsic needs associated with organizational goals are important, the needs of the people are valued more. In theory, when the people are served well, they will serve the organization well. Servant leaders have a responsibility to do everything within their power to promote the personal and professional growth of those they lead (Schwantes, 2015).

**Building community.** Greenleaf (1970) recognized the need for servant leaders to demonstrate their commitment to those they lead by developing community-related groups. In a time when local communities were shifting to large institutions, Greenleaf acknowledge this was negatively impacting the shaping of lives with a loss of community. Servant leaders foster the building of community among those they lead and restore an element of connection and belonging to something larger than self (Spears, 1998). They also support the interests of others and are generous with recognition when credit is due (Van Deirendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Servant leaders are known as compassionate collaborators who are interested in the ideas of others and want to involve followers in making decisions (Schwantes, 2015). According to Greenleaf (1970) all that is needed to rebuild community is for servant leaders to show the way,

not by mass movements, rather by each servant leader demonstrating their own unlimited liability and commitment to the community being served.

Servant leadership as an institutional model and philosophy for nonprofit and for-profit organizations was first promoted by Spears (1998). This theorist believed the servant leadership model's primary purpose for businesses was to create a positive impact on employees and the community they serve. Servant leadership has become viewed as a framework necessary for organizations that ascribe to it to ensure effective leadership in continuous quality improvement efforts and to promote systems thinking. Servant leadership as a practical application for organizations has been found to work by reinforcing the nature of the profession, being action-oriented, and being committed to celebrating people and their potential (Spears, 1995). According to Spears (2016), servant leadership can be applied as a leadership methodology in any organization through understanding, desire, and personal commitment by those who practice it. By incorporating the traits of intelligence, alertness, expressiveness, and curiosity, leaders mature and serve others well (Leider & Spears, 2016). Many organizational leaders have successfully transitioned from traditional, hierarchal leadership models to the relational, servant leadership model (Spears, 2010). Specifically in healthcare organizations, servant leadership has been identified as an effective model to promote strong teams, the development of trust, and best serve the needs of customers (Trastek, Hamilton, & Niles, 2014).

In addition to serving as an effective institutional model for leaders, servant leadership has been shown to have a second application for training and education of trustees of nonprofit organizations (Spears, 1998). The concepts within servant leadership help trustees and boards of

directors' answer questions related to those they serve and for what purpose they serve. When functioning as servant leaders, trustees have been found to be more effective members in serving organizations and helping them achieve goals. Educational opportunities have also been successful in community leadership programs and organizational leadership educational programs utilizing the servant leadership model as the framework for learning. The paradox is that servant leadership also supports the idea that leaders are not trained; rather, they evolve through their own natural rhythm (Greenleaf, Beazley, Beggs, & Spears, 2003). Therefore, servant leadership programs attempt to facilitate the natural development of the leader.

Leaders in organizations are finding that, teaching servant leadership concepts through leadership development programs, improve how business is developed and conducted (Spears, 1998). In organizations, servant leadership turns the hierarchy of leadership upside down and makes it possible for all in the organization develop effective relationships, get desired results, and provide excellent customer service (Blanchard, 2018). Many of the characteristics of servant leadership are natural for some leaders; however, most can also be learned through practice (Spears, 2010). Businesses become greater than the sum of their parts when the people of the organization serve well and work together toward synergy (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998). Servant leadership education in organizations ensures the next generation of leaders will have the skills to lead utilizing the servant leadership model (Greenleaf, Beazley, Beggs, & Spears, 2003). Servant leadership workshops introduce participants to concepts associated with the servant leadership model. Servant leadership is taught as a philosophy of life for work and home, rather than an organizational approach to leadership only applied in the workplace. Typically, servant

leadership training sessions include instructor-led education, exercises and activities, personal reflection among participants, viewing recordings, and discussions among small groups. It is also reinforced that it is not simply a matter of learning a set of skills and being finished; becoming a servant leader involves ongoing reflections and discussions as it relates to the organization being served. In addition to workshops, leadership development efforts are recommended to include ongoing mentoring (Spears, 1995).

Finally, servant leadership has been credited with having an application for personal transformation. It has the potential to transform values, thoughts, priorities, and how lives are lived (Ferch, Spears, McFarland, & Carey, 2015; Leonard, 2017). As a personal growth and development tool, servant leadership provides a pathway to spiritual, professional, emotional, and intellectual growth. It is with increased self-awareness, individuals are encouraged to find opportunities where they can serve and lead. In turn, they enhance their own quality of life as well as that of society. The study site for this research study seeks to inspire hope and contribute to the health and well-being of society while promoting the organizational core values of respect, integrity, compassion, healing, teamwork, innovation, excellence, and stewardship. Promoting this at an organizational and societal level begins with the personal transformation of individuals. The mission and values of the organization are aligned with the servant leadership principles as defined by Spears (1998). Servant leaders produce more effective, caring organizations (Spears, 2010).

As the foundation of the virtual leadership development program, the servant leadership model was a significant component of this study. Servant leadership is much more about who

leaders are than what they do, which can be a challenge (Greenleaf, Frick, & Spears, 1996). The servant leader is a servant first; they aspire to serve first—the choice to lead is secondary. The servant leader ensures that the highest priorities of others are being served and the true test of servant leadership is whether or not those being served are growing as persons—becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and servants themselves (Greenleaf, 1970). Studies indicate that the use of servant leadership has a positive impact on the motivation of followers to also become leaders (Lacroix & Verdorfer, 2017). The concepts of servant leadership as developed by Greenleaf (1970) and Spears (1998) provided the context for the framework by which the success of the virtual leadership development program was measured in this study.

The following literature review begins with the historical background of the study of leadership to the current state of leadership development programs within organizations. I reviewed theories of leadership and methods of program delivery including the use of virtual systems for courses, reviewed mentoring and coaching as it applies to leadership development programs, and explored methods used to measure the success of leadership development initiatives. The literature review will conclude with a summary.

### **Review of Literature**

According to Hodgkinson and Ford (2015), when conducting a review of literature, the topic being explored should have a sufficient body of scholarly knowledge accumulated to warrant continued research. A prerequisite of a sizable amount of research and theory associated with the topic is needed for a thorough literature review (Hodgkinson & Ford, 2015). A wealth of research exists on the topic of leadership theory and leadership development (Bradd,

Travaglia, & Hayen, 2017; Gandolfi, Stone, & Deno, 2017; Hibbert, Beech, & Siedlok, 2017; Newman, Schwarz, Cooper, & Sendjaya, 2017; Öztürk, Varoğlu, & Varoğlu, 2017; Pidgeon, 2017; Vogel, 2017; Wellman, 2017). Within Chapter 2, I explore current literature relating to the history of leadership, leadership theory, and leadership development, review the history of the study of leadership, additional leadership theories, themes found in the literature, and will conclude with findings.

## **Background**

The study of leadership dates to the times of Aristotle when he combined ethics and action for people to live well and be happy as leaders (Douglas, 2014). Early works revealed connections between knowledge, skills, wisdom, intelligence, sensory perception, and intuition in doing what was considered right (Aristotle & Sachs, 2002). Other early leaders valued leading with power, defying convention, and being an effective communicator, such as Julius Caesar (Barlag, 2016). Over time, leadership theories, models, and frameworks for educating leaders have evolved. Studies indicate that there is a relationship between historical events and the evolution of leadership theory and practice at given points in time (Harter, 2015). Today, leadership education programs in organizations are known for teaching skills related to problem-solving, conflict resolution, effective listening, and teamwork (Northouse, 2016).

## **Additional Leadership Theories**

A comprehensive review of leadership development practices and how to effectively educate leaders requires an understanding of the different theories of leadership. In addition to servant leadership, which was already reviewed in this chapter, other significant leadership

theories will be covered. To provide an overview of the different approaches to leadership, (a) the great man theory, (b) style approach, (c) situational leadership, (d) contingency theory, (e) path-goal theory, (f) leader-member exchange theory, (g) transactional, and (h) transformational leadership will briefly be outlined. In addition to these approaches to leadership, there are also styles, including (a) authoritarian, (b) democratic, and (c) laissez-faire (Northouse, 2016). These styles will be evident in each approach outlined.

Research investigating leadership traits which make great leaders in the early twentieth century resulted in the great man theory (Northouse, 2016). It is a philosophical belief first presented by Carlyle (1841), which is focused on heroes and hero worship. This theory suggested that specific innate qualities and characteristics could be identified which make certain people naturally great leaders. Those not born with these traits were considered followers rather than leaders. Great men, leaders, were those who enlightened others and provided a model to be followed to make a better society. The great man theory was the first of many leadership approaches with an emphasis on personal traits. Critics of the theory argue that society, rather than nature, contributes to the qualities associated with great leaders (Spencer, 1875). While the first of several in the line of leadership theories, there are those who still consider the great man theory relevant in contemporary society (Spector, 2016).

In contrast to leadership approaches which define great leaders by traits, the style approach defines effective leaders by their behaviors. This approach places emphasis on the leader's behavior rather than their personality characteristics (Northouse, 2016). Stogdill's (1948) research was significant in expanding views to include consideration of more than

leadership traits to be inclusive of behavioral skills. The approach divides behaviors into two types—task behaviors and relationship behaviors. Leaders utilize the style approach to combine both task and relationship behaviors to accomplish goals with those they lead. Unlike other leadership theories, the framework of the style approach to leadership is broad and describes components of effective behaviors instead of identifying specific behaviors (Northouse, 2016).

Hersey and Blanchard (1969) were credited for developing the approach known as situational leadership. This method focuses on the situation the leader is facing and recognizes that different situations may require different ways of leading others (Northouse, 2016). Situational leadership is based on the premise that there are two different dimensions of leadership—directive and supportive. Depending on the leader's subordinates at a given point in time, either directive or supportive measures may be appropriate. Leaders change their approach as the situation requires. Supportive leadership behaviors would be those which are delegating and supporting subordinates, while directive behaviors would be those which are coaching and directing subordinates (Blanchard & Zigarmi, 1985). There are four styles of situational leadership—telling, selling, participating, and delegating. When using the telling approach, the leader tells followers what to do. The selling approach involves the leader selling their idea to the followers. In participating, the leader engages in less directing of followers; instead, the leader shares decision-making with the team. Lastly, in the delegating approach, the leader delegates responsibilities to the followers (Luizzi, 2017). Recent studies indicate that situational leadership remains an effective leadership model for some organizations (Haibin & Shanshi, 2014).

Fiedler (1964) is recognized as the creator of the contingency theory of leadership which suggested that leaders are most effective when their style is paired within a context in which they will be successful (Northouse, 2016). Hence, the performance of the leader is contingent on them being in a position that is aligned with their personal style. The contingency theory approach to leadership focuses on leader styles and situations and having leaders effectively matched to situations where they would be of the most benefit. This approach recognizes three factors faced by leaders: (a) leader-member relations, (b) task structure, and (c) position power. Using a contingency model of leadership, these three factors determine the most appropriate leader for a given situation (Fiedler, 1967). Studies continue to support the validity of the contingency theory approach to leadership in organizations (Waters, 2013).

In the 1970s the path-goal theory emerged out of the desire to increase the performance and satisfaction of employees through employee motivation (Northouse, 2016). In this theory, leaders must adjust their leadership style to best motivate their subordinates. It operates under the assumption that motivation happens when subordinates believe they are capable, will achieve desired outcomes, and are accomplishing something worthwhile. The path-goal theory of leadership essentially defines what the goals are, clarifies a path to achieve those goals, removes any obstacles, and provides support along the path to achievement of goals (House & Mitchell, 1974). This approach incorporates leader behaviors of directive leadership for guidance, supportive leadership to nurture subordinates, participative involvement of the leader, and achievement-oriented leadership to provide challenges (Northouse, 2016). A recent study indicated that the path-goal theory promotes the leadership capabilities of customer service,

creativity and innovation, listening and communication, coaching and mentoring, and conflict management (Bickle, 2017).

While most leadership theories focus on the one in a leadership position, the leader-member exchange theory focuses on the process of leadership from the perspective of the relationship between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2016). In this model leaders develop relationships with subordinates individually; the dyadic relationship between leader and follower is defined by content and process exchanges. The making of a leader develops throughout three phases when the leader and subordinate go from being strangers to acquaintances to having a mature partnership (Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1992). The three phases are role taking, role making, and role routinization. During role taking, the leader initiates the process of leader-member exchange. Next, during the role making phase, a series of dyadic events shape the quality of the leader-member exchange. Finally, the leader-member exchange culminates in the role routinization phase in which the group maintains a stable relationship. Studies indicate it is an effective framework for establishing and maintaining high-quality relationships between leaders and followers within organizations (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017).

Burns (1978) proposed both transactional and transformational leadership after he categorized political figures by the type of leader they were. Those who are transactional leaders rely on authority to motivate those they lead. They focus on rules and punishment to control subordinates. Transactional leaders maintain the status quo and only intervene when expectations are not being met (Hackman & Johnson, 2004). In transactional leadership, tasks, responsibilities, and expectations are clearly defined and monitored.

In the 1980s transformational leadership gained popularity. It emerged as a valid approach to leadership when Burns (1978) suggested that to be effective, leaders needed to understand the motives of followers, which would result in the ability to meet the goals of both leaders and followers. This approach focuses on inspiring and empowering followers to succeed through charismatic leadership and influence (Northouse, 2016; Tal & Gordon, 2016). It incorporates processes to transform followers by attention to values, ethics, standards, and goals while meeting the needs of followers and seeing them holistically as human beings. Through transformational leadership, leaders connect with and engage followers to help them reach their fullest potential. In this partnership both the leader's and the follower's motivations and morale are increased. A recent study found that both transactional and transformational leadership styles can be beneficial in healthcare settings (Saravo, Netzel, & Kiesewetter, 2017).

According to House (1976), transformational leaders typically have personality characteristics that include being dominant, confident, possessing strong values, and having a desire to influence others. They serve as strong role models, are competent, articulate goals effectively, have high expectations for followers, and are skilled motivators. As a result, followers trust and identify with transformational leaders and have increased confidence (House, 1976). Ultimately, transformational leadership is viewed as positively effecting followers by utilizing idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Follower satisfaction rates and team performance have shown a positive relationship with the use of the transformational leadership style (Liang, Chan, Lin & Huang, 2011; Prochazka, Vaculik, & Smutny, 2017).

## **Leadership: Nature or Nurture**

The military has recognized the value of effective leadership development programs based on the belief that leaders are not born; rather, they are made through training and education just as is the case with any other profession (Bowe & Jones, 2017; Strong, 2016). Greenleaf believed that leaders were both born and made; suggesting that there were some skills that could be taught and others that they were born with, such as humor and foresight (Spears, 1995). This is supported by current research which indicates that leadership development programs are effective in improving participant reactions, learning, transfer, and results (Lacerenza, Reyes, Marlow, Joseph, & Salas, 2017; Vatan, 2016).

Northouse (2016) explored the differences between trait and process leadership. Trait leadership defines a leader by their physical height, intelligence, extroversion, fluency, and other traits related to sociability; while process leadership is based on the leader's interactions with followers. Those who ascribe to the trait approach to leadership would indicate that leaders are born. This approach has been found to change over time in defining what characteristics are considered leadership traits in one time period versus another (French & Raven, 1959). The process leadership approach is more aligned with people having the ability to learn skills associated with effective leadership.

This is the definition set forth by the organizational leaders of the virtual leadership development program. The skills approach incorporates three skills needed for effective leadership (1) technical, (2) human, and (3) conceptual (Katz, 1955). This is consistent with the findings of Murthy, Sassen, and Kammerdiener (2016) and Maqbool, Ye, Manzoor, and Rashid

(2017), which indicated that potential leaders have strong decision-making skills, a high level of emotional intelligence, learning agility, and demonstrate team effectiveness. Leaders must have a high level of proficiency in their area of expertise, an ability to work well with people, and be able to work with ideas and concepts. This combination of problem-solving skills complemented with social judgment and knowledge frame a leadership competency for effective leaders. This structure is consistent with the curricula used in most educational programs aimed at leadership development (Northouse, 2016).

### **Learning to Lead**

Those who lead well define the organization's desired state, set up the team to succeed in getting to that state, and engage in efforts that drive organizational value (Cooper, 2015). Leadership experts indicate that aspects of leadership can be learned (Bauermeister, Greer, Kalinovich, Marrone, Pahl, Rochholz, & Wilson, 2016; Casey, 2016; Johnston, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; McGinley, Peterson, & Johnston, 2016; Sorensen, 2017); therefore, concepts and skills associated with effective leadership can be taught in leadership development programs. In a recent military leadership development program, recruits learned that being an effective leader is not associated with years of service, but with leveraging knowledge and experience of self and others; building trusting relationships; being willing to take risks; and focusing on results (Dow, 2018). Likewise, McMaster (2014) indicated that learning to lead must include building relationships, fostering a collaborative environment, and creating links between the goals of the organization with those being led. According to Kouzes and Posner (2017), there are five practices of exemplary leadership that leaders need: (a) modeling the way; (b) inspiring a shared

vision; (c) challenging the process; (d) enabling others to act; and (e) encouraging the heart.

Those who design leadership development programs can be assured that aspiring leaders can learn to lead.

Creators of organizational leadership development programs are encouraged to incorporate the aforementioned elements in curricula aimed at cultivating new leaders. By teaching prospective leaders to model the way, they obtain the skills to define their own personal values and align actions with shared values. In inspiring a shared vision, new leaders are taught to envision the future desired and recruit followers with shared aspirations. When taught to challenge the process, leaders gain the ability to find innovative ways to improve and take risks while learning from mistakes. By including a component of enabling others to act, leaders learn to create a collaborative environment built on trust and strengthen others by sharing power. Finally, by training leaders to encourage the heart, they learn to build community by celebrating the accomplishments of others (Hallowell, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

### **Leadership Development Programs**

Leadership development programs are designed to transform the worldview of program participants while helping them develop the skills necessary for organizational positions (Coloma, Gibson, & Packard, 2012). Effective leaders are needed to help organizations collectively pursue a purpose or goal (Hatch, 2018). Organizations with successful leadership development strategies provide continual pipelines of new leaders from within the organization and offer a significant return on investment (Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016; Tichy & Cohen, 1997). Yet, leaders in organizations struggle to maintain effective leadership development

programs even with budgets allocated specifically for organizational leadership training (Ho, 2016; O'Leonard, 2014). While 66% of organizational leaders recognize the value of leadership development programs and offer them to employees, few consider their leadership development programs successful (Fernandez-Araoz, et al., 2017; Schwartz, Bersin, & Pelster, 2014).

Effective leaders are a critical component of healthcare organizations, like the study site, and it is important to have educated leaders who can understand, analyze, and handle complex challenges (Ghiasipour, Mosadeghrad, Arab, & Jaafaripooyan, 2017). The literature indicates that servant leaders have the potential to revolutionize organizations with their ability to impact individual, group, and organizational performance in positive ways (Heyler & Martin, 2018). This highlights the importance for organizations to have effective leadership development programs in place as well as continually measure the success of those programs.

Organizational leadership development programs are not universally present; oftentimes, due to the lack of a solid model of leadership with a framework for training to follow (Bozer, Kuna, & Santora, 2015; Leonard, 2017). There has been limited research about leadership development programs for those working in healthcare organizations (Bradd, Travaglia, & Hayen, 2017; Lachance & Oxendine, 2015). Many nonprofit organizations do not offer leadership development programs (Bozer, Kuna, & Santora, 2015). Due to this, some organizational leaders have created their own leadership development programs with a focus on authentic leadership, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, inter-professional collaboration, organizational effectiveness, and life-long learning (Bowe & Jones, 2017; Murthy, Sassen, & Kammerdiener, 2016). Bozer, Kuna, and Santora (2015) found that when nonprofit

organizations were not promoting leaders from within the organization, they encountered retention problems. A formal leadership development program to engage and train those who are interested in moving up in the organization promotes the retention of talent and reduces turnover. Bozer's, et al. (2015) study also found that organizations benefit when employees are viewed as long-term organizational assets and provided the resources to develop the skills needed for leadership positions. The value that leadership development programs bring to organizations is clear.

