

**EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF HONESTY AND INTEGRITY WITHIN  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE LEADERSHIP**

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Doctorial Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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### **Abstract**

This study focuses on employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity within the National Park Service in response to the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results. Answers to two questions on the survey returned highly negative reactions to employee perspectives on senior leaders' honesty and integrity and low measures of employee motivation and commitment levels. The qualitative nature of the research presents a case study design that develops an understanding of negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity within leadership and employee commitment and motivation. It addresses the general problem of negative employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity and the resulting low levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. The research seeks to question the reasoning behind National Park Service employees' high negative response to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey on opinions of senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity, how these perceptions affect commitment, and how perceptions impact employee motivation. Individual interviews and a focus group session asked semi-structured questions to target specific variables of the study and explore further into participant responses. Data coding occurred during the collection process. A review of the existing literature establishes the influence of leadership practices on the variables of employee behaviors, organizational culture, employee motivation, and employee commitment. The findings of the study support the relationship between the variables. The study reports on the value of these variables regarding senior leadership positions to develop recommendations for further action on filling vacant positions, creating a communication plan, and establishing accountability.

**Keywords:** leadership, honesty, integrity, employee perceptions, commitment, motivation.

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### **Section 1: Foundation of the Study**

This study will focus on employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity within the National Park Service in response to the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results. Section one will establish a foundation for the need of study by discussing the study's background, the problem to address, and the purpose of the research. The qualitative nature of the study will present a case study design that develops an understanding of negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity within leadership and the effect on employee commitment and motivation. The conceptual framework of the study follows a constructivist worldview. The definition of terms provides clarification of those that are not a universal language. The discussion will acknowledge the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. The significance of the study discusses the reduction of gaps, biblical integration, and the relationship to the field of human resource management. The section concludes with a review of the professional and academic literature.

#### **Background of the Problem**

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is an annual questionnaire distributed to all employees within the executive branch of the federal service for voluntary participation. Negative responses to two questions within the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey vary significantly from the government-wide results. One item measures employee perspectives on senior leaders' honesty and integrity, while the other measures employee motivation and commitment levels. Responses demonstrate highly negative employee perceptions in both areas. The analysis of the 2018 survey results does not indicate if a relationship exists between the variables or addresses an explanation or reasoning for highly negative responses (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018).

Mayer et al. (2009) demonstrate that ethical practices of top management indirectly influence employee behavior through social learning theory and social exchange theory. A study by Yang (2014) supports this finding and adds that leadership behaviors indirectly influence life and job satisfaction in employees. Other studies show various factors that influence the relationship between ethical leadership and employee motivation and commitment. In a private industry study, Yang and Wei (2018) find a positive association with ethical leadership and organizational commitment that influences organizational citizenship behavior. Stouten et al. (2013) identify the connecting variable between ethical leadership and employee behaviors to be moral values. In their findings, Stouten et al. state that highly ethical leaders can be as morally reproofing as leaders that demonstrate low ethical behaviors. Potipiroon and Ford (2017) find that ethical leadership alone does not have a direct influence on the moral value of public service motivation. The interaction between variables requires the impact of intrinsic motivation (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). When considered together, ethical leadership, moral values, and inherent motivation influence organizational commitment (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017).

Private industry studies further identify variables that influence relationships within the general workplace. Elci et al. (2012) find that work-related stress affects the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational commitment. Ethical leadership creates a negative effect on commitment, where work-related stress positively affects commitment (Elci et al., 2012). When employees are more confident in their leadership, they experience a lower level of stress and are more satisfied in their jobs (Elci et al., 2012). Zhou et al. (2015) support the findings in that when leaders demonstrate appropriate behaviors, employees experience lower levels of stress. In Zhou, et al.'s study (2015), leader-member exchange mediates the negative relationship between ethical leadership and employee work-related stress.

Dust et al. (2018) find psychological empowerment as the influencing factor between perceived leadership behaviors and employee commitment and motivation. Dust et al.'s (2018) research findings conclude that leaders engaging in ethical behaviors exhibit more confidence over their work, enhancing the psychological empowerment and emotions of employees, and creating higher levels of motivational within the employee. Potipiroon and Ford (2017) demonstrate commitment and motivation within public sector organizations involve more complex variables as individual balance intrinsic needs with those of public service. A gap in the literature exists in understanding the effect of leadership behaviors on employees in public service organizations and specifically within the federal civilian service.