Objectives of leadership development programs often include developing talented leaders, preparing future leaders, and improving leadership competencies. This is achieved through instructor-led training, group learning among peers, experiential learning, and reflection done in the classroom and independently (Murthy, Sassen, & Kammerdiener, 2016; Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016; Steinhilber & Estrada, 2015). It is important that leadership development programs are based on an easily understood and usable model of leadership that is connected to the organization's desired leadership skills (Lacerenza, et al., 2017; Leonard, 2017). An incorporation of inductive learning supporting attitudes of inquiry and discovery produce positive results with adult learners (Kolb, 2014; Leonard, 2017). When creating a leadership development program, it is beneficial to also include the ability to engage in real-world situations to practice leadership skills, opportunities to demonstrate the improvement of leadership skills, and give participants time to offer real-time feedback on the training experience (Leonard, 2017) as well as review of leadership case studies and small group exercises in a safe environment (Hartzell, Yu, Cohee, Nelson, & Wilson, 2017).

## **Leadership Development Through Mentoring and Coaching**

Mentoring and coaching have been shown to be powerful tools to incorporate into organizational leadership development programs (Lenert & Janes, 2017; Leonard, 2017; Stevenson, 2016). They provide a developmental relationship between mentees and mentors where encouragement, guidance, and support are received (Chadiha, et al., 2014; Wilson, et al., 2014). Coaching challenges and supports teams towards the development of ways of thinking, being, and learning with the purpose of achieving personal and organizational goals (Thompson & Cox, 2017). Mentoring proactively seeks to advance the development and education of a mentee (Cobb, Zamboanga, Xie, Schwartz, Meca, & Sanders, 2018). In recent studies conducted by the United States military, Air Force and Army leaders found that leadership development programs benefit from having leadership models in place along with defined behaviors for leaders to follow. This combined with effective communication and mentoring resulted in enhanced leader performance (Arenas, Tucker, & Connelly, 2017; Ferrell, 2016). The value of mentoring and coaching in leadership development programs has been well-established.

This is consistent with Spears' (1998) servant leadership model for organizational leadership development which focused on specific characteristics and behaviors for leaders to emulate. Likewise, Augustine-Shaw (2015) and Seidle, et al. (2016) indicated that mentoring or coaching and induction with time for reflection for new leaders through cohorts resulted in increased leadership capacity and self-awareness which is considered the most significant component of leadership effectiveness. In Augustine-Shaw's (2015) case, new leaders were assigned a coach for their first year in a leadership position. There were added benefits

associated with the expanded knowledge base of leaders, networking opportunities, and the cultivation of a culture of learning. Having the support of a mentor in leadership development empowers participants in their learning while serving as a continual resource for them (Devin, 2016; Devin, Augustine-Shaw, & Hachiya, 2016). Mentoring and coaching offer the opportunity for unfiltered feedback which provides reinforcement of the material learned as well as the generation of increased self-awareness (Seidle, et al., 2016).

### **Virtual Technologies in Leadership Development Programs**

Given the global nature of many organizations, the use of virtual and online technologies has become commonly used for training and education. This non-traditional classroom environment can be as effective as the traditional experience when designed well (Faulconer & Gruss, 2018). In the two decades between 1995 and 2014, authors from 34 different countries published scholarly articles related to synchronous online learning (Martin, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Budhrani, 2017). In the modern age, organizations currently operate in a digital world where teams routinely work in a virtual environment rather than face-to-face with all or part of their team (Chang, Hung, & Hsieh, 2014; Dulebohn & Hoch, 2017; Hoegl, & Muethel, 2016; Meier, Smith, & Porter, 2016). As a result, training and development of new leaders often includes the incorporation of audio and video technologies or online, on demand learning. These are cultural forces that are reshaping organizational life and while they bring value, they also bring challenges (Block, 2014; Miller, 2016). Virtual training options offer interactive synchronous online instructor-led training classes where participants are individually connected from geographically dispersed locations using a web-based classroom platform (Huggett, 2014) as

well as asynchronous functionality. It is important that instructors are informed of the opportunities that exist in virtual training opportunities (Lenert & Janes, 2017; Thomas, 2016). While the reality of virtual training and education has been established, there are both benefits and challenges associated with the use of these technologies.

Benefits associated with virtual training include the development of higher levels of critical thinking which bring value to leadership roles as well as increased knowledge and skills (George, et al., 2014; Mendez, Al Arkoubi, & Yue, 2015); likewise, virtual technologies have advanced to the point to be able to mimic the real-life feel to experiences gained online. This advancement in virtual technologies for education has made both synchronous and asynchronous interaction possible for participants (Giesbers, et al., 2014; Rockinson-Szapkiw & Wendt, 2015). The use of virtual technologies in training programs positively impacts perception and attitudes, enhanced interaction, and increased achievement (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Djukic, et al., 2015; Martin, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Budhrani, 2017). Participants in virtual programs are engaged when the technology facilitates the ability to connect with peers and instructors and the program generates desirable outcomes; they were also found to be more collaborative and achieve higher levels of competency when utilizing synchronous virtual learning platforms (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Wendt, 2015; Watts, 2016). When participants find the virtual experience useful, enjoyable, and user friendly, they are more likely to be engaged (Tokel & Isler, 2015). Likewise, a review of online leadership courses indicated that a focus on maintaining student engagement was directly correlated with getting the greatest benefit out of the virtual setting (Deschaine & Whale,

2017). It is also beneficial for instructors to become experts in the specific online technology being used for the program to reap optimum benefits.

Challenges associated with virtual training programs include technological issues associated with sound, video, Internet connection stability, Internet speeds as well as inconsistencies between virtual tools and the participant knowledge levels of the tool being used (Farooq & Matteson, 2016; Lindsay & Williams, 2014). Current modalities of delivery vary widely and have differing functionality depending on the technology selected. Common delivery systems include WebEx (Cisco, 2018), GoToMeeting (Citrix Systems, Inc., 2018), Elluminate Live (Blackboard Inc., 2018), Adobe Connect (Adobe Systems Incorporated, 2018), and Blackboard Collaborate (Blackboard Inc., 2018). It can be especially challenging for facilitators of virtual programs to be successful if they do not have a firm understanding of the technology being used (Smith, 2015), or if leaders at the organization allow too many students to be enrolled in the virtual programs at the same time (Trammell & LaForge, 2017). Couple that with differences among virtual technologies for education including the bandwidth they require to run, the learning curve for both instructors and students, variances in functionality and customizability, limitations with platforms, and costs associated with the tools; venturing into the realm of virtual training can become overwhelming for organizational leaders, instructors, and students (Alexandra & Lucian, 2015). To combat challenges, organizational direction and support has been shown to be a driving factor in the success of quality virtual programs (Lenert & Janes, 2017). Leaders of organizations benefit from an awareness of both the benefits and

challenges associated with virtual learning and must prepare to mitigate the challenges in order to reap the benefits.

### **Measuring the Success of Leadership Development**

The effectiveness of leadership development programs must be systematically measured to determine whether a return on investment is being achieved (Phillips, Ray, & Phillips, 2016; Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016). Through the use of key performance indicators, measurements can be used to define and evaluate success, creating the basis for accountability, prioritization, and quality improvement (Karami, 2017). Positive outcomes from organizational leadership development programs include improving employee retention, increasing employee participation and engagement, and improving leadership skills and promotion rates among employees. The programs have also been shown to break down barriers and silos between different campuses at multi-site organizations (Clarke & Higgs, 2016; Murthy, Sassen, & Kammerdiener, 2016). It is significant to note that organizational leaders should measure organizational impact when assessing leadership development programs to ensure enhanced leadership is equating to organizational success rather than solely individual outcomes (Clarke & Higgs, 2016; Frich, Brewster, Cherlin, & Bradley, 2015; Leonard, 2017; Phillips, Ray, & Phillips, 2016; Steinhilber & Estrada, 2015).

Program evaluations use applied research to aid those who must make decisions about programs based on whether or not the program is accomplishing its objectives (Royse, Thyer, & Padgett, 2016). Satisfaction surveys can be an effective means of assessing the success of a leadership development program (Anderson, Tredway, & Calice, 2015; Harrison, Gemmell, &

Reed, 2014; Hill, 2014; Marmon, Vanscoder, & Gordesky, 2014). Recommended areas of focus for measuring leadership development program success include internal processes, behaviors, intangible benefits, human resource metrics, and business unit perspectives (Phillips, Ray, & Phillips, 2016). It is important to evaluate leadership development programs regularly and change that which is identified as not working well (Steinhilber & Estrada, 2015). Studies indicate that leadership development programs continue to have improved impacts on organizational results and bring great value (Lacerenza, et al., 2017). In a review of 335 leadership training programs, Lacerenza, et al. (2017), found that there was a significant return on investment in desired organizational outcomes as a result of leadership development programs. Hence, identifying key performance indicators and systematically measuring leadership development program performance as it relates to organizational goals is imperative to the continual improvement of the training.

### **Summary**

Ultimately, organizational leadership development done well contributes to effective stewardship of organizations. This stewardship within organizations is defined as being responsible for the community the organization serves and contributing to society in a meaningful way (Barbuto, Gottfredson, & Searle, 2014; Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017). The organization which was the focus of this study ascribes to a servant leadership model and utilizes both synchronous and asynchronous virtual formats for the virtual organizational leadership development program. Synchronous technologies make live streaming video and audio possible with instant feedback from participants for real-time interaction while also

incorporating an asynchronous component in the program of study for the participants to engage at will (Giesbers, Rienties, Tempelaar, & Gijselaers, 2014). This blended approach, including both forms of interaction, promotes participant engagement as the goal of each type is to facilitate participant learning, material retention, and engagement (Watts, 2016).

In this literature review, I addressed the historical background of leadership theories and trends in organizational leadership development; reviewed ideas surrounding whether or not leaders are born or made; and provided an overview of themes in the literature associated with learning to lead, leadership development programs, the role of mentoring in leadership development, virtual technologies and their use in leadership development initiatives, measuring the success of leadership development programs, and effective strategies for organizational leadership development programs. In the review of literature, I offered foundational knowledge on the topic of organizational leadership development for this research study to build upon. In the following chapter, I outline the grounded theory methodology used to explore the effectiveness of an organizational leadership development program, the virtual leadership development program, as it relates to participant and supervisor satisfaction and participant promotion rates after completion of the program.

### **Chapter 3: Research Method**

Organizational leaders benefit from having leadership development programs that allow prospective leaders to get real-world practice in an environment that reinforces the organization-specific cultural nuances that exist (Leonard, 2017). Specific to healthcare organizations, effective leadership skills are necessary to address the difficult challenges being faced by the industry today as staff are required to do more with less (Arroliga, Huber, Myers, Dieckert, & Wesson, 2014). Leadership development programs benefit from being evaluated to ensure they are achieving the desired outcomes of the program (Blumenthal, Bernard, Fraser, Bohnen, Zeidman, & Stone, 2014). Exploring the effectiveness of organizational leadership development programs adds to the research and offers guidance for the enhancement of future programs. Within this grounded theory study, I explored how a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership efficacy through the review of the survey results from participants and their supervisors, interviewing participants, and assessing promotion rates of those who completed the program. The research methodology that was used for the research study is outlined within this chapter.

In this study, I utilized a large interdisciplinary educational healthcare organization as the study site where I explored how the use of a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership development. The specific area of interest for this study was an internally developed educational program offered by the organization's human resources department—a virtual leadership development program. This program targets all employees in the organization, both clinical and allied-health, who are interested in advancing their leadership skills but who do

not have a leadership title. I reviewed and synthesized the data collected to assess the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program. At the time of the research study, 435 participants in 16 cohorts had completed the program from the spring of 2016 to the fall of 2018 when the study was conducted. The participants in the virtual leadership development program were spread out among 17 different locations in the organization, representing four different states in the United States. My role as the researcher consisted of being a collector of both existing and new data, and a data analyzer. Plans for data collection and analysis, ensuring the validity and reliability of the data, and ethical procedures for this study are outlined in this chapter.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions for this study were:

1. How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site?
2. How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants?
3. How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective?
4. How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants?

### **Research Design of the Study**

I selected a qualitative method for research according to the purpose of the study and research questions with the goal of gaining insights into the effectiveness of a virtual organizational leadership development program. Creswell (2014) explained that qualitative approaches to research involve collecting data in the participant's setting followed by my interpretation of the data to bring meaning. Additionally, the grounded theory design, which was initially used in a healthcare setting to research dying patients, is grounded in the fundamental idea that explanations and theories are generated based on the perspectives of the participants (Charmaz, 2014). Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally developed the grounded theory design for sociologists needing to generate theory from research. Charmaz (2008) built on the ideas of the design founders and described grounded theory as inductive, comparative, emergent, and interactive.

In the current study, I utilized Charmaz's (2014) constructivist approach to grounded theory. In this view, grounded theory includes iterative logic with a focus on flexible application of the research design. Theory using this research design is based on data directly from those who experienced the phenomena being researched. The data combined with the researcher's investigation generates the explanation and theory. Grounded theory provides guidelines for research that are systematic, yet flexible for data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I utilized the grounded theory design to examine the virtual leadership development program's effects and identify the impact the program has had on participant promotions and participant and supervisor satisfaction rates. It is through interactive

and comparative inquiry, which is the coding of numerous comparisons of data (Charmaz, 2014), that this study explored whether the virtual organizational leadership development program is indeed developing leaders. The perspectives of the virtual leadership development program participants and supervisors were evaluated in this study.

According to Charmaz (2014), the qualitative method of research involves collecting data in the participant's setting followed by the researcher's interpretation of the data to bring meaning. The grounded theory design, which was initially used in a healthcare setting akin to the current study site, is grounded in the fundamental idea that explanations and theories are generated based on the perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Theory is based on data directly from those who experienced the phenomena being researched. The data combined with the researcher's investigation generates the explanation and theory. Research utilizing grounded theory does not begin with hypotheses; rather, it allows the data to answer the questions (Charmaz, 2014). The grounded theory design was useful in data collection and analyses to provide an in-depth review of research results. This form of inquiry generated knowledge from complex data as it qualified as a qualitative interpretive means to compare, code, and sort data (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

According to Leavy (2017), qualitative research offers inductive approaches to build knowledge and meaning from data sources. Qualitative methods are used for exploration, investigation, and learning, and result in the ability to describe and explain the researched phenomena. It is for this reason that a qualitative approach was appropriate for this study exploring the effectiveness of a virtual organizational leadership development program.

Exploratory research helps fill gaps in knowledge (Leavy, 2017). In the case of the present study, there was a gap in knowledge associated with the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program. While the data existed in participant and supervisor surveys and within promotion rates, none of the data had been reviewed. Analysis of this data in addition to participant interviews was able to close the knowledge gap and equip the program developers with information to make informed decisions about the continued improvement of the program to ensure it achieves the organizational goals associated with the program. This qualitative methodology utilizing the grounded theory design was used for data collection and analyses and provided an in-depth review of research results.

Ground theory is an inductive method of research which generates theory from data (Green, 2014). This form of inquiry generates knowledge from complex data as it qualifies as a qualitative interpretive methodology through comparisons, coding, and sorting of data (Taylor & Francis, 2013). Grounded theory enables the researcher to increase the analytic import of work and the speed in which it is completed (Charmaz, 2014). The design provides a set of principles, strategies, and guidelines for research without being prescriptive in nature. Charmaz's (2014) constructivist approach to grounded theory views research as a construction in progress; in this sense the researcher recognizes the specific conditions under which the research occurs. The researcher is involved in the construction and interpretation of the data associated with the study. Grounded theory starts with inductive logic, subjects data to rigorous comparative analysis, develops theoretical analyses from the data, and utilizes the study to inform organizational policy and practice (Charmaz, 2014). These characteristics aligned well with the research study that I

focused on as I explored the effectiveness of a virtual organizational leadership development program.

Effective leadership development is a significant issue for the study site organization. There was sufficient information to draw conclusions from in existing surveys and promotion rates, yet this information had not previously been reviewed, so there were no current stated conclusions on the topic. This study also offered an opportunity to hear the voices of the program participants and compare how their perspectives may be different or similar to the information which was previously captured in the satisfaction surveys. This effort focused on a single healthcare organization's leadership development program to analyze its effectiveness in training leaders who are promoted within the organization to leadership roles, either formally or informally. The study filled a gap in knowledge and provided the developers of the virtual leadership development program, within the study site's human resources department, with information regarding whether or not intended outcomes associated with the program were being met. There was also a lack of current literature that addressed the effectiveness of virtual organizational leadership development programs; this study not only fills an internal organizational gap in knowledge but contributes to a larger knowledge gap in the talent development profession as a whole in regard to components of effective leadership development programs utilizing virtual technologies.

Grounded theory was chosen as the methodology to conduct this qualitative study as it is a method that generates theory from data (De Chesnay, 2015). According to Charmaz (2014) grounded theory can ground theoretical orientation in the views or perspectives of individuals.

Research utilizing grounded theory does not begin with hypotheses; rather, it allows the data to answer the questions. The method has its roots in research involving patients who were dying in hospitals. Through grounded theory, explanations were formed based on the perspectives of the participants (Charmaz, 2014). This research study relied on the views of the participants to generate theory. Strategies used in grounded theory include:

1. Conducting data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process;
2. Analyzing actions and processes rather than themes and structure;
3. Using comparative methods;
4. Drawing on data in service of developing new conceptual categories;
5. Developing inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis;
6. Emphasizing theory construction rather than description or application of current theories;
7. Engaging in theoretical sampling;
8. Searching for variation in the studied categories or process; and
9. Pursuing developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic (Charmaz, 2014).

Through these strategies I was able to engage in qualitative inductive data collection and analysis to produce answers to the research questions. I used grounded theory to analyze the collected data to build theory and contribute to the literature. As researcher, through this study, I demonstrated how the use of a virtual organizational leadership development program at the

study site impacted employee leadership development by assessing participant and supervisor satisfaction and participant promotion rates after program completion.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My role as researcher in this study consisted of primary data collector of existing survey results, conductor interviews of participants, and data evaluator and analyzer of all data collected. As a part of the research process, I kept a daily journal of study-related activities and reflections. The study site selected is a large interdisciplinary educational healthcare organization where I explored how the use of a virtual organizational leadership development program impacted employee leadership development. The study site is also my place of employment. I do not work in the human resources department, which is the area that facilitates the virtual organizational leadership development program. However, within my role in information technology, I serve on the education team and am an instructor within the College of Medicine; therefore, I had access to most of the data required for the study. The human resources team retrieved data I did not have access to and sent to me for inclusion in the study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by me. I received authorization from the human resources leadership team granting me authorization to proceed with the research by signing a written agreement (see Appendix A). I also received Institutional Review Board approval from both the study site and Concordia University–Portland. Per the conditions outlined in the written agreement, the study site remained confidential in the dissertation research study and all mention of the study site were redacted prior to publication.

It should be noted that I have participated in the virtual leadership development program which is the subject of this research study. I was enrolled in the program as a participant from July 11, 2017 through August 29, 2017. During my time as a student in the virtual leadership development program I shared with the instructors and my cohort that I was in a doctoral program. It was during that time that I was beginning to think about dissertation topics. I was interested in focusing my research on a project that involved components of education, leadership, and technology. Upon completion of the virtual leadership development program, I was contacted by one of the program instructors to discuss the possibility of researching the effectiveness of the program for my dissertation.

While surveys had been automatically sent to participants since the program's inception in 2016, the team had not had the resources available to conduct a thorough review of the program's effectiveness due to competing priorities. I agreed to focus my research on the virtual leadership development program as it met my intended goals of studying a topic related to education, leadership, and technology; while also contributing valuable insights into the program's effectiveness for the program's developers and the larger body of literature on the topic as a whole. To avoid any bias I may have had about the program, I did not provide any information regarding my own experience when collecting data. I did not respond to the program survey, so there was no survey data from me to be incorporated into the study. My supervisor's response to the survey also was not included in the data collection process as it would pertain to me and my experience in the program. I had not been promoted to a leadership role since completion of the program; hence as researcher, I was not reflected in that data

collection either. I am an employee of the organization which is the study site; however, I am not an employee in the department which facilitates the virtual leadership development program. There is no conflict of interest in my role as the researcher.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

In qualitative research, participants are selected to be aligned with the purpose of the research and the research questions (Leavy, 2017). Purposeful sampling ensures the best data for the study by starting with the most appropriate participants (Patton, 2015). The use of purposeful sampling is most appropriate when researchers need to select a representative sample for a study and researchers have some knowledge of the population (Taylor, 2017). According to Taylor (2017), this type of sampling process increases credibility for qualitative studies.

In this research study, participants were selected solely based on their employment at the study site and completion of the virtual organizational leadership development program. This was the only criteria for participants to be in the study. Criteria for selection of participants included theoretical sampling which is a data collection process involving the simultaneous collecting and coding of data. This process drives the decision-making for data collection and is central to grounded theory which ensures that the research produces a theory that is truly grounded in data (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). In this sense, the processes of data collection, coding, and analyses are done concurrently and the data directs the researcher in what to collect next (Charmaz, 2014). Using this method, the researcher must remain open to following the data and potentially revising what is being asked of participants; hence, the semi-structured interview questions offer some flexibility. The following eight steps were followed:

1. I generated a list of all program participants who completed the virtual leadership development program at the study site. This information was available via a report in the learning management system used at the organization.
2. All program participants were contacted via email with an opportunity to participate in the research interview (see Appendix B). My participant logic was to select the first 12 respondents for interviews. This was consistent with Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) recommendation that for most research studies, 12 interviews are sufficient to gather data and generate themes on participant views and experiences. Charmaz (2014) echoed this recommendation in her work on grounded theory. The recommendation proved to be true as saturation was reached within 12 interviews.
3. I scheduled the 12 interviews during the month of September 2018.
4. Interviews were conducted and recorded.
5. Interviews were transcribed.
6. Interviews were coded.
7. Coded interviews were analyzed to identify common themes.
8. Findings were documented.

All those who had completed the program were included in the collection of existing study data which included participant and supervisor satisfaction survey results and promotion rates. That participant list included 435 people. Two additional cohorts were scheduled in 2018 after the data was collected and were not reflected in the study results. Supervisors of participants at the time of enrollment in the program were also included in the participant

selection for the research study. Both program participants and supervisors were from diverse areas across the organization and offered an enterprise-wide perspective. I used the survey data the human resources department provided me access to on September 6, 2018 to assess the survey results. The retrieved data was coded, analyzed, and findings were documented based on survey results. Participant selection logic included the following.

**Program Completion.** Participants for this study were enrolled in a cohort of the virtual organizational leadership development program at the study site and successfully completed the program. The total number of participants was 435, including 16 cohorts from 2016 to 2018. All those who had completed the program at the time research began were included in the study. Cohorts began in 2016. Enrollment in the leadership development program was open to all employees of the organization who were not in a formal leadership position. Enrollment in the leadership development program was optional for employees and required supervisor approval. All participants of the virtual organizational leadership development program received satisfaction surveys upon completion of the program. Survey completion and participation in the research interview were optional.

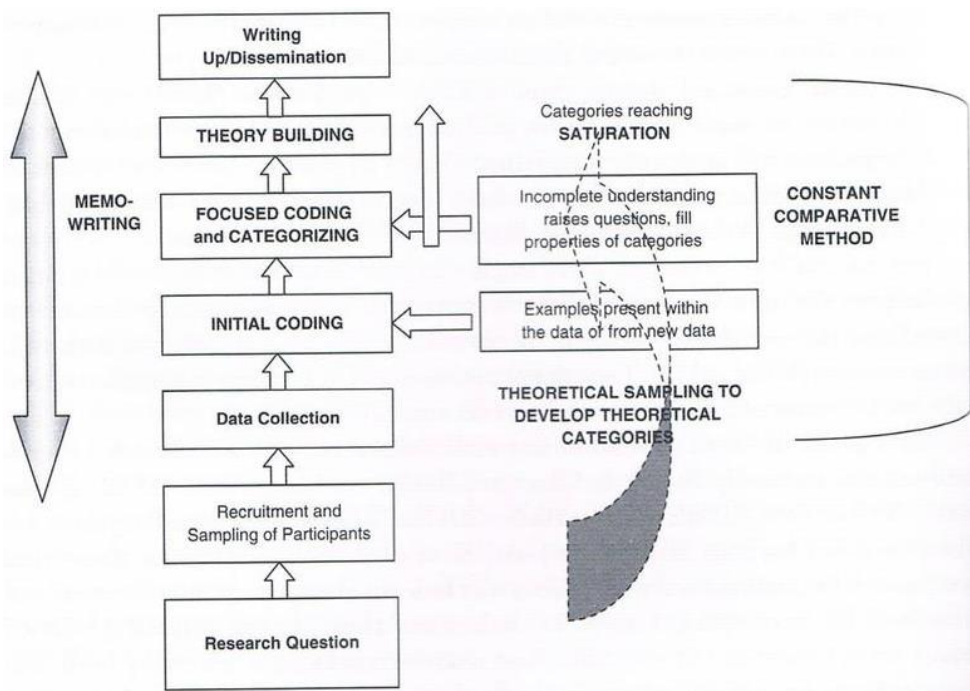
**Supervisor of Participant.** The perspectives of the supervisors of participants in the virtual organizational leadership development program were included in this study. Anyone who was a supervisor of a participant at the time of completion of the virtual organizational leadership development program received a satisfaction survey for inclusion in the study. Survey completion was optional.

## **Instrumentation**

The use of instruments or tools, also known as instrumentation, is important for research (Edgar & Manz, 2017). In my research design, multiple instruments were necessary for the study. The survey data collection, promotion rates data collection, and interview process all required specific instruments for collection of the data. In grounded theory, ultimately the researcher is the primary instrument. Through continuous memo-writing the researcher (a) addresses the research question, (b) recruits a sampling of participants, (c) collects data, (d) codes data, (e) categorizes data, (f) builds theory, and (g) writes findings (Charmaz, 2014). In this section, I describe the instrumentation which was used in this study. Tweed and Charmaz's (2011) visual representation of a grounded theory provides a graphic depiction of the flow of my process for instrumentation (Thompson & Harper, 2011, p. 133).

Following the grounded theory design as depicted by Tweed and Charmaz's (2011) graphic display (figure 1), I began with the research questions, which were: (1) How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site? (2) How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants? (3) How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective? (4) How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants? With the research questions in mind, I recruited participants for the study who had completed the virtual organizational leadership development program. The first 12 volunteers were selected for interviews. Data collection commenced with

the scheduling and conduction of interviews, compilation of survey data, and extraction of promotion rates. Initial coding involved the first review of data and the identification of concepts within the data. This was followed by focused coding and categorization of the data into common themes. Systematic categorization and comparison of the data included repeated fracturing and analysis of the data to look for new concepts. Saturation was reached when no new common themes were being produced.



*Figure 1. Constructing Grounded Theory*

As the researcher, I accessed four data sources that are the instruments in this study. I accessed cohort data for all cohorts of the program from 2016 to 2018. This information was in the organization's learning management system, Success Factors, which I had access to, and retrieved myself. Cohort data included participant name, division, department, supervisor, title, credentials, email address, work location, and date of program completion. Then I accessed the

satisfaction survey results of all program participants and their supervisors from the first cohort in 2016 to the fall of 2018 which were three surveys developed by the human resources team and distributed to those who participated in the study. The surveys included: (1) follow-up survey for participants sent immediately upon completion of the program to participants, (2) follow-up survey for participant supervisors sent 60 days after participant completion of the program, and (3) post-program survey of participants sent three months after completion of the program.

The surveys were conducted via online surveys and access to the results was sent to me by the human resources team for inclusion in the study in September 2018. A secure web application for building and managing online surveys was utilized which can be used to collect any type of data. I then accessed the promotion rates of participants in the program from the first cohort in 2016 to 2018. This information was retrieved from the human resource system and was sent to me for inclusion in the study in September 2018. After the human resource data was collected, I conducted interviews of participants of the program; also done in September 2018. Interview transcripts were used to assess the effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program based on participant perspectives. The inclusion of all cohorts in the study provided a comprehensive view of the virtual leadership development program's overall effectiveness.

### **Data Collection**

Surveys, interviews, and data reflecting promotion rates were the primary data utilized in this grounded theory study. Researchers who use grounded theory typically use interviews as the primary data collection technique (Charmaz, 2014). In this research study I conducted interviews and collected data from surveys and human resource systems. Grounded theory

research also focuses on comparing data systematically and allowing categories or themes to emerge as it is collected rather than waiting until all data is received. While the survey and systems data in this study were received in totality at once, I remained true to the concepts of grounded theory and coded interviews as they occurred by immediately transcribing the recorded interviews and codifying themes.

Survey, or questionnaire, research is widely used to allow the researcher to ask standardized questions resulting in statistically analyzed data (Leavy, 2017). Experts promote the use of existing surveys for consistency of data; doing so facilitates the study of change over time and provides more data to work with (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014). The survey instrument utilized for this study was an online survey tool sent via email to all participants upon completion of the virtual organizational leadership development program. A total of three surveys were sent—the program participants received two and the participant supervisors received one as follows.

A survey intended to measure to what extent the learning objectives were successfully implemented by the virtual organizational leadership development program was sent to participants immediately upon completion of the program. The learning objectives measured included: (1) developing skills and gaining experience to inspire values, engage colleagues, have bold and forward thinking, and drive results; (2) identifying and practicing skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and communicating effectively; (3) differentiating and recognizing the impact of leadership and a coaching mindset versus management; and (4) engaging in self-assessment exercises in

preparation for future leadership roles. These learning objectives were defined by the creators of the virtual organizational leadership development program.

The final outcome of the virtual leadership development program culminates in participant completion of a leadership self-inventory in which they rate their (a) ability to inspire values, (b) engage colleagues, (c) have bold and forward thinking, and (d) drive results. Participant completion of the survey was voluntary. The surveys were modeled after the Kirkpatrick Return on Investment / Return on Expectation evaluation methodology (Abkulghani, Shaik, Khamis, Al-Drees, Irshad, Khalil, & Isnani, 2014). Recommended questions and processes from the evaluation method were utilized with a few customizations specific to the program. The survey process focused on the Return on Expectations philosophy in that the participant and their supervisor were given an opportunity to self-reflect and evaluate the skills acquired and learning that took place while assessing how the participant was able to apply them to their work. Seven questions were asked on the initial survey as outlined in Figure 2 (see Appendix C).

<p>1. I am applying what I learned in the program.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>2. I have received coaching and/or support in applying my new skills and/or knowledge.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>

*Figure 2. Follow-up Survey for Participants.*

Figure 2 Continued

<p>3. This program has supported me in my career development.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>4. I am applying the following new skills and/or knowledge from this program in my current role:</p>
<p>5. I have experienced the following successes in applying my new skills and/or knowledge:</p>
<p>6. I have encountered the following barriers to applying my new skills and/or knowledge:</p>
<p>7. Additional Comments:</p>

*Copyright is held by an external entity; used with permission. Contact the dissertation author for information.*

A survey was also sent to the supervisors of all participants upon completion of the virtual organizational leadership development program. This survey was intended to measure to what extent the learning objectives were successfully implemented by the virtual organizational leadership development program from the supervisor's perspective. Supervisors were considered an integral part of the process from the beginning of participant acceptance in the virtual leadership development program as they were required to approve enrollment and serve as a coach throughout the duration of the program. Supervisor completion of the survey was voluntary. The learning objectives measured are outlined in Figure 3 (Appendix D).

<p>1. Based on my observations, my staff member has applied new skills and/or knowledge attained from participating in this program.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>2. I have provided coaching and/or support to assist my staff member in applying their new skills and/or knowledge.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>3. The communication emails I received throughout the program were helpful in providing me with suggestions and ideas on how to coach and support my staff member.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>4. Please provide two or three examples that demonstrate your staff member has successfully applied their new skills and/or knowledge.</p>
<p>5. If your staff member has not been able to apply their new skills and/or knowledge, please describe two or three barriers they might need help overcoming in order to be successful.</p>
<p>6. What suggestions, if any, would you recommend that would have helped you in supporting your staff member successfully implement their new skills and/or knowledge as they went through the program.</p>
<p>7. Additional Comments:</p>

*Copyright is held by an external entity; used with permission. Contact the dissertation author for information.*

*Figure 3. Follow-up Survey for Supervisors.*

The final survey was sent to the program participants three months after completion of the program. The survey had sixteen questions. Participant completion of the survey was voluntary. The questions on this survey are outlined in Figure 3 (Appendix E). For questions 10–11, 1 = not at all and 10 = extremely. For questions 14–15, 1 = strongly disagree and 10 = strongly agree. Names were optional on all surveys. Sending the final survey three months after completion of the program allowed participants time to reflect on their experience and adequately assess the impact of the program over time.

<i>Post-Program Participant Survey</i>
<p>1. Develop skills and gain experiences that align with organizational leadership capabilities: Inspiring Values, Engaging Colleagues, Bold and Forward Thinking and Driving Results</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>2. Identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and communicating effectively</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>3. Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) vs. management</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>

*Figure 4.*

Figure 4 Continued

<p>4. Engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>5. The format of the program was conducive to my learning style and preferences</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 Strongly Disagree <input type="radio"/> 2 Disagree <input type="radio"/> 3 Neutral <input type="radio"/> 4 Agree <input type="radio"/> 5 Strongly Agree</p>
<p>6. The time commitment (in class and out) of the program was</p> <p>Too short / Just right / Too long</p>
<p>7. For completion credit of the program I would recommend that participants be required to</p> <p>Attend ALL sessions / Miss 1 live session &amp; watch recording / Miss 2+ live sessions &amp; watch recordings</p>
<p>8. What worked well during the program?</p>
<p>9. What change to the program would you recommend?</p>
<p>10. Level of CONFIDENCE to apply what I learned</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9 <input type="radio"/> 10</p>
<p>11. Level of COMMITMENT to apply what I learned</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9 <input type="radio"/> 10</p>
<p>12. What barriers do you anticipate might prevent you from applying what you learned?</p>
<p>13. What might help you overcome those barriers?</p>

Figure 4 Continued

<p>14. I expect positive results from applying what I learned.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1   <input type="radio"/> 2   <input type="radio"/> 3   <input type="radio"/> 4   <input type="radio"/> 5   <input type="radio"/> 6   <input type="radio"/> 7   <input type="radio"/> 8   <input type="radio"/> 9   <input type="radio"/> 10</p>
<p>15. I would recommend this program to others.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1   <input type="radio"/> 2   <input type="radio"/> 3   <input type="radio"/> 4   <input type="radio"/> 5   <input type="radio"/> 6   <input type="radio"/> 7   <input type="radio"/> 8   <input type="radio"/> 9   <input type="radio"/> 10</p>
<p>16. Overall comments</p>

*Copyright is held by an external entity; used with permission. Contact the dissertation author for information.*

In this study, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews, each 15–30 minutes in length. The use of semi-structured interviews facilitated an exchange which was guided by a list of questions, but with flexibility to explore new ideas and topics based on the interviewee's responses to open-ended questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Grounded theory uses interviews to reveal and understand patterns in experience (Charmaz, 2014). The grounded theory design guided my approach to interviews. Following Charmaz's (2014) model of interviewing with grounded theory, I (a) asked open ended questions, (b) explored the participants' experience and concerns, (c) engaged in initial memo-writing and coding, (d) treated recurring interview statements as theoretically plausible, (e) created and developed tentative categories, (f) identified theoretical direction, (g) conducted additional interviews if needed for saturation, (f) defined theoretical centrality, and (g) assessed theoretical adequacy.

An invitation to participate in an interview was sent via an email communication (Appendix B) to all program participants who had completed the virtual leadership development

program as of September 2018. The first 12 to respond were selected to be interviewed, as this number of interviewees was supported by Charmaz (2014) and Guest et al. (2006) for grounded theory studies. Due to the geographically dispersed nature of the organization, which has locations in multiple states across the United States, the interviews were conducted via video conferencing and recorded. Constructivist interviewing practices based on the grounded theory design were considered in the development of the interview questions. Using constructivist techniques, I developed the interview questions in such a way that the participant's story was revealed while silencing the researcher (Charmaz, 2009). The first question was considered the most important question of all and could theoretically have been the only question if the participant shared their entire story based on that one question. Using this approach to designing interview questions, the questions were created carefully to promote participant reflection (Charmaz, 2014).

The ten interview questions (see Appendix G) gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their experience in the virtual organizational leadership development program and share their perspectives. Participants were asked why they enrolled in the virtual leadership development program. They were encouraged to share their experience in the program and elaborate on positive or negative aspects they encountered. Participants were asked about their opinion regarding the effectiveness of the program in achieving the program objectives of developing skills and gaining experiences that align with the organization's leadership capabilities, identifying and practicing skills related to the leadership capabilities, differentiating and recognizing the impact of leadership versus management, and engaging in self-assessment

opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles. Questions addressed the effectiveness of the program in communicating the ten principles of servant leadership—listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Participants were asked about their potential to move into a leadership position after completing the program; whether or not it had helped their career progression. In addition, they were asked to share about their knowledge level of the virtual technology prior to the program and how the use of that tool was effective or ineffective based on their experience in the program. The use of supplemental technologies such as Yammer for cohort collaboration was addressed in the questions to find out whether that enhanced participant experience in connecting them with classmates and instructors. Participants were asked if they would recommend the program to others and given an opportunity to share any changes they would recommend for the program to be more effective. Finally, if the participant had not transitioned into a leadership role since completion of the program, they were asked to describe the biggest obstacles hindering that transition.

A web-based video-conferencing tool was the internal communication method used at the study site. This was the tool used to conduct the interviews. Using this method of communication, I was able to connect with the study participants with audio and video regardless of their geographic location. I also had the ability to record the interviews for later review and transcription. As all employees of the organization were familiar with and had a high comfort level with this technology, it provided a common ground for the interviews and gave me as researcher the ability to read body language during the sessions.

The final data collection activity was getting a report of promotion rates of all participants who completed the program from 2016 to 2018. This report listed all program participants who had been promoted to a formal or informal leadership role within the organization. These were individuals who had applied for a leadership position at the organization and had been hired for the leadership role since completing the virtual leadership development program. This was acquired from the human resource system by the human resources team and provided to me for inclusion in the research study. My role as data collector and data evaluator commenced with the analysis of the data. The plan for data analysis continues in the next section.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

For the developers of the virtual organizational leadership development program to understand the perspectives of program participants and their supervisors as well as the impact of the program, a three-fold approach to research was utilized in data analysis which included: (1) satisfaction survey results from participants and their supervisors were collected and analyzed, (2) interviews of participants were conducted, and (3) promotion rates were extracted from the human resource system for all program participants. The satisfaction surveys were already in existence as all participants and their supervisors had been requested to complete surveys since the first cohort in 2016. The questions were not altered to ensure the consistency of the data collected from all cohorts for inclusion in the study. While prior surveys had been administered and stored, competing priorities had redirected resources on the human resources team to other

priorities, resulting in no review or analysis of the survey results or promotion rates prior to the current research study.

Coding of the data was completed to identify themes in the participant and supervisor responses as well as identify any trends in promotions. In grounded theory, coding is the process of bringing meaning to the data and defining it (Charmaz, 2014). I coded the data utilizing Excel spreadsheets by categorizing key phrases into segments with short names in preparation for data analysis to identify common themes. It was recommended in grounded theory that researchers follow seven rules when coding, (a) remain open, (b) stay close to the data, (c) keep codes simple and precise, (d) use short codes, (e) preserve actions, (f) compare data, and (g) move through the data quickly (Charmaz, 2014). I followed these recommendations in my initial coding practices utilizing open coding. Initial coding involved the first review of data and the identification of concepts within the data. This was followed by a second round of more focused coding to derive meaning from the data by categorization of the data into common themes which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. With systematic categorization and comparison of the data, repeated fracturing and analysis of the data, new concepts were revealed. Saturation was reached when no new common themes were being produced.

Memo-writing was a core component of the grounded theory research incorporated into the research study which begins the analysis process (Charmaz, 2014). I engaged in memo-writing daily during the month of research gathering and analysis by taking the codes and data apart, comparing them, and identifying links between them—translating data to information. Memo-writing was documented on an online site for documentation for easy access from any

computer. The process of memo-writing followed a journaling format which was broken up by date. This allowed me to view the data analyses over time and identify trends in the themes as they were revealed in the data. In grounded theory, memo-writing guides, directs, and commits the researcher to taking action with the data (Charmaz, 2014). It is a discovery phase activity that begins the process of identifying patterns in the data and the generation of analytic ideas. According to Charmaz (2014), memo-writing helps me as researcher to (a) think about the data, (b) recognize qualitative codes as categories to analyze, (c) interact with the data and begin analysis, (d) develop a writer's voice in the process, (e) create new ideas for continued research, (f) avoid forcing the data into existing concepts and theories, (g) create new ideas, concepts, and relationships between the data, (f) recognize connections between categories, (g) identify gaps in the data, (h) create links between data gathering, analysis, and writing, (i) start building sections and chapters of the research paper, (j) maintain momentum in analysis, and (k) increase my competence and confidence as a researcher.