### **Problem Statement**

This study addresses the general problem of negative employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity and the resulting low levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. Honesty is a significant predictor of leadership effectiveness (Bakhsh et al., 2019). A study by Feng et al. (2018) finds a positive relationship between ethical leadership practices, employee motivation levels, and employee creativity levels. Ahmad and Gao (2018) support the positive influence of ethical leadership on employee behaviors in their findings of a positive relationship with increased employee work engagement. Employees in public service positions who are motivated and engaged are more likely to report ethical problems to management, furthering public sector ethics (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2018).

Public service motivation is positively associated with ethical leadership (Ugaddan & Park, 2019). High levels of motivation and ethical leadership produce a positive effect on organizational commitment (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). A study by Lavena (2016) finds that employees in the public sector are more likely to report wrongdoing within the workplace due to

a strong sense of commitment to public service and loyalty of duty. Organizational commitment is positively associated with ethical leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (Yang & Wei, 2018). Literature that addresses honesty and integrity in federal agencies and its effect on the workforce is limited. The specific problem to be addressed within this study is the negative employee perceptions of ethical leadership within the National Park Service that result in decreased motivation and commitment in the workforce.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand how negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership affect levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. It will use the case study design to explore employee perceptions within the National Park Service. Results of the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey demonstrate that the National Park Service employees have a negative opinion on senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). Government-wide responses to this survey question returned 55.2% positive results while the National Park Service employees rate responses 36.4% positive (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). The National Park Service employee response (29.3% positive) to senior leaders' ability to generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce is significantly lower than government-wide results (43.8% positive) (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018).

The study will provide constructive insight into employee perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity necessary to develop recommendations and action plans for improvement. Participants from any geographical location within the National Park Service will receive an

invitation through social media communication forums to volunteer to provide feedback and input for data collection. The results will represent a generalized assumption of the employee population. The study explores the perceptions of a broad sector of employees on the topics of motivation and commitment to determine if perceptions of leadership behaviors affect them. The findings of this study will develop a conclusion representative of the general workforce that confirms the substantial value in assessing employee perceptions on leadership's honesty and integrity. It will demonstrate the influence leadership behaviors have on employee motivation and commitment.

### **Nature of the Study**

#### ***Discussion of Method***

The difference in qualitative and quantitative research is the difference between aiming for understanding and aiming for an explanation (Stake, 2010). Quantitative research tells what happened, whereas qualitative research seeks to answer questions that involve understanding and interpreting the meaning of an occurrence (Denny & Weckesser, 2019). This research will follow the qualitative method. The results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey identify the issue of low perceptions of honesty and integrity in senior leadership and low perceptions of commitment and motivation in the National Park Service. This study seeks to understand why employee ratings of questions measuring leadership honesty and integrity are highly negative and gain insight into reasoning behind the responses.

The role of the researcher differs among types of researchers. With qualitative research, the researcher's role is more personal, whereas quantitative research is more impersonal (Stake, 2010). The researcher will have to interact with participants in this study through oral and written communication. Data collection methods require the researcher to reach out to those in the

setting to collect data and opinions of the participants on topics that can be sensitive (Creswell, 2016). This study will focus on communication with National Park Service employees composed through social media contacts. Personally, identifiable information is not collected during the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and is not available for further specific participant inquiry. The call for participants to this study will ask for those employees who self-identify as participants in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Only responses from those who participated are considered in the data analysis.

Interaction with participants and collection of data will occur through social media discussion groups, individual electronic mail interviews, and individual and group conference telephone discussions. Participants engaged through group interactions will maintain anonymity amongst each other. Personally, identifiable information of participants will remain confidential. The researcher will ask participants to identify the regional location, gender, age group, and status of participation in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

### ***Discussion of Design***

This qualitative research will follow the case study design. Qualitative research uses open-ended methods to explore a group of people to develop a sophisticated understanding of different views of an event (Creswell, 2016). This study focuses on employees of the National Park Service and the views of honesty and integrity in the agency's senior leadership. Case studies are adequate to use when the boundaries between the event and the context are not evident (Yin, 2018). The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results do not explore or explain why employees reported negative responses to questions regarding leadership honesty and integrity, motivation, and commitment (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018).

### ***Summary of the Nature of the Study***

The design of the study determines how to conduct the research, outcome expectations, research questions, and data collection methods. This research is a case study of employee perceptions of honesty and integrity within National Park Service leadership and employee motivation and commitment. Case studies ask descriptive research questions to seek understanding and interpret meaning (Creswell et al., 2007). The purpose of this study is to provide an account of the negative responses to the questions on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey regarding employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in an organization's leadership, employee motivation, and commitment within the workforce.

Case studies focus on the issue of the case and not an individual (Creswell et al., 2007). While the topic of this case involves employees of the National Park Service, the focus is on the issue of negative perceptions and not the stories of the individual participants. The outcome will interpret the meaning of the negative responses to the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey. Data collection will focus on analyzing the responses of employees as the representation of a group. It will not portray individual experiences or stories.

### **Research Questions**

Federal employees of all agencies have the opportunity to participate annually in a Federal Employee Viewpoint survey administered by Gallup. Reports of survey results compare agency results to those of government-wide results. Compared to the government-wide response to questions regarding senior leader's honesty and integrity and employee's commitment and motivation levels, responses of employees within the National Park Service rate notably more negative than the government-wide reaction (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). The research questions will develop an understanding of the

negative employee responses regarding perceptions of honesty and integrity in the National Park Service's senior leadership and determine the relationship with the negative reactions regarding motivation and commitment in the workplace.

- RQ1: Why do National Park Service employees have a high negative response to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey on opinions of senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity?
  - SQ1: What common themes can be identified in the employee perceptions of senior leaders' honesty and integrity?
  - SQ2: Which themes may provide reasoning for the negative responses to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey?
- RQ2: How do employee opinions of senior leaders' honesty and integrity impact employee commitment?
  - SQ 1: How do employee perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity influence the employee's intent to seek a job outside the agency?
  - SQ2: What is the influence of employee perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity on job satisfaction?
  - SQ3: What impact does the employee perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity have on the effort an employee is willing to put into job performance?
- RQ3: How do the perceptions of senior leaders' honesty and integrity impact employee motivation?
  - SQ1: What effect do negative perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity have on seeking developmental opportunities?



- SQ2: What is the influence of employee tenure on the impact of the perception of leadership's honesty and integrity on employee motivation?

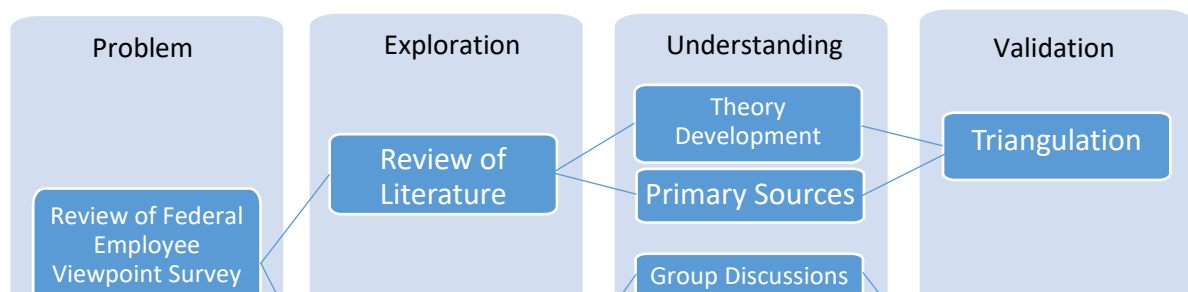
## Conceptual Framework

### *Discussion of Concept 1*

At the foundation of this study is a constructivist worldview. This view assumes that meaning or an understanding of a situation arises from social circumstances that occur from interaction within a human community (Creswell, 2014). Employee experiences influence the individual opinions of positive and negative behaviors. The tolerance or acceptance of such behavior spreads among the organization's culture through interaction with other employees. The constructivist worldview assumes that historical and social perspectives are how people engage in the world and make sense (Creswell, 2014). Figure 1 outlines how this study utilizes the constructivist view to developing the purpose of the study, research questions, and data collection and analysis.