In grounded theory, categories of data are considered saturated when the researcher is gathering fresh data, but no longer generates new insights (Charmaz, 2014). When the categories are repeatedly reporting the same findings, saturation of the study has been achieved. It is recommended that researchers be willing to go back and recode earlier data if it appears that saturation is being reached to ensure new information is not there to be defined (Charmaz, 2014). I incorporated this approach in my research and revisited data once saturation was reached. Saturation was reached when no new common themes were being produced.

Triangulating key observations for interpretation was utilized to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic being researched (Patton, 1999). In the current research study, four data sources were reviewed—participant surveys, supervisor surveys, participant interviews, and participant promotion rates.

It is with valid survey questions in place, researchers can code, analyze, and interpret the answers in a meaningful way (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014). I used the information gleaned from the surveys to code the respondents' answers and report both ordinal and interval results. All survey responses were pulled from the online survey system by the human resources team and provided to me for inclusion in the study. Survey completion was optional for all respondents. All surveys were anonymous unless the respondent chose to enter their name on the survey, which was not required. All participants voluntarily responded to the emailed survey questions accessible via a link to the online system.

According to Vogt, et al., (2014) it is beneficial to interpret and report both ordinal and interval results to prevent bias in reporting. To accomplish this, I imported all survey data into a spreadsheet and utilize the statistical analysis tools to find patterns, trends, and probabilities within the data. The online survey tool facilitated automatic importing of data from the tool into an Excel spreadsheet which was provided by the human resources team. Free text, narrative entries were also coded to allow for statistical analysis of this information. In addition, promotion rates of those who had completed the virtual organizational leadership development program were reviewed. They were aligned with the survey respondents, to allow for the

generation of more information. The information was then extracted from the organizational learning management system, Success Factors, for added insights it had to offer in correlation to participant division, department, supervisor, title, credentials, work location, and date of program completion. Demographic information was not included in the report and was not evaluated as a part of the study.

I reviewed and synthesized the data collected to assess the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program. Synthesis takes place by identifying themes in the data through analysis (Leigh, Laporte, Bonadada, Fritz, Pella, Sauquet, & Datry, 2017). These themes are reviewed in Chapter 4. At the time of the study, 435 participants in 16 cohorts had completed the program with two more cohorts scheduled in 2018 which were not a part of the study. The participants in the virtual leadership development program were spread out among 17 different locations in the organization, representing four different states in the United States. All participant information was kept confidential and de-identified for the purposes of the study. The organization which served as the study site for this research had internal firewalls in place to prevent the disclosure of any information being reviewed for the study. I, as researcher, solely conducted study-related research within the confines of the organization's firewall and not on personal computers.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

In qualitative research, credibility is the ability of the researcher to accurately interpret and present the truth of the data and the views of the participants (Polit & Beck, 2012). Every

researcher has an individual responsibility to conduct a study in an ethical manner that demonstrates trustworthiness and credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Cope (2014), credibility is supported when researchers demonstrate engagement, methods of observation, and audit trails. I employed strategies to enrich the credibility and trustworthiness of the study by incorporating triangulation, using multiple data sources, including participant surveys, supervisor surveys, participant interviews, and participant promotion rates, to come to conclusions (Casey & Murphy, 2009). Additionally, I maintained a daily audit trail with time-stamps, documenting my decisions and assumptions in a journal utilizing an online documentation site which can in turn be reviewed by others to draw the same study conclusions (Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009).

### **Dependability**

The constancy of the data over similar conditions is known as dependability (Polit & Beck, 2012). This can also be achieved by maintaining audit trails allowing other researchers to replicate and come to the same conclusions with similar participants (Cope, 2014). This provides a detailed account outlining how the study was conducted as well as the data analysis processes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My audit trail using a journal on an online documentation site increased the dependability of the study by enabling others to trace through my logic and determine whether my findings are dependable (Carcary, 2009). Using an audit trail added transparency to my research and offered insights for others into my thought processes and decision-making throughout the study. Triangulation was also an effective strategy for ensuring dependability of research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For my research to be dependable I kept

clear records and used multiple methods for data collection, including participant and supervisor surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participant promotion rates from the human resources system, to obtain consistent data that reflected the reality of participants. I utilized these strategies to obtain dependable data.

Dependability of the instrument used and reliability of the data are elements to consider when demonstrating trustworthiness. The appropriate instrument for research should be selected in order to generate dependable information for the research study (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). As it relates to data dependability, the scores or answers should be consistently reported. The online survey tool used in this research ensured the reliability of consistent data and the validity of the instrument for the purposes of this study. The surveys were conducted via online surveys and were retrieved from system by the human resources team and sent to me for inclusion in the study. A secure web application for building and managing online surveys was utilized to collect data. Dependability of the study was ensured with these practices.

### **Validity**

The validity of research is based on how the findings match reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This reality tells the narrative truth or the story of the research participants (Lapan, Reimer, & Quartaroli, 2012). In this sense, validity reveals the perspectives and feelings of the people behind the data – providing meaning. Since reality is relative, validity must be assessed in relation to the purpose of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Again, triangulation was an effective strategy to increase validity of research using more than one data source (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking was also included as a technique to validate respondent data by

allowing interviewees to check transcripts for accuracy. I utilized these strategies in my research to promote validity.

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical procedures were outlined and submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Concordia University–Portland and at the study site. I submitted the methodology presented in this dissertation to the Institutional Review Board at Concordia University-Portland and at the study site for review and approval. In addition, I obtained a letter of authorization for research from human resources leadership team (Appendix A) at the study site, granting approval to conduct the study within the designated organization which will remain confidential for the purposes of this study. I maintained confidentiality of all study participant information and de-identified all information for inclusion in the study results. Participants were protected with anonymity and consent was given by all participants before any interviews were conducted (Appendix G). All files associated with this study remained on a workstation provided by the study site and were protected by the firewalls of the organization. No risks were identified with this research study.

### **Summary**

The research rationale, participant selection, and methodology utilized in this qualitative, grounded theory study exploring how the use of the virtual leadership development program at the study site impacted employee leadership development were presented in this chapter. The specific area of interest for this study was a program offered by the organization's human resources department – a virtual leadership development program. This program targeted

employees who were interested in advancing their leadership skills, but, who did not have a formal leadership title. This chapter reviewed research methodology with (a) an outline of the research questions; (b) the research design of the study; (c) my role as the researcher consisting of being a collector of data and a data analyzer; (d) participant selection logic; (e) instrumentation; (f) plans for data collection and analysis; (g) issues of trustworthiness including credibility, dependability, validity, and reliability of the data; and (h) ethical procedures for the research study. This research design is supported by research and will benefit the developers of the organization's virtual leadership development program while contributing to the larger body of knowledge in regard to effective organizational leadership development programs.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

This grounded theory study explored how a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership efficacy through the review of the survey results from participants and their supervisors, interviews of participants, and the assessment of promotion rates of those who completed the program. The purpose of this study was to explain how an existing virtual leadership development program utilized at the study site impacted employee leadership development. The servant leadership model for leading, which is the leadership style ascribed to at the study site, served as the framework for the research. By using the grounded theory approach to research, theory was allowed to emerge from the data through data collection and analysis. This research provides insights, meaning, and enhanced understanding to serve as a guide for future decision-making as it applies to the organizational leadership development program at the study site while adding to the body of literature on the topic of leadership development (Francis & Taylor, 2013). Using a grounded theory design allowed the data to reveal whether or not the virtual leadership development program was achieving the intended goals.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of data analysis and results associated with the research study. The first section describes the sample used in data collection, including the study site, target population, and participants selected for inclusion in the study. Next, the research methodology is outlined followed by detailed descriptions of the data analysis and research results based on the four research questions.

1. How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site?
2. How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants?
3. How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective?
4. How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants?

The chapter continues with a summary of the findings. In addition, evidence of trustworthiness is addressed in a section. Finally, this chapter concludes with an overall summary.

### **Description of the Sample**

A large interdisciplinary educational healthcare organization was the study site where I explored how the use of a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership development by assessing the promotion rates of those who completed the program as well as the satisfaction rates of participants and their supervisors. This large, multi-site healthcare organization is a leader in education, research, and clinical practice worldwide. The specific area of interest for this study was a program offered by the organization's human resources department – a virtual leadership development program. The program targets employees who are interested in advancing their leadership skills but who do not have a formal leadership title. The study evaluated the effectiveness of this virtual organizational leadership development

program by assessing participant and supervisor satisfaction rates as well as participant promotion rates.

In this research study, participants were selected based on their completion of the virtual organizational leadership development program. All those who had previously completed the program were included in the collection of existing study data which included participant and supervisor satisfaction survey results and promotion rates. That participant list included 435 people who had completed the program at the time data collection for the study commenced. Two additional cohorts were scheduled in 2018 after the data was collected and were not reflected in the study results. Participants were employees of the study site who were not in a formal leadership role at the time of enrollment in the virtual organizational leadership development program. Supervisors of participants were also included in the participant selection for the research study as they also completed satisfaction surveys to provide feedback on their perspective of the impact of the program on participant leadership skill enhancement. Both program participants and supervisors were from diverse areas across the organization and offered an enterprise-wide perspective.

Table 1

*Program Participants by Geographic Location*

Geographic Location	Number of Program Participants
Southwest	35
Southeast	76
Midwest	324

The study also incorporated interviews of participants. An invitation to participate in an interview was sent to all program participants via email (Appendix B). The first 12 participants to respond with an interest in participating were selected for interviews. This was consistent with the recommendation that 12 interviews are sufficient for most research studies to gather data and generate themes on participant perspectives and experiences (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Charmaz (2014) concurred with this recommendation and it proved to be true as saturation was reached within 12 interviews when no new ideas were being shared by participants. Participants interviewed represented all geographic locations of the organization, again providing an enterprise-wide perspective in data collection through interviews.

Table 2

*Interviewed Participants by Geographic Location*

Geographic Location	Number of Interviewed Participants
Southwest	2
Southeast	2
Midwest	8

## **Methodology**

In this grounded theory study, I utilized multiple data sources for collection and analysis. First, electronic satisfaction survey results from both program participants and their supervisors were reviewed providing numeric, Likert scale ratings as well as free text entries for feedback. Both forms of data were analyzed as a part of the study. Next, semi-structured interviews were

conducted to understand the perceptions of the program participants in their own words after having time to reflect on their experience in the virtual leadership development program. Lastly, promotion rates of program participants were collected and analyzed from the human resource system to measure the overall number of participants in comparison to the number of participants who went on to acquire formal and informal leadership roles upon completion of the program.

All 12 interviews were held in a single month as the schedules of the participants allowed and were no longer than 30 minutes each. All interviewed participants signed and returned an informed consent prior to their scheduled time with me per the approved Institutional Review Board protocol. The interview questions were provided to the participants the day prior to the scheduled interview, to give participants time to reflect on their experiences as they related to the questions prior to responding. Given the limited amount of time scheduled for interviews, 30 minutes, I wanted participants to know ahead of time what topics would be discussed. All interviews were completely confidential and it was communicated in the welcoming comments that their responses would be anonymous. I believe this alleviated any reservations regarding answering honestly.

Interviews were conducted via a web-based video-conferencing tool, recorded within the application on my computer, manually transcribed by me using word processing software, and coded for comparative analysis. By transcribing the interviews myself, I was able to conduct a more thorough examination of what the participants had to say and hear their responses more than once. Interviews utilized both audio and video. Immediately following the interviews, I accessed the recorded file on my computer and manually transcribed all interviews verbatim

using word processing software followed by initial memo-writing on an online documentation site and coding of the data in a spreadsheet.

### **Analysis**

I incorporated Charmaz's (2014) view of grounded theory which is described as a process of objective discovery, asking questions, engaging in the description of the research findings, undergoing conceptual ordering while theorizing, analyzing data, and using open coding to make comparisons. Using these recommendations I engaged in initial coding which involved the first review of data and the identification of concepts within the data. I did this by reviewing the data and highlighting the key points. In a second round of focused coding the data was categorized into common themes. This was done on a spreadsheet where categories were filtered to identify repeating trends. With systematic categorization and comparison of the data and repeated fracturing and analysis of the data, new concepts were revealed. Saturation was reached when no new common themes were being produced by the data.

A three-fold approach to research was utilized to analyze the data in this grounded theory study: (1) satisfaction survey results from participants and their supervisors were collected and analyzed, (2) interviews of participants were conducted and analyzed, and (3) promotion rates of participants were extracted from the human resource system and analyzed. Satisfaction survey data were coded to identify themes in the participant and supervisor responses. Utilizing this process allowed me to extract meaning from the data (Charmaz, 2014). I coded the data by categorizing it into segments representing key themes with short names in preparation for data analysis. As I coded data I followed the recommendations of Charmaz (2014) and remained

open, stayed close to the data, kept codes simple and precise, used short codes, preserved actions, compared data, and moved through the data quickly.

This data analysis process involved initial and secondary rounds of coding and revealed common themes in the data. In the initial round of coding, key messages in the data were highlighted. I did this with a preliminary review of the data to look for patterns. Key messages that were repeated in the data were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet. In the second round of coding, common themes were identified in the feedback from participants. These common themes emerged by taking a more granular view of the key messages. Again, an Excel spreadsheet was used to record common themes as they were revealed. For example, in the initial round of coding the review of data was done at a very high level – participants were satisfied or not satisfied. The second round of coding explored at a more detailed level the elements of satisfaction expressed by participants. The common themes expressed by participants will be outlined in detail in a subsequent section of this chapter.

In remaining open, I approached the data review objectively with no preconceived notions of the outcome. I stayed close to the data with daily memo-writing on an online documentation site regarding common themes in the data. I chose codes to represent the key messages from participants by keeping them clear and concise – simplistic and short. All of my actions throughout the data analysis process were preserved through daily documentation. The data was compared utilizing a spreadsheet to sort and filter common themes. I was able to move through the data quickly by reviewing it as it came in and continually reviewing and comparing as new data came in. Data collection, review, and analysis took place within one month.

Likewise, interview data was also coded to identify common themes in participants' perspectives. After conducting the interviews they were transcribed and coded. I conducted the interviews using a web-based video-conferencing tool. All interviews were recorded within the application on my computer. I manually transcribed all interviews and coded for comparative analysis. Coding was done in two rounds. In the first round of coding I highlighted the key messages from participants. These were broad in scope – they had a positive experience or a negative experience, they believed objectives were met or they did not believe the objectives were met. In the second round of coding I looked deeper into the data to find themes to answer how or why they had had a positive or negative experience or believed the objectives were or were not being met. This process was applied to all of the interview and survey questions in a spreadsheet for sorting and filtering to identify common themes in the data. The themes correlated with the conceptual framework of servant leadership with participants indicating enhanced communication skills, the ability to influence positive change, increased self-awareness, receiving opportunities for growth and advancement, and the ability to partner with their supervisor in a servant leadership capacity.

Memo-writing was also a core component the analysis process (Charmaz, 2014). This was done by taking the codes and data apart, making comparisons, and identifying any existing links between them which, in turn, translated the data to information through common themes. Through memo-writing I was able to process the interviews and think about the data, recognize qualitative codes as categories to analyze, interact with the data, and engage in initial analysis with good momentum (Charmaz, 2014). Memo-writing daily kept the data continually in front

of me for review and analysis. I used an online version of documentation software to engage in memo-writing. It was kept in the format of a journal with headers for the date of each entry. This was done until the twelfth interview when saturation was reached and no new insights were being generated from the interviews. Saturation was reached when no new common themes were be produced by the data.

Finally, promotion rate data was coded to reveal common themes in rates of advancement of program participants. Incorporating the analysis of promotion rates into the research study enabled the triangulation of data – the use multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic being researched (Patton, 1999). The human resources department at the study site provided a spreadsheet outlining which of the program participants had received promotions since completing the virtual organizational leadership development program. Promotion rates of those who had completed the program were reviewed and aligned with the survey respondents. Through the multiple techniques and sources outlined in this section, data was reviewed, analyzed and synthesized to assess the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program. Synthesis took place by identifying common patterns in the data through analysis (Leigh, laporte, Bonadada, Fritz, Pella, Sauquet, & Datry, 2017). The following sections will describe in detail the themes revealed in this data analysis process.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The findings of this study were revealed through a constructivist approach to derive meaning from data based on the participants experience in the virtual organizational leadership development program. Three data sources were utilized: (1) existing survey data from

participants and supervisors, (2) interviews of participants, and (3) promotion rates of participants after completion of the virtual leadership development program. Results from the surveys and interviews indicated that while overall satisfaction rates associated with the program were high, participants thought that it would be beneficial to extend the program with a second part that went deeper into the topics covered, include a mentoring component, as well as provide opportunities to apply the skills taught in real-world projects. The majority of the findings were consistent across surveys, interviews, and promotion rates; however, there were disconnects between supervisor and participant perceptions in some cases; specifically related to the participants receiving the coaching and support they needed throughout the program. The results of the study will be outlined in detail in the following section.

### **Presentation of the Data and Results**

The collection, review, analysis, and synthesis of data in this study generated the information necessary to answer the following research questions: (1) How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site? (2) How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants? (3) How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective? (4) How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants? In this section, the results are presented by reviewing the survey results of program participants and their supervisor, common themes in the interview responses from program participants, and promotion rates of program participants.

## Survey Results

Upon completion of the virtual leadership development program, participants and their supervisors were given the opportunity to complete an online satisfaction survey which they received via email. The surveys were designed to measure the satisfaction rates of participants and supervisors immediately following program completion, 60 days after completion, and participants again three months after program completion. No review or analysis of the survey results had been conducted by organizational leaders prior to current study. This research study was the first time this survey data was reviewed. The effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program at the study site was measured in three surveys. A follow-up survey to program participants was sent immediately following program completion. Likewise, a follow-up survey to supervisors of program participants was sent 60 days after program completion. Next, a post-program survey was sent to program participants three months after completion of the program. The surveys were administered by leaders of the organization via online surveys and were sent to those who completed the program and their supervisor via email. Due to limited resources associated with lowered staffing and competing priorities, this data had been captured but not reviewed. Surveys were sent beginning with the first cohort in 2016 and continued throughout the remaining cohorts included in the study in 2018 – for a total of 16 cohorts. The survey results are outlined in the following sections dedicated to each survey type.

**Follow-up Survey to Participants.** Of the 435 participants who completed the virtual organizational leadership development program, 149 completed the follow-up survey which was sent immediately following program completion, a 34% response rate. The results of that survey

are outlined in Table 3. Based on the responses, 82% indicated they were applying what they learned in the program. Regarding receiving coaching and support from their supervisor in applying their newly acquired skills and knowledge, 57% said they had received the support they needed. In addition, 75% stated that the program had supported them in their career development.

Table 3

*Follow-up Survey to Participants Results*

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am applying what I learned in the program.	3%	4%	11%	62%	20%
I have received coaching and/or support in applying my new skills and/or knowledge.	3%	16%	24%	40%	17%
This program has supported me in my career development.	3%	5%	17%	53%	22%

---

*Copyright is held by an external entity; used with permission. Contact the dissertation author for information.*

Common themes emerged in the participant responses to narrative questions on the survey. For example, when asked to list the new skills and knowledge from the program that they are applying in their current role, participants repeatedly mentioned active listening, coaching, having a growth mindset, and possessing change agility. Comments from participants included:

- “My position has not changed, however, I am using the skills and knowledge that I have acquired to help our team cope with all the upcoming changes and create a more united team.”
- “I’ve leveraged the coaching skills in conversations with staff, considered the change management process as our team is experiencing change, and have been bolder with speaking up with recommendations and influencing others for creating positive change.”
- “With changing roles recently I have been able to use some of the coaching and training skills to ensure the new staff are well trained and understand they can come to me with any questions.”
- “Active listening! This topic was discussed in one of the sessions and was very eye-opening for me.”
- “I am very much aware of the growth versus fixed mindset now and am able to better handle situations with this in mind.”

In response to successes in applying their new skills and knowledge, respondents cited enhanced communication skills, the ability to influence positive change, engaging in coaching others, building better working relationships with colleagues, and cultivating trust in the workplace. Comments from participants included:

- “The successes I have experienced are improved communication when interacting with peers and leaders. Project timelines have improved as well as trusted relationships.”

- “People have responded better to the coaching mindset rather than just handing out jobs.”
- “I have been building a stronger relationship with my co-workers.”
- “I have become a much better listener; it has helped me be a better communicator.”
- “I’ve helped colleagues see the benefit of suggested changes.”

When asked about the barriers faced in applying new knowledge and skills from the program, participants repeatedly listed time constraints and lack of opportunities for career advancement in the organization. Comments from participants included:

- “It takes time to practice the skills we learned and sometimes it gets busy with day-to-day tasks and I don’t do the things we learned as much as I would like.”
- “I am in a position where I don’t get to practice all the skills and knowledge learned during this program so it is a struggle to remember all the awesome bits and pieces discussed during the sessions.”
- “Not currently being in a leadership role, it is somewhat difficult to know how well I could do in some of the areas we discussed as far as inspiring, interacting, mentoring people, etc.”
- “My current job limits me in using the leadership skills.”
- “With so many people in the same line of work it’s hard to move up the ladder.”
- “There is a lack of room for advancement and a lack of support in trying to move forward in my career.”

In the additional comments section of the survey, participants repeatedly suggested there be a part two to continue the program and take learning to a deeper level through mentoring.

Comments from participants included:

- “I would like a part two class!”
- “I took a subsequent coaching class which was excellent and built on the foundational knowledge established in the program. It has shifted my approach to leading as it relates to problem-solving and has been very effective.”
- “I would love to have a mentor to help coach me how to move forward in my career and use the skills learned in the program.”

**Follow-up Survey to Supervisors.** Of the 435 participants who completed the virtual organizational leadership development program, 130 of their supervisors completed the follow-up survey which was sent 60 days following program completion, a 30% response rate. The results of that survey are outlined in Table 4. Based on the responses, 83% indicated their employee was applying what they learned in the program in their current role. Regarding providing coaching and support to assist their employee in applying their newly acquired skills and knowledge, 88% said they had provided the support they needed. In addition, 81% stated that they valued the communications from the program throughout their employee’s cohort, stating it had helped them coach and support the employee through the process.

Common themes emerged in the supervisors responses to narrative questions on the survey. For example, when asked to list the new skills and knowledge from the program that their employee was applying in their current role, supervisors repeatedly mentioned

collaboration, the ability to give and receive feedback effectively, engaging in coaching others, improved communication skills, and an indication that many participants were promoted or assumed informal leadership roles since completion of the program. Comments from participant supervisors included:

- “This employee has now been promoted to a supervisor position and she used great examples in her interview on what she learned and wants to apply in this role through this program.”
- “I’ve seen more forward thinking and pushing through obstacles to achieve results.”
- “Communication skills and leadership has improved.”
- “The employee is able to redirect staff when needed, asks good questions of staff members, and uses a coaching mindset versus a fixed mindset.”
- “She is now leading two projects and using her skills in project management and communication.”
- “He has stepped up in a leadership role on a committee in our department and provided input in meetings that is constructive and not critical of others.”
- “I have seen my staff member engage her colleagues more skillfully, inspiring the team to work smarter, remain engaged, and focus on our goals.”

When asked about the barriers their employees faced in applying new knowledge and skills from the program, supervisors repeatedly listed time constraints and lack of opportunities for career advancement in the organization. Comments from participant supervisors included:

- “Resources and time tend to limit some of our time to use this learning.”
- “Right now there are not a lot of opportunities for leadership roles in our department.”
- “Sometimes regular daily work gets in the way.”

Regarding recommendations for improvement, supervisors suggested that the program reinforce learning with projects and offer opportunities for participants to shadow leaders in the program. Comments from participant supervisors included:

- “It would be helpful if the staff member was assigned a project that could measure their participation and success in the program and share that with their supervisor.”
- “Maybe shadowing another supervisor or assistant to see how other areas work and make comparisons would be beneficial.”

In the additional comments section of the survey, supervisors requested that an outline of the virtual organizational leadership development program curriculum be made available to them to help them appropriately assess their employee’s progress in the program. Comments from participant supervisors included:

- “It would be better if we had the materials that they went through to guide us in asking questions and get feedback from them.”
- “Provide an outline of their curriculum.”

Table 4

*Follow-up Survey to Supervisors Results*

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Based on my observations, my staff member has applied new skills and/or knowledge attained from participating.	2%	0%	15%	51%	32%
I have provided coaching and/or support to assist my staff member in applying their new skills and/or knowledge.	2%	1%	9%	59%	29%
The communication emails I received throughout the program were helpful in providing me with suggestions and ideas on how to coach and support my staff member.	2%	1%	16%	50%	31%

*Copyright is held by an external entity; used with permission. Contact the dissertation author for information.*

**Post Program Survey to Participants.** Of the 435 participants who completed the virtual organizational leadership development program, 284 completed the post-program survey which was sent three months following program completion, a 65% response rate. The results of that survey are outlined in Table 5. Based on the responses, 93% indicated they developed skills and gained experiences that aligned with organizational leadership capabilities of inspiring

values, engaging colleagues, bold and forward thinking, and driving results. Regarding identifying and practicing skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics, and communicating effectively, 91% said they had met these objectives. In addition, 97% stated that the program had helped them differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership with a coaching mindset versus management. When asked about engagement in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles, 94% indicated this had been accomplished in the program. Also, 83% of participants believed that the format of the program was conducive to their learning style and preferences. Regarding the time commitment both in and outside of class, 90% of program participants believed it was just right and did not need any changes. The majority of participants, 66%, thought that program participants should be allowed to miss only one session and watch the recording to receive credit for program completion.

Table 5

*Post Survey to Participants Results*

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Develop skills and gain experiences that align with organizational leadership capabilities: Inspire values, engage colleagues, bold/forward thinking, drive results.	2%	1%	4%	35%	58%

Table 5 Continued

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and communicating effectively.	2%	1%	6%	45%	46%
Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) vs. management.	2%	0%	1%	21%	76%
Engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles.	2%	0%	4%	38%	56%
The format of the program was conducive to my learning style and preferences.	2%	3%	12%	46%	37%

---

*Copyright is held by an external entity; used with permission. Contact the dissertation author for information.*

On a scale of one to ten, when asked their level of confidence to apply what they had learned, 98% scored greater than five. Five is the mid-point on the scale which would be considered average. In this study, I looked at those scores considered above average. Regarding their level of commitment to apply what they had learned, 100% scored greater than five. In

regards to expecting positive results from applying what they had learned in the program, 98% of program participants scored greater than five. When asked if they would recommend the virtual organizational leadership development program to others, 96% scored greater than five on a scale of one to ten.

Common themes emerged in the participant responses to narrative questions on the survey. For example, when asked what worked well in the program, participants repeatedly mentioned the virtual format, the small group sessions, the course content, the collaboration with their supervisor, and the knowledgeable instructors. Comments from participants included:

- “I thought the package of course materials and articles were great!”
- “I enjoyed the collaboration between participants with the breakout sessions; it was also helpful when the presenter would review the topic and incorporate real-world examples into how the learning that week would apply.”
- “The moderators did a great job of conducting the course; they were excellent at explaining content, allowing for discussion, and using breakout sessions – it was obvious they were prepared.”
- “I had never participated in a virtual class before, so I wasn’t sure if I would like that particular learning environment, but I was pleasantly surprised at how well the ‘systems’ worked.”
- “I was impressed with the level of engagement I had for it being a virtual class.”
- “I enjoyed the conversations that it initiated with my supervisor; the online format was great and easy to participate in.”

In response to recommended changes to the program, respondents suggested having opportunities to apply the new skills being taught, having live-streamed video of the instructor during sessions, having more in-depth instruction on topics, and having more time for small group sessions. Comments from participants included:

- “I would have liked more time in the program to learn even more!”
- “It would be nice to have a live video of the instructor.”
- “I’d like to see more hands-on experience to apply and develop the skills mentioned.”
- “Get a little more in depth with things.”
- “Often times, there wasn’t enough time for the small group discussion.”
- “The sessions with breakout teams could be a little longer.”
- “Add more time to the program.”

When asked about the barriers faced in applying new knowledge and skills from the program, participants repeatedly listed their personal confidence levels, time constraints, not being in leadership or management position, and lack of opportunities for advancement within the organization. Comments from participants included:

- “My own lack of confidence in using the skills, and the lack of a mentor or guide to ensure I am applying skills efficiently.”
- “With the role I am in it doesn’t give me much wiggle room to be a leader.”
- “Day to day workload may prevent opportunities to lead.”
- “Not having subordinates or being in a position of influence.”

- “There is nowhere for me to move in my department.”
- “The biggest barriers would be limited opportunities and finding areas to boost confidence.”

When asked what might help them overcome the barriers, program participants suggested having the ability to partner with a mentor, collaborating with their supervisor, having opportunities to practice the leadership capabilities that were taught, and seeking out formal and informal leadership roles. Comments from participants included:

- “I will try to get a trusted leader to work through challenges and offer feedback as I attempt to use the skills learned.”
- “Keep in touch with a mentor or my supervisor.”
- “Additional classes that provide some real-world experience to apply what we learned in the program.”
- “I am getting involved in smaller group projects to hopefully overcome barriers.”
- “I am currently working with my supervisor to find and create opportunities.”
- “Finding ways in my current role to apply some of the new tactics I learned.”

Finally, in the overall comments section of the survey, participants repeatedly suggested there be a part two to continue the program and take learning to a deeper level. They also commented on high quality instruction from the program facilitators who provided an excellent overview of the leadership model used at the organization. Comments from participants included:

- “I would recommend it, but with the hope that we can continue taking more advanced training directly working on assigned projects where we can develop those skills discussed in class.”
- “This class was very well produced and organized; the leaders each week were prepared and engaging.”
- “The facilitators were amazing! Their knowledge, passion, and genuine interest in our learning shined in each and every session.”

## **Interview Results**

Of the 435 participants who completed the virtual organizational leadership development program, 12 participants were interviewed, a 3% response rate until data saturation. Participants who were interviewed were asked the following ten questions (Appendix G):

### **Question 1.** Why did you enroll in the virtual leadership development program?

All participants were interested in leadership and desired to expand their knowledge and skills to further their career growth. Comments from participants included:

- “I’ve always been interested in leadership and I wanted to grow and learn more about leadership skills and what I was doing wrong and what I was doing right.”
- “Leadership is a passion of mine. It’s something I’m extremely interested in and I thought that the leadership development program might offer insights into advancing my career and give opportunities for networking as well as keep things fresh in my mind for my own personal development.”

- “It was an opportunity for growth and looking to what’s the future as far as opportunities for promotion and moving into what’s next.”
- “I’m always eager to learn new things and am appreciative of the opportunities to learn more about leadership.”

**Question 2.** Tell me about your experience in the virtual leadership development program; was it positive or negative, why?

All program participants indicated a positive experience. Networking opportunities and enhanced self-awareness were repeatedly noted as significant benefits of the program. Participants indicated the organizational leadership competencies were effectively conveyed throughout the program. Comments from participants included:

- “It was an interesting opportunity to get to know others. I liked that it was virtual; don’t know that it would have been offered in my location.”
- “I enjoyed getting to know the other participants in the program and getting to know people from other sites.”
- “It was definitely a positive experience. It opened my eyes to what leaders go through on a daily basis and how leadership style affects people on your team and even further out than that. It was an eight week program and I recall it feeling like it was a good amount of time allowing time to practice principles and try things in your personal and professional life and experiment. I really liked the layout of it.”

- “It was a positive experience. It’s always good to refresh the skills and ideas that you’re familiar with and introduce more ideas that you may not be as comfortable with. It also provided networking opportunities as well. It was recommended by my supervisor.”
- “I really liked hearing from people outside of my work unit and people across the organization, hearing different perspectives and the experiences that they had. It helped me learn.”

**Question 3.** What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program in equipping participants with the following program objectives?

The four objectives are: (1) develop skills and gain experiences that align with the organization’s leadership capabilities, (2) identify and practice skills related to the leadership capabilities, (3) differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) and management, and (4) engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles. Participants believed that leadership skills were identified and communicated well, self-assessments were beneficial, and coverage of the coaching mindset was the most effective component of the program; however, they consistently requested opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills with real-world scenarios which could be worked through. All those interviewed indicated that post-program mentoring as well as a second level to the program would be helpful. Comments from participants included:

- “I thought it was a really good opportunity to reflect on what I was currently doing versus what I learned. It really helped me grow not only as a leader, but as a person.”
- “Yes, I was overall satisfied with the whole program. It showed all the different ways of leading and everything was aligned with organizational values. It was great.”
- “Identifying skills was definitely done, but practicing those skills is something that could be expanded in further iterations of the program.”

**Question 4.** Do you believe the program effectively communicated the ten principles of servant leadership?

The principles of servant leadership are: (1) listening, (2) empathy, (3) healing, (4) awareness, (5) persuasion, (6) conceptualization, (7) foresight, (8) stewardship, (9) commitment to the growth of people, and (10) building community. Participants indicated that the principles of servant leadership were woven throughout the program well with exceptional coverage of listening, empathy, awareness, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of people. Healing was the principle with the least amount of focus in the program. Comments from participants included:

- “I think this was a focus of the course offering. Each of these concepts was developed well. Examples were given. Exercises were involved. These 10 ideas are practical and are good solid information. What was provided in the course reinforced these principles.”

- “I think the class did a good job making us aware of each one and how it applies to leadership.”
- “Yes, I remember multiple conversations in the targeted curriculum as far as trying to highlight these various components in the general discussions.”
- “I remember a lot of these being talked about extensively and learning how to as a leader embrace those things with those around you and coach them and yourself through doing those things.”

**Question 5.** How do you feel about your potential to move into a leadership position after completing the program; did it help your career progression?

All participants indicated that the program was helpful in expanding their knowledge base of the leadership capabilities ascribed to at the organization. They also stated that their potential to move into formal leadership positions was hindered by limited opportunities for advancement within the organization, rather than the effectiveness of the program. Comments from participants included:

- “I am now a supervisor, so it did help quite a bit, but I ended up going to earn my masters in healthcare leadership afterwards. It really helped build a base for knowledge and growth.”
- “Definitely, whether or not it was coincidence of timing or not, I have since been promoted in the last couple of months. So, the initiative of taking the class and some of the things I took from the class helped with that.”

- “I felt that it definitely helped my preparedness for a leadership position and gave me a lot of new ideas and made me excited about taking on a leadership position. I applied for and was interviewed for a leadership position and focused a lot on the things learned in this workshop but did not get the position. That was discouraging to me after all I feel I’ve contributed and learned.”
- “I don’t know that it’s helped my career progression at all due to the structure of my department, but I’ve gained skills and reinforcement of concepts that I can relay to others. The leadership skills and concepts I’ve been able to share with others have been helpful. I’m currently in the same role.”

**Question 6.** What was your knowledge level of the virtual technology (WebEx) prior to the program; how was the tool effective or ineffective based on your experience in the program?

All participants stated that they were familiar with the tool and believed it was a good choice for the program. For all participants, this was their first time using the small group breakout sessions in the virtual environment and they provided positive feedback on the effectiveness of that specific component of the technology in enhancing the program and their ability to collaborate with their cohort. Comments from participants included:

- “I think the tool was effective in facilitating small group conversations and sharing information.”
- “I had never used it prior and I thought it was an excellent way to do virtual instruction. I enjoyed it. It was easy to use.”

- “This was the second time I’ve seen it in a classroom setting and the first time I’ve seen breakout sessions. I thought it was a really interesting, innovative tool that forced people outside of their bubbles to be in groups with those they didn’t normally associate with. It was an appropriate tool that was effective for this training.”

**Question 7.** Did the use of supplemental technologies such as Yammer for cohort collaboration enhance your experience; did you feel connected to your classmates and instructors?

Regarding the use of Yammer for cohort collaboration, eleven participants found it to be a helpful tool as a single place where all materials could be found and cohort members could dialogue with classmates and instructors. The one participant who did not find it useful was confused by the platform and thought they may have used it more if a better overview of the application were provided on the first day of class. Comments from participants included:

- “I thought it did connect us because I can remember we had to post something by a day every week and we had to interact with each other, which was nice because in a lot of these virtual courses all you do is listen and you don’t do a lot of interacting.”
- “Yes, that was more like what we’re used to now with Facebook and things like that. I subscribed to the forum and received regular email communications from the group.”

- “Yes, I did use Yammer. I thought it was a nice supplement. They’d post things for that week. It was an easy way to access versus mass email or attachments in calendars. It was nice. Moderators would post questions and get discussions going.”
- “When I go onto Yammer I see many threads and it seems like a random set of information from a handful of people – didn’t know how to navigate it. I needed a tutorial.”

**Question 8.** Would you recommend the virtual leadership development program to others, why or why not?

All participants indicated they would recommend the program to others and many had already recommended it to their colleagues. Those interviewed expressed that the program content was beneficial for them both professionally and personally in leading situations more effectively to achieve desired outcomes. Comments from participants included:

- “Yes, absolutely. I thought it helped me grow professionally and personally, recognizing how my own actions affect those around me and in turn affects others. It put me in the coaching mindset more than ever before. It allowed me to look for ways my coworkers can be successful and has resulted in me passing along opportunities for others to help them grow professionally as well.”
- “Yes, I already recommended two other people. It’s definitely a solid course for others to take. I think this course is an excellent stepping stone.”

- “I would. I’ve actually recommended it to a lot of my colleagues just because I feel like even if you aren’t going to be in a leadership role, it helps you learn and grow as a person.”

**Question 9.** What changes would you recommend for the program to be more effective, describe an ideal leadership development program from your perspective?

Repeated suggestions included having a mentoring component within the program, developing a second part to the program for cohorts to continue learning, and getting more in-depth with the content through experiential learning via real-world scenarios and projects.

Comments from participants included:

- “One thing I can think about is maybe having people who are in leadership roles already become mentors to people in the program.”
- “It would be cool to see it go a bit further for those who’ve had these experiences to delve in a little deeper – phase two or something like that.”
- “An ideal program would be something where the students are partnered with organizational leaders for assignments; something that allows employees to maintain their employment and pay while participating in a program for current employees to aid in succession planning of the organization with those who are already in the know, would be an ideal state.”
- “To me, a leadership development program would look more like a mentoring program with one-on-one time with an experienced leader mentoring someone less experienced or who wants to learn. Together they’d work through a

leadership challenge or leadership real life example. I'd like more of a mentoring opportunity, where they share real life examples. There's so much more value in that."

**Question 10.** If you have not transitioned into a leadership role since completion of the program, what do you see as the biggest obstacles hindering that transition?

A common theme was the lack of opportunities for advancement within the organization.

Comments from participants included:

- "Opportunity is a big obstacle."
- "There haven't been opportunities for my role to progress."
- "Prior to my transition to a leadership role, one of the biggest hindrances I saw moving to a leadership role was the roles were not 100% site agnostic. Generally, you'd have to be willing to move to a larger site as that's where the bulk of the leadership positions were. Even when they say it's ok across sites, only a handful of supervisors were actively engaging and not requiring they be on the main campus. A way to improve would be to recognize that leaders don't have to be on site all the time."
- "There really aren't positions available. Anyone in leadership roles will be there a while, so I have to consider other leadership roles like working on projects in my current role or helping with other initiatives rather than moving into formal leadership role."

- “In my current facility there aren’t as many opportunities for advancement. The leadership structure might have to change for me to advance in my current place and that’s a long process that may or may not happen. My supervisor is very supportive, but he’s limited in what he can do – it’s out of his hands in the smaller setting at our site. Kudos to the developers of the program – it was really good.”

### **Promotion Rate Results**

Of the 435 participants who completed the virtual organizational leadership development program, 30 participants were promoted to a formal leadership role with direct reports after completion of the program, a 7% promotion rate. Of the 30 participants who were promoted, three were promoted while enrolled in the program. The average time to acquire a promotion after completion of the program was seven months. In addition, 103 participants were promoted to a role with increased responsibility, but not a formal leadership role with direct reports, a 24% promotion rate of informal leaders. In total, 31% of those who completed the virtual organizational leadership development program received promotions, while 69% of participants did not receive promotions of any kind. Figure 5 provides an overview of participant promotion rates.