### *Discussion of Concept 2*

Social constructivism, also referred to as interpretivism, relies on the participant's view of the situation to develop a theory as the research is conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study follows an ontological philosophical assumption in the belief that individuals experience and perceive reality differently (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study captures the perceptions of individuals that form the group and reports on the specific perspectives of senior leaders' honesty and integrity. The understanding of the negative employee perceptions develops as information unveils through the data collection methods of the research.



*Figure 1.* Outline of the research topic utilizing the constructivist worldview.

Group discussions, open-ended questions, and individual conversations allow participants to share perceptions and experiences on the topic to identify common themes among the group. The data collaborates with personal thoughts, experiences, and opinions influenced by experience, values, environment, and peers. This study utilizes a random sample population of the National Park Service workforce to gather information to develop a general understanding of the negative ratings on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey regarding senior leaders' honesty and integrity and employee motivation and commitment.

### ***Summary of the Conceptual Framework***

In qualitative research, a sample of a diverse group should reflect the relevant characteristics of that group (Williams, 2000). The sample for this group is random; however, those participating will be current, career, or career-conditional employees within the National Park Service that participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The researcher will extend an invitation of participation to employees within different regions, tenure groups, and personal characteristics. The diversity of participants will support the constructivist worldview in that the understanding of the situation will vary by the social interactions between individuals. Each region or tenure group may experience the same event differently. Analysis of the data will follow the

concept of interpretivism to work with meanings that exist within the social world and acknowledge, reconstruct, and understand them to develop a theory to understand an overall employee perception (Goldkuhl, 2012).

## **Definition of Terms**

### ***Competency***

A measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and characteristics necessary to perform the duties of a job successfully (Competencies, n.d.).

### ***Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey***

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey used by the Office of Personnel Management to measure employee perceptions of an agency's conditions and characteristics as required by the United States Code of Federal Regulations in 5 CFR Part 250, subpart C (Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, n.d.). The Office of Personnel Management distributes the electronic survey annually to all agencies within the Executive Branch of the United States government.

### ***Employee***

Under the civil service rules, Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1, section 1.3 defines an employee as an individual in the competitive service who occupies a non-temporary position obtained through an open competitive examination of a vacant position. When referring to employees within the federal service, this definition will apply. This study also addresses private sector employees. Employees in the private sector receive a benefit in exchange for assistance when the employer controls the detail of what service will be provided and how (Common-law employee, 2019).

***Honesty/Integrity***

The behavior exhibited when an individual acts fairly and truthfully and models a high standard of ethics (MOSAIC Competencies, 2013).

***Regions***

Geographical regions identified for the management of agency operations. The National Park Service has sub-divided operational management into 12 geographical regions.

***Senior leader***

High-level employees within an organization with authority to make decisions that affect the organizational mission, operations, and purpose. Within the National Park Service, senior leaders are assigned to senior executive service (SES) positions (Senior Executive Service, n.d.).

**Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations*****Assumptions***

Participants interested in this study will be employees that participated in providing feedback to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey in 2018. Demographics of employees within the Department of Interior employees that responded to the survey demonstrate a high response rate of participants from three categories: mid-career level employees within the GS 7-12 pay scale range (58.4%), between the age of 40-59 years old (60.8%), and of the white race (80.9%) (Report on demographic questions by agency, 2018). Additionally, data from Greenwood et al. (2016) reports that the Facebook user group fits within a similar demographic profile as mostly middle-aged, middle-income members. It is assumed that the participants for this study will fit within similar demographic percentages.

Employee social experiences within the organizational culture of the National Park Service influence perception of behavior that is honest and ethical from that which is

unacceptable. These social experiences will be a collective gathering from within the park and regional culture and influence from employees who relocate from other parks and geographical areas. The social experiences for each individual differ based on their career path within the agency. Individual employees will experience and perceive reality differently based on their personal experiences. The study will be a collective gathering of these experiences and perceptions to identify commonalities that direct the general negative opinions of the bureau's workforce.