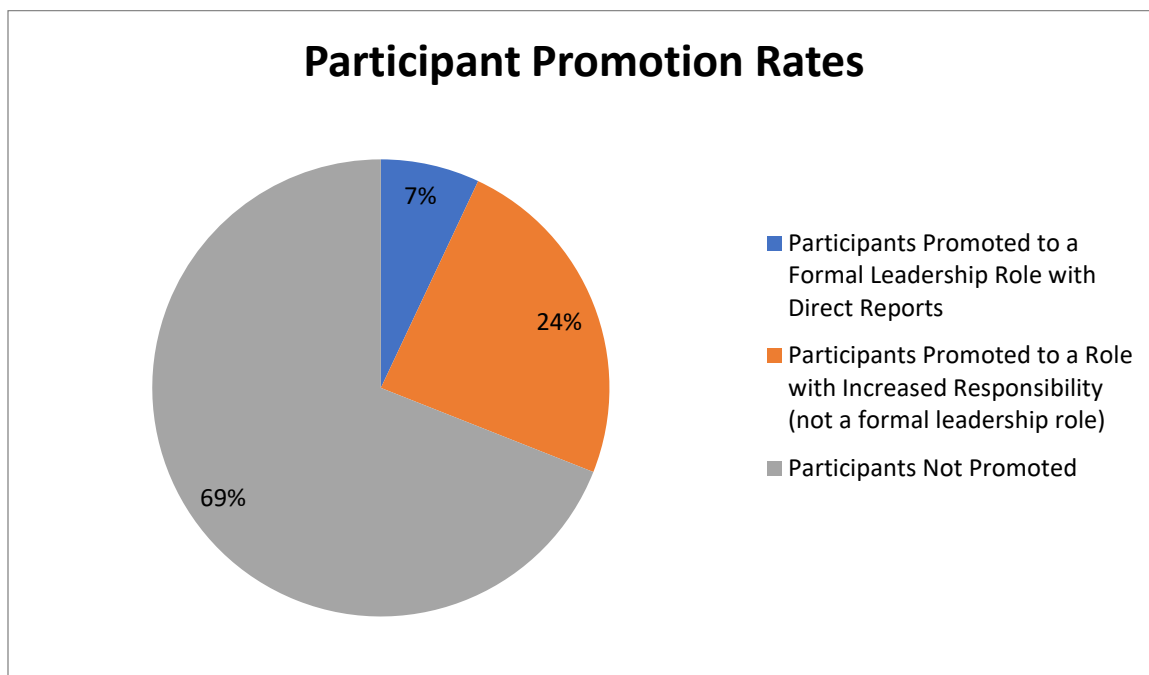


Figure 5.

Research Question 1. *How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site?*

All participants interviewed cited organizational barriers associated with a lack of opportunities for advancement rather than promotion rates being connected to the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program. This common theme was repeated in the participant satisfaction surveys. Promotion rates indicate that 31% of participants were promoted after completion of the program, 7% of those to formal leadership roles, while 69% of participants did not receive a promotion after completion of the program.

Research Question 2. *How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants?*

The four objectives were: (1) develop skills and gain experiences that align with the organization's leadership capabilities, (2) identify and practice skills related to the leadership capabilities, (3) differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) and management, and (4) engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles. Based on the participant post-program survey, 93% indicated they developed skills and gained experiences that aligned with organizational leadership capabilities of inspiring values, engaging colleagues, bold and forward thinking, and driving results. Regarding identifying and practicing skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics, and communicating effectively, 91% said they had met these objectives. In addition, 97% stated that the program had helped them differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership with a coaching mindset versus management. When asked about engagement in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles, 94% indicated this had been accomplished in the program.

All of these questions were designed to measure participant achievement of objectives and all were over 90% favorable. Likewise, in the interviews participants believed that leadership skills were identified and communicated well, self-assessments were beneficial, and coverage of the coaching mindset was the most effective component of the program. The weaknesses identified in achieving program objectives included, opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills with real-world scenarios which could be worked through. Those interviewed indicated that post-program mentoring as well as a second level to the program would be helpful.

Research Question 3. *How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective?*

Based on participant supervisor feedback on the follow-up survey to supervisors, the majority, 83%, believed that their employee was applying new skills and knowledge attained from participating in the virtual organizational leadership development program. Another 15% of supervisors were neutral on the subject, while 2% did not believe that the participant was applying skills and knowledge from the program.

Research Question 4. *How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants?*

Based on the data collected and presented in this research study, the program impacted participants in multiple ways. According to the follow-up survey to participants 82% indicated they were applying what they learned in the program, 57% said they had received the coaching support they needed, 75% stated that the program had supported them in their career development. Likewise, in the follow-up survey to supervisors 83% indicated their employee was applying what they learned in the program in their current role. In the participant interviews, interviewees indicated that the program was helpful in building their knowledge base of the leadership capabilities ascribed to at the organization and benefitted them with increased self-awareness and an expanded network.

## **Summary**

Chapter 4 began with an overview of this grounded theory study which explored how a virtual leadership development program impacted employee leadership efficacy through the review of the survey results from participants and their supervisors, interviews of participants, and the assessment of promotion rates of those who completed the program. In this chapter I provided an overview of my research methodology, data analysis, and research results which included survey data, interview data, and promotion rates of those who completed the program. The data collected was outlined in detail and then used to answer the four research questions: (1) how did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site, (2) how were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants, (3) how were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective, and (4) how did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants? Overall, findings indicate the program positively impacted participants and achieved the learning objectives from both participant and supervisor perspectives. Evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability and validity were also addressed. In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings, their relation to the current literature, and conclude with recommendations.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to research the effectiveness of a virtual organizational leadership development program by assessing satisfaction surveys of program participants and supervisors, in conjunction with program participant interviews and exploration of their promotion rates at the study site. By analyzing existing data sources and engaging in dialogue with the participants, the findings of this study offer insights into how the program impacted employee leadership development. In this study, I collected and analyzed data to answer the following research questions: (1) How did the organizational virtual leadership development program affect participant promotions at the study site? (2) How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants? (3) How were the organizational virtual leadership development program learning objectives effectively implemented by participants from the supervisor's perspective? (4) How did the organizational virtual leadership development program impact participants? In this concluding chapter, I provide a summary of the research results, discussion of the results, review of the results in relation to literature, limitations of the study, implications of the results, and recommendations for further research.

### **Summary of the Results**

The results of this qualitative study were found through a grounded theory research design. Procedures for data collection and analysis utilizing a constructivist approach were used to derive meaning from data based on the participants experience in the virtual organizational leadership development program. Three data sources were utilized in the study: (1) existing

survey data from participants and supervisors, (2) interviews of participants, and (3) promotion rates of participants after completion of the virtual leadership development program. In the study, I reviewed data from the date of the inaugural program cohort in the spring of 2016 until the fall of 2018 when the study was conducted. A total of 16 cohorts and 435 participants were included in the overall study-related data. For the interviews, the first 12 participants who volunteered were selected and interviewed until saturation was reached at the twelfth interview. Common themes in the survey results and interviews were identified through comparative analysis.

Participant survey results indicated that 82% reported that they were applying what they learned in the program. Additionally, 75% of participants said that the program had supported them in their career development. Of those who responded to the survey, 57% indicated that they had received the coaching and support they needed to apply the knowledge and skills from the program. Participants mentioned active listening, having a growth mindset, and change agility as new skills from the program that they were actively applying in their current roles. They also stated that the new skills and knowledge from the program had resulted in enhanced communication skills, the ability to influence positive change, enhanced working relationships with colleagues, and the cultivation of trust in the workplace. Barriers to applying new skills included time constraints and a lack of opportunity for career advancement within the organization. A common theme in participant feedback was the request for an advanced offering of the program to continue learning at a deeper level. Participants appreciated the virtual format

of the program, citing the small group component as a significant impact. They thought the course content worked well and commented that the instructors were very knowledgeable.

Supervisor survey results indicated that 83% reported that they believed their employee was applying new knowledge and skills from the program. In addition, 88% said that they had provided coaching and support to assist their staff member in applying the content learned in the program. Supervisors reported that participants demonstrated successes from the program in being collaborative, having an improved ability to give and receive feedback effectively, enhanced communication skills, coaching others, and assuming informal leadership roles. Barriers to applying new skills included time and resource constraints and limited opportunities for advancement within the organization. Supervisors recommended that learning be reinforced by having projects incorporated into the program and offering participants the ability to shadow existing leaders.

The interview results indicated that participants enrolled in the program because they were interested in leadership and had a desire to expand their knowledge and skills in hopes of furthering their career growth. Their experience in the program was positive overall. They reported that networking was a beneficial component of the program as well as acquiring enhanced self-awareness. Participants believed that the program effectively conveyed the organizational leadership competencies. Regarding the program learning objectives, participants thought that the leadership skills were identified and communicated well, but requested opportunities to practice and develop the skills with real-world scenarios and post-program mentoring. It was also suggested that a second level to the program would be beneficial.

Participants indicated that the principles of servant leadership were woven throughout the program well, with exceptional coverage of listening, empathy, awareness, stewardship, and commitment to the growth of people. They repeatedly mentioned a lack of opportunities for advancement within the organization as a hindrance to career growth rather than the effectiveness of the program. Participants indicated they would recommend the program to others and found it beneficial for them both professionally and personally in leading situations more effectively.

The results of participant promotion rates showed that 7% of participants were promoted to a formal leadership role with direct reports following program completion. Another 24% of participants were promoted to a role with increased responsibility, but not a formal leadership role with direct reports. As a result, a total of 31% of participants received a promotion within the organization. Of the 435 program participants, 69% did not receive a promotion of any kind following completion of the virtual leadership development program.

Results from the surveys and interviews indicated that while overall satisfaction rates associated with the program were high, participants thought that it would be beneficial to extend the program with a second part that went deeper into the topics covered, include a mentoring component, as well as provide opportunities to apply the skills taught in real-world projects. The majority of the findings were consistent across surveys, interviews, and promotion rates; however, there were disconnects between supervisor and participant perceptions in some cases; specifically related to the participants receiving the coaching and support they needed throughout the program. The following section will outline in detail the results of the study.

## **Discussion of the Results**

In comparing participant surveys and interviews, the common themes remained the same. Participants of the virtual organizational leadership development program expressed personal and professional gains in their ability to be active listeners, have a growth mindset, engage in coaching techniques, and enhanced change agility. They enjoyed the virtual format of the program overall and called out the small group sessions as their favorite aspect of the virtual environment. Participants indicated both on surveys and in interviews that the stated program objectives were met overall, with the exception of practicing skills related to the leadership capabilities. They also believed that the principles of servant leadership were woven throughout the program well. Most indicated a sense of enhanced self-awareness and an ability to better lead through difficult situations after completing the program. The opportunity to network and connect with others in the organization they normally would not have was also referred to as a positive component of the program. Barriers to applying the knowledge learned were continually mentioned as limited time and lack of opportunities for advancement. Participants repeatedly commented on the value of the program content and the quality of the instructors. The majority believed the program had positively impacted them personally and professionally even if they had not acquired a promotion since completing the program.

The comparisons were less consistent between supervisor and participant feedback. While supervisors agreed that participants came out of the program with improved listening, communication, and coaching skills; they tended to mention the acquiring of informal leadership roles more so than participants. The participants were more likely to mention not acquiring a

formal leadership role, rather than indicate they had assumed informal opportunities to lead. Additionally, 88% of supervisors indicated that they had provided coaching and support to assist the participant in applying the skills learned. In contrast, only 57% of participants reported that they had received coaching and support to apply the skills and knowledge from the program. There is a gap in the perceptions of supervisors and participants in this regard. Supervisors agreed with participants that the stated program objectives were met overall. They also echoed the comments of participants suggesting that learning from the program should be reinforced with projects to practice the skills and mentoring to partner with an existing leader.

Promotion rates showed that 24% of participants received promotions to roles with increased responsibility that were not formal leadership roles. Another 7% of participants received promotions to formal leadership roles with direct reports under them. Of the 435 participants in the study, 69% were not promoted after completing the virtual organizational leadership development program. While promotion to a leadership position is not guaranteed to those who complete the program, they are encouraged to apply to positions that become available. Participants and supervisors both indicated an overall lack of opportunity in the organization for participants to transition into formal leadership roles.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

In this grounded theory study, I explored the effectiveness of a virtual organizational leadership development program from the perspective of program participants and supervisors. Themes that were revealed in the review of literature included learning to lead – addressing the question of whether or not leadership skills can be learned, components of effective leadership

development programs, the role of mentoring in leadership development, virtual technologies and their use in leadership development initiatives, and measuring the success of leadership development programs. In this section each of these themes from the literature will be reviewed in relation to the research results of this study.

In the literature, leadership experts indicate that aspects of leadership can be learned (Bauermeister, Greer, Kalinovich, Marrone, Pahl, Rochholz, & Wilson, 2016; Casey, 2016; Johnston, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; McGinley, Peterson, & Johnston, 2016; Sorensen, 2017). This is consistent with Greenleaf's belief as it relates to servant leadership that there were some skills that could be taught and others that leaders were born with, such as foresight (Spears, 1995). In the present study, the perspectives of participants align with the literature in that all indicated they had acquired leadership skills and learned to lead. One participant stated, "I remember a lot of the servant leadership principles being talked about extensively and learning how to, as a leader, embrace and do those things both to the benefit of yourself and those around you." Participant feedback on the program indicated that the virtual leadership development program effectively communicated the characteristics of servant leaders.

Components of effective leadership development programs in the literature included: (1) developing talented leaders, (2) preparing future leaders, and (3) improving leadership competencies. This is achieved through instructor-led training, group learning among peers, experiential learning, and reflection done in the classroom and independently (Murthy, Sassen, & Kammerdiener, 2016; Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016; Steinhilber & Estrada, 2015). The research results indicate that the virtual organizational leadership development program is

improving leadership competencies based on participant and supervisor feedback. They are also following best practices from the literature of utilizing instructor-led training, group learning, and reflections; however, the experiential learning element is lacking. This was a common theme expressed by most participants. One participant expressed it this way, “I would have liked to have seen the skills directly tied to real life experiences – having local leadership aware of the program and offer assignments to the participants of the program to give more exposure to those kinds of things with real world practice.” Participant feedback supported the literature findings which indicated that experiential learning is a significant component of leadership development programs.

Another element discussed in the literature was the role of mentoring and coaching in leadership development. Mentoring and coaching have been shown to be powerful tools to incorporate into organizational leadership development programs (Lenert & Janes, 2017; Leonard, 2017; Stevenson, 2016). Based on participant feedback, those completing the virtual organizational leadership development program concur with the literature findings and would have benefitted from opportunities to engage with a mentor. Participants repeatedly mentioned the desire to be paired with a mentor following the program. This common theme was expressed by one participant by stating, “To me, a leadership development program would look more like a mentoring program – one on one time with an experienced leader mentoring someone less experienced or wanting to learn, and together they’d work through a leadership challenge or leadership real life example. I’d like more of a mentoring opportunity where they share real life examples. There’s so much more value in that.” Again, the feedback from participants remained

aligned with the findings in the literature which indicated that incorporating a mentoring component is beneficial in leadership development programs.

Virtual technologies and their use in leadership development initiatives were also widely discussed in the literature. According to the literature the use of virtual technologies in training programs positively impacts perception and attitudes, enhanced interaction, and increased achievement among participants (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Djukic, et al., 2015; Martin, Ahlgrim-Delzell, & Budhrani, 2017). The majority of the participants in the virtual organizational leadership development program believed that the virtual component of the program was a positive element. Specifically, the ability to break out into virtual small groups with peers was repeatedly mentioned as beneficial for participant collaboration with their cohort members in the program. One participant addressed this point by stating, “I thought it was a very neat tool with the break-out sessions, separating us into groups with the ability to write on the board with our teams being able to see. I thought it was great!” Based on feedback from participants, the leadership development program effectively utilized virtual technologies to enhance the learning experience.

Measuring the success of leadership development programs was another topic addressed in the literature at length. According to the literature, leaders of organizations should measure organizational impact when assessing leadership development programs to ensure enhanced leadership is equating to organizational success rather than solely individual outcomes (Clarke & Higgs, 2016; Frich, Brewster, Cherlin, & Bradley, 2015; Leonard, 2017; Phillips, Ray, & Phillips, 2016; Steinhilber & Estrada, 2015). The current study focused on individual outcomes

of the program participants. This would be an opportunity for further research to assess the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program from an organizational perspective versus a participant perspective.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This grounded theory study was limited in some cases by the recollections of the participants interviewed. For some of the interviewees, it had been two years since completing the virtual organizational leadership development program and this impacted their ability to reflect on their experiences more than others. Therefore, some responses to interview questions may have been impacted by the element of time and its impact on memory.

As a former participant in the virtual organizational leadership development program which was the focus of this study, I bracketed my own experiences and reflections on the data in an effort to conduct unbiased research. In alignment with the grounded theory design, I relied solely on the experiences and reflections of the program participants, allowing their data to answer the research questions of the study (Charmaz, 2014). Bracketing allowed me to let the data reveal the collective experience of the participants without any assumptions on my part.

Another limitation of the study is the single study site. The current study explored the effectiveness of a single organization's virtual leadership development program. All participants were employees of this single organization who were participants in this single leadership development program. The study did not include surveys results from participants of the program that chose not to respond. Not all participants were interviewed. Hence, limitations

exist due to only one organization being included in the study. Nor were multiple leadership development programs reviewed.

### **Implications of the Results for Transformation**

This grounded theory study contributes to the literature on organizational leadership development programs. The findings from this study provide the developers of organizational leadership development programs insights into the experiences and perspectives of program participants and their supervisors. In this section, I describe the implications of the study results as they relate to practice, policy, and theory.

Regarding practice, based on the feedback from program participants, several key components to enhance the leadership development program at the study site were identified. Participants discussed the need for leadership concepts to be reinforced with real-world projects incorporated into the program, opportunities to be partnered with a mentor, and a part two of the program to explore the leadership competencies at a deeper level. These recommendations from the program participants are supported by the literature. It is beneficial to include real world situations to practice leadership skills and opportunities to demonstrate the improvement of skills being taught (Leonard, 2017). Likewise, having a mentoring component in leadership development programs results in enhanced leader performance (Arenas, Tucker, & Connelly, 2017; Ferrell, 2016). Offering a second part of the leadership development program dedicated to projects and mentoring would provide the added benefit of time to explore the leadership competencies at a more advanced level.

Regarding policy, grounded theory studies inform organizational policy and practice (Charmaz, 2014). The literature indicates that having effective leaders is a critical component of healthcare organizations and it is important to have educated leaders who can understand, analyze, and handle complex challenges (Ghiasipour, Mosadeghrad, Arab, & Jaafariipooyan, 2017). While leadership development is not an area often regulated externally, it would be prudent for organizational leaders to have internal policies in place to ensure their unique organizational culture and goals are supported by their approach to leadership development. Greenleaf (1970) also supported an – in here, not out there – approach in that servant leadership begins within rather than externally. While it is important for leaders of organizations to be engaged in equipping people with leadership skills, this study finds that it is also important for organizational opportunities for advancement to exist for those who complete leadership development programs to use those skills in some capacity.

Regarding theory, the results from this study supported the servant leadership model and the leadership development program's effectiveness in communicating the principles of servant leadership. The literature indicates that servant leaders have the potential to revolutionize organizations with their ability to impact individual, group, and organizational performance in positive ways (Heyler & Martin, 2018). Participants in the study indicated that the principles of servant leadership were woven throughout the leadership development program well. They also repeatedly mentioned elements of servant leaders as the new skills they were applying successfully, including: (1) communication, (2) trust, (3) relationship-building, (4) awareness, (5) empathy, (6) stewardship, and (7) commitment to the growth of people. The implication on

theory is that the servant leadership model can be taught utilizing a virtual organizational leadership development program.

Based on the feedback of the participants of the virtual organizational leadership development program, there are opportunities to transform practice, policy, and theory as it relates to developing servant leaders by addressing the three elements identified in this research study. First, provide real-world projects for participants to practice the skills being taught in a safe environment. Second, pair participants with a mentor who can serve as a guide and a resource for them. Third, offer an advanced level of leadership development programs for participants to take learning to a deeper level. These recommendations have potential to contribute to the transformation of organizational leadership development programs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The data collected in this grounded theory study can serve as a foundation for further research studies. This study was limited to a single organization's virtual leadership development program. Future research can be conducted using multiple organizations to get a larger sample size and more complex dataset. A comparative study of organizational leadership development programs utilizing different leadership models would be beneficial. In the current study, I focused on program effectiveness primarily from the perspective of the participants. Further research to explore program effectiveness in relation to the achievement of organizational goals would add value to the body of literature. In addition, considering another research design could offer new insights. While I chose a qualitative approach to explore

participant perspectives, a quantitative review of survey data could also be utilized to review the numbers behind the perspectives.

### **Conclusion**

In this grounded theory study I explored the participant and supervisor perspectives of a virtual organizational leadership development program. I used multiple tools to collect data, including: (1) satisfaction surveys of participants and supervisors, (2) interviews of participants, and (3) participant promotion rates. Data were analyzed utilizing Charmaz's (2014) grounded theory approach, including: (1) addressing the research question, (2) recruiting a sampling of participants, (3) collecting data, (4) coding data, (5) categorizing data, (6) building theory, and (7) writing findings.

The study results indicated that overall participant and supervisor satisfaction rates with the virtual organizational leadership development program were high. Participants appreciated the advantages of the virtual format of the program and the quality of the instructors. They completed the program with enhanced communication skills, the ability to influence positive change, and increased self-awareness. Based on promotion rates, 31% of participants received promotions after completion of the program. Opportunities for program improvement included incorporating real-world projects into the curriculum to give participants the ability to practice the leadership skills taught, the option to be paired with a mentor, and a second part to the program to explore the leadership competencies at a more advanced level. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of literature with insights into the experiences and perspectives of participants of a virtual organizational leadership development program.



## References

- Abdulghani, H. M., Shaik, S. A., Khamis, N., Al-Drees, A. A., Irshad, M., Khalil, M. S., & Isnani, A. (2014). Research methodology workshops evaluation using the Kirkpatrick's model: Translating theory into practice. *Medical Teacher, 1*(36), S24–S29.
- Adobe Systems Incorporated. (2018). Adobe Connect. Retrieved from <http://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html>
- Alexandra, H., & Lucian, B. (2015). Pros and cons of virtual learning environments: The experience of e-learning platforms in project management. *Revista Economica, 67*(3), 80–92.
- Allen, I. E., & Seaman, J. (2015). *Grade level: Tracking online education in the United States*. Retrieved from <http://onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/gradelevel.pdf>
- Anderson, G., Tredway, C., & Calice, C. (2015). A longitudinal study of nursing students' perceptions of online course quality. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research, 26*(1), 5–21.
- Arenas, F. J., Tucker, J., & Connelly, D. A. (2017). Transforming future Air Force leaders of tomorrow: A path to authentic transformational leadership. *Air & Space Power Journal, 31*(3), 18–33.
- Aristotle, & Sachs, J. (2002). *Nicomachean ethics*. Newbury, MA: Focus Pub./R. Pullins.
- Arroliga, A. C., Huber, C., Myers, J. D., Dieckert, J. P., & Wesson, D. (2014). Leadership in health care for the 21st century: Challenges and opportunities. *American Journal of Medicine, 127*(3), 246–249.

- Augustine-Shaw, D. (2015). Developing leadership capacity in new rural school district leaders: The Kansas educational leadership institute. *Rural Educator*, 37(1), 1–13.
- Barbuto, J. E., Gottfredson, R. K., & Searle, T. P. (2014). An examination of emotional intelligence as an antecedent of servant leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 21(3), 315–323.
- Barlag, P. (2016). *The leadership genius of Julius Caesar: Modern lessons from the man who built an empire*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). The implications of transactional and transformational leadership for individual, team, and organizational development. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 4, 231–272.
- Bauermeister, M. C., Greer, J., Kalinovich, A. V., Marrone, J. A., Pahl, M. M., Rochholz, L. B., & Wilson, B. R. (2016). Preparing students for leadership through experiential learning. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 15(3), 31–41.
- Bickle, J. T. (2017). Developing remote training consultants as leaders-dialogic/network application of path-goal leadership theory in leadership development. *Performance Improvement*, 56(9), 32–39. doi:10.1002/pfi.21738
- BlackBoard Inc. (2018). Blackboard. Retrieved from <http://www.blackboard.com>
- BlackBoard Inc. (2018). Illuminate Live! V10. Retrieved from [http://www.illuminate.com/Services/Training/Elluminate\\_Live!/?id=418](http://www.illuminate.com/Services/Training/Elluminate_Live!/?id=418)
- Blanchard, K. H. (2018). *Servant leadership in action*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

- Blanchard, K. H., & Zigarmi, P. (1985). *Leadership and the one minute supervisor: Increasing effectiveness through situational leadership*. New York, NY: Morrow.
- Block, P. (1993). *Stewardship: Choosing service over self-interest*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Block, P. (2014). Technology, culture, and stewardship. *Organization Development Journal*, 32(4), 9–13.
- Blumenthal, D. M., Bernard, K., Fraser, T. N., Bohnen, J., Zeidman, J., & Stone, V. E. (2014). Implementing a pilot leadership course for internal medicine residents: Design considerations, participant impressions, and lessons learned. *BMC Medical Education*, doi:10.1186/s12909-014-0257-2
- Bowe, S. N. & Jones, W. S. (2017). Continuous leadership education and development at the San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium. *Military Medicine*, 182(7), 1624–1627. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-16-00260
- Bozer, G., Kuna, S., & Santora, J. C. (2015). The role of leadership development in enhancing succession planning in the Israeli nonprofit sector. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, 39(5), 492–508. doi:10.1080/23303131.2015.1077180
- Bradd, P., Travaglia, J., & Hayen, A. (2017). Leadership in allied health: A review of the literature. *Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*, 12(1), 17–24.
- Breckenridge, J., & Jones, D. (2009). Demystifying theoretical sampling in grounded theory research. *Grounded Theory Review*, 8(2), 113–126.

- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Oxford, England: Harper & Row.
- Carcary, M. (2009). The research audit trial: Enhancing trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 7(1), 11–23.
- Carlyle, T. (1841). On heroes, hero-worship, and the heroic in history. *New World*, 2(46), 226–229.
- Casey, D. (2016). Learning leadership by observing. *Fire Engineering*, 169(3), 141–146.
- Casey, D. & Murphy, K. (2009). Issues in using methodological triangulation in research. *Nurse Researcher*, 16(4), 40–55.
- Chadiha, L., Aranda, M., Biefel, D., & Chang, C. (2014). The importance of mentoring faculty members of color in schools of social work. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 34(4), 351–362.
- Chang, H. H., Hung, C., & Hsieh, H. (2014). Virtual teams: Cultural adaptation, communication quality, and interpersonal trust. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 25(11/12), 1318–1335.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Reconstructing grounded theory. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman & J. Brannen (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of social research methods* (461-478). London, England: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2009). Stories, silences, and self: Dilemmas in disclosing chronic illness. In D. E. Brashers and D. J. Goldstein (Eds). *Communicating to manage health and illness* (240–270). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Charmaz, K. (2010). Studying the experience of chronic illness through grounded theory. In G. Scambler and S. Scambler (Eds). *Assaults on the lifeworld: New directions in the sociology of chronic and disabling conditions* (8–36). London, England: Palgrave.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cisco. (2018). WebEx. Retrieved from <http://www.webex.com/>
- Citrix Systems, Inc. (2018). GoToMeeting. Retrieved from <http://www.gotomeeting.com/online/>
- Clarke, N., & Higgs, M. (2016). How strategic focus relates to the delivery of leadership training and development. *Human Resource Management, 55*(4), 541–565.  
doi:10.1002/hrm.21683
- Cobb, C. L., Zamboanga, B. L., Xie, D., Schwartz, S. J., Meca, A., & Sanders, G. L. (2018). From advising to mentoring: Toward proactive mentoring in health service psychology doctoral training programs. *Training and Education In Professional Psychology, 12*(1), 38–45. doi:10.1037/tep0000187
- Coetzer, M. F., Bussin, M., & Geldenhuys, M. (2017). The functions of a servant leader. *Administrative Sciences, 7*(1), 1–32. doi:10.3390/admsci7010005
- Coloma, J., Gibson, C., & Packard, T. (2012). Participant outcomes of a leadership development initiative in eight human service organizations. *Administration in Social Work, 36*, 4–22.
- Cooper, D., 2015. Effective safety leadership. *Professional Safety, 60*(2), 49–53.
- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 41*(1), 89–91. doi:10.1188/14.ONF.

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cropanzano, R., Dasborough, M. T., & Weiss, H. M. (2017). Affective events and the development of leader-member exchange. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(2), 233–258. doi:10.5465/amr.2014.0384
- De Chesnay, M. (2015). *Nursing research using grounded theory: Qualitative designs and methods in nursing*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Deschaine, M. E., & Whale, D. E. (2017). Increasing student engagement in online educational leadership courses. *Journal of Educators Online*, 14(1), 1–12.
- Devin, M. (2016). Transforming the preparation of leaders into a true partnership model. *Educational Considerations*, 43(4), 15–24.
- Devin, M., Augustine-Shaw, D., & Hachiya, R. F. (2016). Changing from traditional practice to a new model for preparing future leaders. *Educational Considerations*, 43(4), 44–53.
- Dittmar, J. K. (2006). An interview with Larry Spears. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 13(1), 108–118.

- Djukic, M., Adams, J., Fulmer, T., Szyld, D., Lee, S., Oh, S., & Triola, M. (2015). E-learning with virtual teammates: A novel approach to interprofessional education. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 29(5), 476–482. doi:10.3109/13561820.2015.1030068
- Douglas, J. (Ed. & Trans). (2014). *Complete works of Aristotle*. Venice, Italy: Aldo Pio Manuzio Publishing.
- Dow, C. (2018). Learning to lead: Take 2! Completing my journey in the AF Civilian Strategic Leader Program (CSLP). *Armed Forces Comptroller*, 63(1), 10–13.
- Downs, H., Champion, H., Hannum, K., Stawiski, S., & Patterson, T. (2017). *Evaluating the impact of leadership development*. 2nd ed. Center for Creative Leadership. Retrieved from <https://akin.css.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED582401&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Dulebohn, J. H., & Hoch, J. E. (2017). Virtual teams in organizations. *Human Resource Management Review*, 27(4), 569–574. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2016.12.004
- Edel, C. N. (2014). *Nation builder: John Quincy Adams and the grand strategy of the republic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Edgar, T.W. & Manz, D.O. (2017). *Research methods for cyber security*. Cambridge, MA: Elsevier, Inc.
- Faulconer, E. K., & Gruss, A. B. (2018). A review to weigh the pros and cons of online, remote, and distance science laboratory experiences. *International Review of Research in Open & Distance Learning*, 19(2), 155–168.

- Farooq, O., & Matteson, M. (2016). Opportunities and challenges for students in an online seminar-style course in LIS education: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science*, 57(4), 271–282. doi:10.12783/issn.2328-2967/57/4/2
- Ferch, S. R. (2012). *Forgiveness and power in the age of atrocity: Servant leadership as a way of life*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Ferrell, R. S. (2016). What makes a good leader?. *Army Sustainment*, 48(1), 18–21.
- Ferch, S., Spears, L., McFarland, M. & Carey, M. (2015). *Conversations on servant leadership: Insights on human courage in life and work*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Fernandez-Araoz, C., Roscoe, A., & Aramaki, K. (2017). Turing potential into success: The missing link in leadership development. *Harvard Business Review*, 95(6), 86–93.
- Fiedler, F. (1964). A contingency model of leadership effectiveness. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 1, 149–190. doi:10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60051-9
- Fiedler, F. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill Series in Management.
- Retrieved from  
<https://akin.css.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED015354&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *Design and evaluate research in education* (8th ed.) New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Francis, K., & Taylor, B. (2013). *Qualitative research in the health sciences*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- French, J. J., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright, D. Cartwright (Eds.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). Oxford: Univer. Michigan. Retrieved from <https://akin.css.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=1960-06701-004&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Frich, J. C., Brewster, A. L., Cherlin, E. J., & Bradley, E. H. (2015). Leadership development programs for physicians: A systematic review. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 30(5), 656–674. doi:10.1007/s11606-014-3141-1
- Fulton S, & Krainovich-Miller, B. (2010). Gathering and appraising the literature. In G. LoBiondo-Wood & J. Haber (Eds.) *Nursing Research: Methods and Critical Appraisal for Evidence-Based Practice*. (pp. 49-74), St. Louis, MO: Mosby Elsevier.
- Gandolfi, F., Stone, S., & Deno, F. (2017). Servant leadership: An ancient style with 21st century relevance. *Review of International Comparative Management / Revista De Management Comparat International*, 18(4), 350–361.
- George, P. P., Papachristou, N., Belisario, J. M., Wang, W., Wark, P. A., Cotic, Z., & Car, J. (2014). Online e-learning for undergraduates in health professions: A systematic review of the impact of knowledge, skills, attitudes and satisfaction. *Journal of Global Health*, 4, 1–17.
- Ghiasipour, M., Mosadeghrad, A. M., Arab, M., & Jaafaripooyan, E. (2017). Leadership challenges in health care organizations: The case of Iranian hospitals. *Medical Journal of the Islamic Republic Of Iran*, 31, 96–104. <https://doi-org.akin.css.edu/10.14196/mjiri.31.96>

- Giesbers, B., Rienties, B., Tempelaar, D., & Gijselaers, W. (2014). A dynamic analysis of the interplay between asynchronous and synchronous communication in online learning: The impact of motivation. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 30, 30–50.  
doi:10.1111/jcal.12020
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Goleman, D. (1998). What makes a leader?. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(6), 93–102.
- Green, H. E. (2014). Use of theoretical and conceptual frameworks in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(6), 34–38.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1970). *The servant as leader*. Atlanta, GA: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1972). *The institution as servant*. Atlanta, GA: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R. K., Beazley, H., Beggs, J., & Spears, L. (2003). *The servant leader within: A transformative path*. New York, NY: Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R. K., Fraker, A., & Spears, L. (1996). *Seeker and servant: Reflections on religious leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Greenleaf, R. K., Frick, D. M., & Spears, L. C. (1996). *On becoming a servant-leader*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Greenleaf, R. K. & Spears, L. (1998). *The power of servant leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Greenleaf, R. K., & Spears, L. C. (2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. 25th anniversary ed. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough?: An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
- Hackman, M. & Johnson, C. (2004). *Leadership: A communication perspective*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Haibin, L., & Shanshi, L. (2014). Effect of situational leadership and employee readiness match on organizational citizenship behavior in China. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 42(10), 1725–1732. doi:10.2224/sbp.2014.42.10.1725
- Hallowell, E. M. (2011). *Shine: Using brain science to get the best from your people*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press Books.
- Harrison, R., Gemmell, I., & Reed, K. (2014). Student satisfaction with a web-based dissertation course: Findings from an international distance learning master's programme in public health. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 15(1), 182–202.
- Harter, N. (2015). Introduction: History in the study of leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 9(2), 39–41. doi:10.1002/jls.21362
- Hartzell, J. D., Yu, C. E., Cohee, B. M., Nelson, M. R., & Wilson, R. L. (2017). Moving beyond accidental leadership: A graduate medical education leadership curriculum needs

- assessment. *Military Medicine*, 182(7), e1815–e1822. doi:10.7205/MILMED-D-16-00365
- Hatch, M. J. (2018). *Organization theory: Modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*. (4th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. (1969). Life cycle theory of leadership: Is there a best style of leadership? *Training & Development*, 23(5), 26–34.
- Hesse, H. (1956). *The journey to the East*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Heyler, S. G., & Martin, J. A. (2018). Servant leadership theory: Opportunities for additional theoretical integration. *Journal of Supervisorial Issues*, 30(2), 230–243.
- Hibbert, P., Beech, N., & Siedlok, F. (2017). Leadership formation: Interpreting experience. *Academy Of Management Learning & Education*, 16(4), 603–622.
- Hill, L. H. (2014). Graduate students' perspectives on effective teaching. *Adult Learning*, 25(2), 57–65.
- Ho, M. (2016). Investment in learning increases for fourth straight year. *TD Magazine*, 30–35.
- Hodgkinson, G. P., & Ford, J. K. (2015). What makes excellent literature reviews excellent? A clarification of some common mistakes and misconceptions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36, S1–S5. doi:10.1002/job.1983
- Hoegl, M., & Muethel, M. (2016). Enabling shared leadership in virtual project teams: A practitioners' guide. *Project Management Journal*, 47(1), 7–12.
- House, R. J. (1976). A 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. *Working Paper Series* (1–38). Toronto University, Ontario. Retrieved from

<https://akin.css.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED133827&site=eds-live&scope=site>

House, R. & Mitchell, R. (1974). Path-goal theory of leadership. *Journal of Contemporary Business*, 3, 81–97.

Huggett, C. (2014). Make virtual training a success. *T+D*, 68(1), 40–45.

Jit, R., Sharma, C. S., & Kawatra, M. (2017). Healing a broken spirit: Role of servant leadership. *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers*, 42(2), 80–94.

doi:10.1177/0256090917703754

Johnston, A. (2016). Yes: Leadership can be learned. *London Business School Review*, (3), 46–50. doi:10.1111/2057-1615.12142

Karami, M. (2017). Development of key performance indicators for academic radiology departments. *International Journal of Healthcare Management*, 10(4), 275–280.

Katz, R. L. (1955). Skills of an effective administrator. *Harvard Business Review*, 33(1), 33–42.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., & Kirkpatrick, J. D. (2006). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson FT Press.

Kotter, J. P. (1990). *A force for change: How leadership differs from management*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Kotter, J. P. (2012). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press Books.

- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lacerenza, C. N., Reyes, D. L., Marlow, S. L., Joseph, D. L., & Salas, E. (2017). Leadership training design, delivery, and implementation: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(12), 1686–1718. doi:10.1037/apl0000241
- Lachance, J. A., & Oxendine, J. S. (2015). Redefining leadership education in graduate public health programs: Prioritization, focus, and guiding Principles. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105, S60–S64. <https://doi-org.akin.css.edu/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302463>
- Lacroix, M., & Verdorfer, A. P. (2017). Can servant leaders fuel the leadership fire? The relationship between servant leadership and followers' leadership avoidance. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(1), 1–11. doi:10.3390/admsci7010006
- Lapan, S. D., Riemer, F. J., & Quartaroli, M. T. (2012). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Leider, R., & Spears, L. C. (2016). What can hunter-gathers teach us about servant leadership?. *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 10(1), 23–31.
- Leigh, C., Laporte, B., Bonada, N., Fritz, K., Pella, H., Sauquet, E., & ... Datry, T. (2017). IRBAS: An online database to collate, analyze, and synthesize data on the biodiversity

- and ecology of intermittent rivers worldwide. *Ecology and Evolution*, 7(3), 815–823.  
doi:10.1002/ece3.2679
- Lenert, K. A., & Janes, D. P. (2017). The incorporation of quality attributes into online course design in higher education. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education*, 32(1), 1–14.
- Leonard, H. S. (2017). A teachable approach to leadership. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 69(4), 243–266. doi:10.1037/cpb0000096
- Liang, T. L., Chan, L. C., Lin, C. W., and Huang, Y. L. (2011). Relationship between leadership behaviors and task performance: The mediation role of job satisfaction and the moderation role of social distance. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(14), 5920–5928.
- Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2), 161–177.
- Lindsay, V., & Williams, H. (2014). In hindsight: The challenges of virtual mentoring the future higher education leaders of Afghanistan. *International Journal Of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 12(2), 203–218.
- Luizzi, P. (2017). Situational leadership. *Fire Engineering*, 170(8), 65–66.
- Maqbool, R., Ye, S., Manzoor, N., & Rashid, Y. (2017). The impact of emotional intelligence, project supervisors' competencies, and transformational leadership on project success: An empirical perspective. *Project Management Journal*, 48(3), 58–75.