### ***Limitations***

Verification of participation in the 2018 survey cannot be validated as employees participating in the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey do not provide personally identifiable data. Email addresses of participants are not publicly available. Participants will self-certify their participation in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. This certification will be taken into consideration in the analysis of the data.

Participants in the study represent a small population of the National Park Service workforce and within each region. Mass or broad communication to all within the workforce is not practicable or accessible. Due to the geographical disparity of the regions and the participants, initial communications regarding interest and feedback will be conducted through social networking contacts. Further communication will involve electronic mail, video conferencing, and telephone communications. Face-to-face contact with participants will not be practicable.

The utilization of social media as a primary form of initial contact will restrict the invitation of employees to participate to those who engage in social media groups and networks. Those without access to social networking accounts will not be able to contribute to the study.

The expected impact of the limitations on the validity of the results is minimal. Facebook reports more than 2.1 billion users in its network of social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Messenger (Facebook reports first-quarter 2019 results, 2019). Greenwood et al. (2016) report that 68% of all United States adults utilize Facebook products. High percentages of the users fit within the same demographic groups as those who responded to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The study by Greenwood et al. (2016) find that 84% of 30-49-year-olds and 72% of 50-64-year-olds use apps within the Facebook social media group. All income levels and geographic regions reported heavy usage, demonstrating no apparent restrictions on social media access (Greenwood et al., 2016).

### ***Delimitations***

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is conducted annually within all agencies of the executive branch of the United States Government. The purpose of the 96-item questionnaire is to measure employees' perceptions of the characteristics within eight broad topic areas to determine the level of performance within the agency (OPM FEVS about, n.d.). This study will specifically address the topic of leadership in question number 53 and 54. These questions ask participants to rate senior leader's ability to generate high levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce and ability to maintain high standards of honesty and integrity (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service). These two questions highlight the significant difference in negative results when comparing government-wide responses to those of the National Park Service.

The study will only address employee perceptions. It will not seek to develop an understanding of the topic from a leadership perspective. The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is a quantitative measurement of employee perceptions and does not measure leadership

perspectives. This study will be bound to the same. The study will focus specifically on employees of the National Park Service. Regional and park-specific results and analysis of the data are not publicly accessible documents. The will be open to participants in all geographic regions within the National Park Service to correlate with the participant pool of the survey data collection and analysis. There will not be an attempt to develop an understanding of the topics from a government-wide perspective.

### **Significance of the Study**

Leaders within public service agencies will benefit from this study in multiple ways. This study will demonstrate how leadership can utilize results from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to identify issues within the agency. It will show how efforts to understand survey responses further provide an insight into the situation and employee perceptions. By developing an understanding of employee perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity and the impact, it has on motivation and commitment of employees, decision-making, and policy development benefits through more effective focus targeting areas to improve ethical leadership behaviors, employee satisfaction, and retention levels.

At more localized levels, leaders within regional positions and those within the park units will understand how their actions affect the workforce and the performance of their units. Within public service organizations, employee satisfaction can affect public experiences of national preservation efforts and shape the values of the next generation of national land advocates. At the individual level, leaders can learn how their actions and decisions affect those around them and the workforce to which they are accountable.

***Reduction of Gaps***

This study will contribute to the existing literature on the effects of ethical leadership behaviors. It will provide an understanding of the relationship between leadership behaviors and employee motivation and commitment. The specificity of the topic into the National Park Service will contribute to the gap of literature that exists on such issues within the federal service. The goal of this project is to develop an understanding of the reasons behind the negative employee perceptions of senior leaders' honesty and integrity and the effect of the perceptions on commitment and motivation. Understanding the relationship between the factors can result in better decision making. Leadership within the National Park Service will gain insight as to factors that contribute to the negative ratings on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey to address a plan of improvement in those areas. Other bureaus within federal agencies will be able to use the case study to understand the value of reviewing and addressing areas of improvement identified in the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

***Implications for Biblical Integration***

God's desire for His Kingdom is for individuals to work together to better each other (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Proverbs 27:17). Good leaders build those around them. When employees demonstrate negative perceptions of the ability of senior leaders to demonstrate honesty and integrity in the workplace, the organization and the individuals within suffering. Believers and non-believers are members of one another and should seek to be truthful and honest with each other (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Ephesians 4:25). Feedback and honesty with each other, such as gained through internal survey methods as the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, provide an opportunity for employees to hold leadership accountable for performance. Leadership is a noble task (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001,



1 Timothy 3:1). Leaders should be honorable, self-controlled, respectable, and able to teach (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 1 Timothy 3:2-7).