- Marmon, M., Vanscoter, J., & Gordesky, J. (2014). Online student satisfaction: An examination of preference, asynchronous course elements and collaboration among online students. *Current Issues in Education*, 17(3), 1–11.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McGinley, P., Peterson, R. S., & Johnston, A. (2016). Yes: Leadership can be learned. *London Business School Review*, 27(3), 46–50. doi:10.1111/2057-1615.12142
- McMaster, M. (2014). Learning to lead: A practitioner perspective. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Management*, 36(4), 430–439. doi:10.1080/1360080X.2014.916470
- Meier, H. H., Smith, D. D., & Porter, T. H. (2016). Global virtual teams for accounting millennials. *Journal for Research in Business Education*, 58(1), 48–60.
- Mendez, M. J., Al Arkoubi, K., & Yue, C. (2015). Business leadership education: A virtual storytellers exercise. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 19(1), 31–42.
- Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. 4th ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, N. C. (2016). Claiming unclaimed spaces: Virtual spaces for learning. *Educational Media International*, 53(1), 13–26. doi:10.1080/09523987.2016.1189252
- Murty, S., Sassen, B., & Kammerdiener, M. (2016). Preparing for the passing of the baton: Leadership programs in senior living organizations. *Seniors Housing & Care Journal*, 24(1), 88–96

- Neill, C. (2017). Writing & research. Writing a literature review. *Radiation Therapist*, 26(1), 89–91.
- Newman, A., Schwarz, G., Cooper, B., & Sendjaya, S. (2017). How servant leadership influences organizational citizenship behavior: The roles of LMX, empowerment, and proactive personality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(1), 49–62.
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O’Leonard, K. (2014). *The corporate learning factbook: Benchmarks, trends and analysis of the U.S. training market*. Oakland, CA: Bersin & Associates.
- Öztürk, A., Varoğlu, M. A., & Varoğlu, D. (2017). A critical review of implicit leadership theory on the validity of organizational actor-national culture fitness. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 6(4), 456–469.
- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Sciences Research*, 34. 1189–1208.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Phillips, P., Ray, R., & Phillips, J. J. (2015). *Measuring the success of leadership development*. Alexandria, VA: ATD Press.
- Phillips, P., Ray, R., & Phillips, J. J. (2016). How to capture the business value of leadership development. *People & Strategy*, 39(2), 46–51.
- Pidgeon, K. (2017). The keys for success: Leadership core competencies. *Journal of Trauma Nursing*, 24(6), 338–341. doi:10.1097/JTN.0000000000000322

- Polgar, S. & Thomas, S. A. (2013). *Introduction to research in the health sciences*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Churchill Livingstone.
- Polit, D. F. & Beck, C. T. (2012). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.
- Prochazka, J., Vaculik, M., & Smutny, P. (2017). Transformational leadership, work satisfaction and group performance: Mediation analysis. *Proceedings of the European Conference on Management, Leadership & Governance*, 386–392.
- Ray, R., & D. Learmond. (2013). *DNA of leaders: Leadership development secrets*. New York, NY: The Conference Board.
- Rockinson-Szapkiw, A., & Wendt, J. (2015). Technologies that assist in online group work: A comparison of synchronous and asynchronous computer mediated communication technologies on students' learning and community. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 24(3), 263–279.
- Royse, D., Thyer, B., & Padgett, D. (2016). *Program evaluation: An introduction to an evidence-based approach*. 6th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Ryan-Nicholls, K. D., & Will, C. I. (2009). Rigour in qualitative research: Mechanisms for control. *Nurse Researcher*, 16(3), 70–85.
- Saravo, B., Netzel, J., & Kiesewetter, J. (2017). The need for strong clinical leaders: Transformational and transactional leadership as a framework for resident leadership training. *Plos One*, 12(8), 1–13. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0183019
- Schwantes, M. (2015). Servant leadership. *Leadership Excellence Essentials*, 32(5), 30–31.

- Schwartz, J., Bersin, J., & Pelster, B. (2014). *Human capital trends 2014 survey*. Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2014.html>
- Scutt, D. (2008). How to review literature. *Radiologic Technology*, 79(4), 306–308.
- Seidle, B., Fernandez, S., & Perry, J. L. (2016). Do leadership training and development make a difference in the public sector? A panel study. *Public Administration Review*, 76(4), 603–613.
- Smith, W. (2015). Relational dimensions of virtual social work education: Mentoring faculty in a web-based learning environment. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43(2), 236–245.  
doi:10.1007/s10615-014-0510-5
- Song, M. M., Simonsen, C. K., Wilson, J. D., & Jenkins, M. R. (2016). Development of a PubMed based search tool for identifying sex and gender specific health literature. *Journal of Women's Health*, 25(2), 181–187. doi:10.1089/jwh.2015.5217
- Sørensen, P. (2017). What research on learning transfer can teach about improving the impact of leadership-development initiatives. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 69(1), 47–62. doi:10.1037/cpb0000072
- Spears, L. (1995). *Reflections on leadership: How Robert K. Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership influenced today's top management thinkers*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Spears, L. (1998). *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit, and servant-leadership*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Spears, L. (2010). Character and servant leadership: Ten characteristics of effective, caring leaders. *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership*, 1(1), 25–30.
- Spears, L. (2016). A journey in servant leadership. *International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, 10(1), 3–6.
- Spears, L., & Lawrence, M. (2002). *Focus on leadership: Servant-leadership for the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Spector, B. A. (2016). Carlyle, Freud, and the great man theory more fully considered. *Leadership*, 12(2), 250–260. doi:10.1177/1742715015571392
- Spencer, H. (1875). Emotions in the primitive man. *Popular Science Monthly*, 6(3), 331–339.
- Steinhilber, S., & Estrada, C. A. (2015). To lead or not to lead? Structure and content of leadership development programs. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 30(5), 543–545. doi:10.1007/s11606-015-3240-7
- Stevenson, S. E. (2016). Wheelhouse Wednesday: Developing dynamic leaders by bridging the experience gap. *Army Sustainment*, 48(1), 46–49.
- Stogdill, R. M. (1948). Personal factors associated with leadership; a survey of the literature. *The Journal of Psychology*, 25, 35–71.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strong, R. (2016). Developing the leaders of tomorrow in today's schoolhouses: The Adjutant General School is modifying its curriculum to train human resources soldiers to be more creative, flexible, and innovative. *Army Sustainment*, 1, 32–37.

- Tal, D., & Gordon, A. (2016). Leadership of the present, current theories of multiple involvements: a bibliometric analysis. *Scientometrics*, 1, 259–270. doi:10.1007/s11192-016-1880-y
- Taylor, M. A. (2017). *Information system research: Fundamentals of scientific research for the consumer*. New York, NY: Momentum Press, LLC.
- Taylor, B. & Francis, K. (2013). *Qualitative research in the health sciences*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Thomas, S., Department of Education (ED), O. T., & American Institutes for Research, (2016). Future ready learning: Reimagining the role of technology in education. *2016 National Education Technology Plan*. Retrieved from <https://tech.ed.gov/files/2015/12/NETP16.pdf>
- Thompson, S., & Cox, E. (2017). How coaching is used and understood by project supervisors in organizations. *Project Management Journal*, 48(5), 64–77.
- Thompson, A. R., & Harper, D. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Tichy, N. & Cohen, E. (1997). *The leadership engine: How winning companies build leaders at every level*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- Tokel, S. T., & İslar, V. (2015). Acceptance of virtual worlds as learning space. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, 52(3), 254–264. doi:10.1080/14703297.2013.820139

- Trammell, B. A., & LaForge, C. (2017). Common challenges for instructors in large online courses: Strategies to mitigate student and instructor frustration. *Journal of Educators Online, 14*(1), 1–10.
- Trastek, V., Hamilton, N., & Niles, E. (2014). Leadership models in health care: A case for servant leadership. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings, 89*(3), 374–381.
- Uhl-Bien, M., & Graen, G. B. (1992). Self-management and team-making in cross-functional work teams: Discovering the keys to becoming an integrated team. *Journal of High Technology Management Research, 3*225–241. doi:10.1016/1047-8310(92)90013-R
- Van Dierendonck, D., & Nuijten, I. (2011). The servant leadership survey: Development and validation of a multidimensional measure. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 26*(3), 249–267.
- Vatan, F. (2016). A leadership development program through mentorship for clinical nurses in Turkey. *Nursing Economic\$, 34*(5), 242–250.
- Vogel, D. J. (2017). Haas research on leadership: An introduction. *California Management Review, 60*(1), 5–7. doi:10.1177/0008125617735339
- Vogt, P., Vogt, E., Gardner, D., & Haeffele, L. (2014). *Selecting the right analyses for your data: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Waters, R. D. (2013). The role of stewardship in leadership: Applying the contingency theory of leadership to relationship cultivation practices of public relations practitioners. *Journal of Communication Management, 17*(4), 324–340. doi:10.1108/JCOM-05-2012-0041

- Watts, L. (2016). Synchronous and asynchronous communication in distance learning: A review of the literature. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education, 1*, 23–32.
- Wellman, N. (2017). Authority or community? A relational models theory of group-level leadership emergence. *Academy of Management Review, 42*(4), 596–617.
- Wilson, P., Valentine, D., & Pereira, A. (2014). Perceptions of new social work faculty about mentoring experiences. *Journal of Social Work Education, 38*(2), 317–333.
- Wolgemuth, J. R., Hicks, T., & Agosto, V. (2017). Unpacking assumptions in research synthesis: A critical construct synthesis approach. *Educational Researcher, 46*(3), 131–139.

## **Appendix A: Authorization for Research**

October 2, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Based on my review of the proposed research by Charlene Banta, I give permission for her to utilize [name redacted] as the study site to conduct the study entitled How Virtual Organizational Leadership Programs Impact Employee Leadership Development. As part of this study, I authorize the researcher to engage in data collection associated with the [name redacted] Program from the Learning Management System (LMS), Human Resource system, and [name redacted] satisfaction surveys for the purposes of assessing the effectiveness of the [name redacted] Program.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing historical data regarding the development of the [name redacted] Program, coordinating access to Human Resource data for all participants to analyze the number of promotions following completion of the program, and granting access to participant and manager satisfaction survey results. The researcher has access to the organizational LMS and will collect that data without assistance.

This authorization covers the time period of October 2, 2017 – December 31, 2018

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that this research is being conducted to fulfill requirements for a doctoral dissertation in the field of education. The study site will remain confidential when the results are published in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

[name redacted]  
[title redacted]

## **Appendix B: Email Invitation to Program Participants for Interview**

From: Banta, Charlene M.  
Sent: Friday, September 07, 2018 12:42 PM  
To:  
Subject: Interview Request

Greetings,

I am conducting research to assess the effectiveness of the virtual [name redacted] Program. You are being contacted as one who has completed the program.

Purpose and what you will be doing:

The purpose of this interview is to assess the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program, The [name redacted] Program, within [name redacted] campuses. We expect approximately 12 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. To be in the study, you will participate in a 10-question interview via Skype answering questions about your experience in the leadership development program. Doing these things should take less than 30 minutes of your time.

Risks:

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, I will protect your information. I, the principal investigator, will record interviews. The recording will be transcribed by me. Any data you provide will be coded so people who are not the investigator cannot link your information to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption on my password protected computer. The recording will be deleted at the conclusion of the study.

Please understand that your current and future employment, education and/or medical care at [name redacted] will not be affected by whether or not you participate. Specifically, your care will not be jeopardized if you choose not to participate.

Benefits:

Information you provide will help the developers of The [name redacted] Program make improvements to ensure the program achieves the intended organizational goals. A summary of the research results will be provided to [name redacted] at the conclusion of the study.

If you would like to volunteer for this study, please reply to this email.

Thank you,

Charlene Banta  
[contact information redacted]

## Appendix C: Follow-up Survey for Participants

This survey intends to measure to what extent the following learning objectives were successfully implemented:

- Develop skills and gain experience that align with organizational Leadership Capabilities: Inspiring Values, Engaging Colleagues, Bold and Forward Thinking and Driving Results
- Identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and communicating effectively
- Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) vs. management
- Engage in self-assessment exercises in preparation for future leadership roles

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. Your input will help to enhance future learning offerings. Thank you!

Please rate the following statements indicating the degree to which you agree.

**5=Strongly Agree**

**1=Strongly Disagree**

- 1) I am applying what I learned in the Program.  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 2) I have received coaching and/or support in applying my new skills and/or knowledge.  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 3) This program has supported me in my career development.  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 4) I am applying the following new skills and/or knowledge from this program in my current role:
- 5) I have experienced the following successes in applying my new skills and/or knowledge:
- 6) I have encountered the following barriers to applying my new skills and/or knowledge:
- 7) Additional Comments:

## Appendix D: Follow-up Survey for Supervisors

This survey intends to measure to what extent the following learning objectives were successfully implemented:

- Develop skills and gain experience that align with organizational Leadership Capabilities: Inspiring Values, Engaging Colleagues, Bold and Forward Thinking and Driving Results
- Identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and communicating effectively
- Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) vs. management
- Engage in self-assessment exercises in preparation for future leadership roles

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. Your input will help to enhance future learning offerings. Thank you!

---

**Please rate the following statements regarding your staff member's participation in the Program.**

**1=Strongly Disagree**

**5=Strongly Agree**

- 1) Based on my observations, my staff member has applied new skills and/or knowledge attained from participating in this program.  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 2) I have provided coaching and/or support to assist my staff member in applying their new skills and/or knowledge.  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 3) The communication emails I received throughout the program were helpful in providing me with suggestions and ideas on how to coach and support my staff member.  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 4) Please provide two or three examples that demonstrate your staff member has successfully applied their new skills and/or knowledge.
- 5) If your staff member has not been able to apply their new skills and/or knowledge, please describe two or three barriers they might need help overcoming in order to be successful.
- 6) What suggestions, if any, would you recommend that would have helped you in supporting your staff member successfully implement their new skills and/or knowledge as they went through the program.
- 7) Additional Comments:

## Appendix E: Program Post Survey

---

**Please rate the following statements indicating the degree to which you agree course objectives were met.**

**1=Strongly Disagree**

**5=Strongly Agree**

- 1) Develop skills and gain experiences that align with organizational Leadership Capabilities: Inspiring Values, Engaging Colleagues, Bold and Forward Thinking and Driving Results  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 2) Identify and practice skills related to change agility, influencing without authority, building relationships, team dynamics and communicating effectively  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 3) Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) vs. management  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 4) Engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree

---

**Please answer the following questions:**

- 5) The format of the Program was conducive to my learning style and preferences  
☐ 1 Strongly Disagree   ☐ 2 Disagree   ☐ 3 Neutral   ☐ 4 Agree   ☐ 5 Strongly Agree
- 6) The time commitment (in class and out) of the Program was  
☐ a. Too Short  
☐ b. Just Right  
☐ c. Too Long
- 7) For completion credit of the Program, I would recommend that participants be required to  
☐ a. Attend ALL sessions live  
☐ b. Be allowed to miss 1 live session and watch the recording  
☐ c. Be allowed to miss 2+ live sessions and watch the recordings
- 8) What worked well during the Program?
- 9) What change to the program would you recommend?

---

---

**Please rate the following statements:**

**1 = Not at all**

**10 =**

**Extremely**

10) Level of CONFIDENCE to apply what I learned

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

11) Level of COMMITMENT to apply what I learned

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

12) What barriers do you anticipate might prevent you from applying what you learned?

13) What might help you overcome those barriers?

---

---

**Please rate the following statements:**

**1 = Strongly**

**Disagree 10 =**

**Strongly Agree**

14) I expect positive results from applying what I learned.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

15) I would recommend this program to others.

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

16) Overall comments

17) Name (Optional)

---

## **Appendix F: Interview Questions**

1. Why did you enroll in the virtual leadership development program?
2. Tell me about your experience in the virtual leadership development program; was it positive or negative, why?
3. What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program in equipping participants with the following program objectives?
  - a. Develop skills and gain experiences that align with the organization's leadership capabilities.
  - b. Identify and practice skills related to the leadership capabilities.
  - c. Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) and management.
  - d. Engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles.
4. Do you believe the program effectively communicated the ten principles of servant leadership?
  - a. Listening
  - b. Empathy
  - c. Healing
  - d. Awareness
  - e. Persuasion
  - f. Conceptualization
  - g. Foresight

- h. Stewardship
  - i. Commitment to the growth of people
  - j. Building community
5. How do you feel about your potential to move into a leadership position after completing the program; did it help your career progression?
  6. What was your knowledge level of the virtual technology (WebEx) prior to the program; how was the tool effective or ineffective based on your experience in the program?
  7. Did the use of supplemental technologies such as Yammer for cohort collaboration enhance your experience; did you feel connected to your classmates and instructors?
  8. Would you recommend the virtual leadership development program to others, why or why not?
  9. What changes would you recommend for the program to be more effective, describe an ideal leadership development program from your perspective?
  10. If you have not transitioned into a leadership role since completion of the program, what do you see as the biggest obstacles hindering that transition?

## **Appendix G: Participant Consent to Interview**

### **CONSENT FORM**

**Research Study Title:** A Grounded Theory Study: How a Virtual Organizational Leadership Program Impacts Employee Leadership Development

**Principal Investigator:** Charlene Banta

**Research Institution:** [name redacted]

**Faculty Advisor:** Christopher Maddox, Ph.D.

#### **Purpose and what you will be doing:**

The purpose of this survey is to assess the effectiveness of the virtual organizational leadership development program. We expect approximately 12 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on 7/2/2018 and end enrollment on 8/26/2018. To be in the study, you will participate in a 10-question interview via Skype answering questions about your experience in the leadership development program. Doing these things should take less than 30 minutes of your time.

#### **Risks:**

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside the organization's firewalls. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will refer to your data with a code that only the principal investigator knows links to you. This way, your identifiable information will not be stored with the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after we conclude this study.

#### **Benefits:**

Information you provide will help the developers of the virtual leadership development program make improvements to ensure the program achieves the intended organizational goals.

#### **Confidentiality:**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Charlene Banta at [email redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email [obran@cu-portland.edu](mailto:obran@cu-portland.edu) or call 503-493-6390).

**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____	_____
Participant Name	Date
_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Name	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	Date



Investigator: Charlene Banta; [email redacted]  
c/o: Professor Christopher Maddox, Ph.D.  
Concordia University–Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street  
Portland, Oregon 97221

## Appendix H: Participant Interview Results

Questions	Common Themes
Why did you enroll in the virtual leadership development program?	Interested in leadership, desire to expand knowledge and skills to further career growth
Tell me about your experience in the virtual leadership development program; was it positive or negative, why?	Positive experience overall, networking was beneficial, enhanced self-awareness, effectively conveyed organizational leadership competencies
<p>What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of the virtual leadership development program in equipping participants with the following program objectives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop skills and gain experiences that align with the organization's leadership capabilities.</li> <li>-Identify and practice skills related to the leadership capabilities.</li> <li>-Differentiate and recognize the impact of leadership (coaching mindset) and management.</li> <li>-Engage in self-assessment opportunities in preparation for future leadership roles.</li> </ul>	<p>Participants believed leadership skills were identified and communicated well, requested opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills with real-world scenarios they could work through, indicated post-program mentoring and a second level to the program would be helpful, coverage of the coaching mindset was repeatedly called out as the most effective component of the program, self-assessment opportunities at the end were beneficial and enhanced self-awareness, participants would have liked self-assessments at the beginning and throughout as well</p>
<p>Do you believe the program effectively communicated the ten principles of servant leadership?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Listening</li> <li>b. Empathy</li> </ul>	<p>Participants indicated the principles of servant leadership were woven throughout the program well with exceptional coverage of listening, empathy, awareness, stewardship, and commitment to the</p>

<p>c. Healing</p> <p>d. Awareness</p> <p>e. Persuasion</p> <p>f. Conceptualization</p> <p>g. Foresight</p> <p>h. Stewardship</p> <p>i. Commitment to the growth of people</p> <p>j. Building community</p>	<p>growth of people, healing was the principle with the least amount of focus in the program</p>
<p>How do you feel about your potential to move into a leadership position after completing the program; did it help your career progression?</p>	<p>Program was helpful in expanding knowledge base of leadership capabilities ascribed to at the organization, potential to move into a leadership position hindered by opportunities for advancement within the organization rather than the effectiveness of the program</p>
<p>What was your knowledge level of the virtual technology (WebEx) prior to the program; how was the tool effective or ineffective based on your experience in the program?</p>	<p>Participants were familiar with the tool and believed it was a good choice for the program, this was the first time participants used the small group break-out sessions in the virtual environment and they provided positive feedback on the effectiveness of that component of the technology</p>
<p>Did the use of supplemental technologies such as Yammer for cohort collaboration enhance your experience; did you feel connected to your classmates and instructors?</p>	<p>Most participants found Yammer to be a helpful tool in the program as a single place where all materials could be found and cohort members could dialogue with classmates and instructors, those who</p>

	<p>didn't find it useful found the platform confusing and thought they may have used it more if a better overview of the application were provided on the first day of class</p>
<p>Would you recommend the virtual leadership development program to others, why or why not?</p>	<p>Participants indicated they would recommend the program to others and have recommended it to others, expressed that the program content was beneficial for them both professionally and personally in leading situations effectively</p>
<p>What changes would you recommend for the program to be more effective, describe an ideal leadership development program from your perspective?</p>	<p>Participants suggested including a mentoring component to the program and developing a second part to the program for cohorts to continue learning and get more in-depth with the content through experiential learning via real-world scenarios they work through</p>
<p>If you have not transitioned into a leadership role since completion of the program, what do you see as the biggest obstacles hindering that transition?</p>	<p>Lack of opportunities for advancement within the organization were cited as the biggest obstacles hindering participants from transitioning to leadership roles</p>

## **Appendix I: Statement of Original Work**

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

### **Statement of academic integrity.**

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

### **Explanations:**

#### ***What does “fraudulent” mean?***

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

#### ***What is “unauthorized” assistance?***

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

### **Appendix I: Statement of Original Work (Continued)**

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association

Charlene Banta

---

Digital Signature

Charlene Banta

---

Name (Typed)

2/14/2019

---

Date