In contrast, employees should be obedient to authorities and ready for good work (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Titus 3:1). A motivated workforce will be eager in spirit (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Romans 12:11) and happy in their duties (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 2 Corinthians 9:7). However, these characteristics caution individuals and occurrences that create diversions and obstacles (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Romans 16:17). When the workforce exhibits a negative perception of leadership, motivation, and commitment to be eager and do good works declines. Employees and leaders would benefit from understanding the effect of leadership behaviors on employee feelings of motivation and commitment.

Understanding the relationship between leadership behaviors and employee motivation and commitment contribute to the gaps in the literature on ethical leadership. Leaders and employees can learn from this study the importance of developing an understanding of the reasoning behind the negative perceptions to improve decision-making, training and development programs, and organizational commitment. When working together to improve, employees and leaders seek honor in their work (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 2 Corinthians 8:21) and pursue peace (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 1 Peter 3:10-12). Organizations that demonstrate and promote righteousness and integrity find more value in these characteristics than those generated from any riches or profit (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Proverbs 16:9 and 19:1).

***Relationship to the Field of Study***

Human resource management practices are evolving to focus on building commitment and motivation in the workforce through employee development and team incentives (Ichniowski & Shaw, 2003). Sustainable practices focus on developing human and social capital within the organization to produce outcomes that influence relationships between individuals or groups that affect long-term organizational results (Kramar, 2014). Fremeaux and Michelson (2017) find that those who experience the feeling of meaningful work through connecting with and serving those around them are less likely to leave the employer or seek other opportunities. Relationships and trust among employees can be essential factors for determining employee commitment. These factors support opportunity-enhancing human resource practices that empower and motivate employees to work together and participate in decision-making (Tian et al., 2016). When employees are not confident in the honesty and integrity of their leadership actions and decisions, it may create an adverse effect on commitment and motivation.

***Summary of the Significance of the Study***

Recent innovations in human resource management focus on employee commitment, motivation, and relationships. Existing literature recognizes a connection between the variables. Still, it fails to understand the effect leadership behaviors and the employee perceptions of such can influence organizational performance and human resource policies and efforts. This study will demonstrate how investing time and effort into developing an understanding of employee perceptions of leadership behaviors can benefit an organization. Leaders from within public service agencies will benefit from the concentration of federal service. Individuals will benefit from gaining insight into the importance of honesty and integrity in leadership practices and behaviors.

## **Review of the Academic and Professional Literature**

A review of the academic and professional literature will demonstrate the importance and value of honesty and integrity as a leadership competency. Existing literature establishes the influence of leadership practices on the variables measured in the two questions addressed on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: employee behaviors, organizational culture, employee motivation, and employee commitment. The literature demonstrates a relationship between the variables. To understand the importance of the variables to this study, an understanding of employee perceptions within the organizational culture needs to exist. Existing literature will demonstrate the development of employee perceptions and discuss specifically how the variables and perceptions of such specifically affect to the public service sector of business.

### ***Honesty/Integrity as a Leadership Competency***

Measurement of the ability to perform successfully as a leader has shifted from focusing on the situation or task to a focus on personal characteristics that incorporate knowledge, skill, and ability (Müller & Turner, 2010). Competency-based measurements focus on aspects of the individual necessary to be successful in exhibiting the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the required duties while aligning with the value and goals of the position and the organization (Srividya Prathiba & Balakrishnan, 2011). Possessing the traits or competencies of a successful leadership does not guarantee success, but the competencies do demonstrate an impact on outcomes (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Larson et al. (2017) find that the development of competencies is attainable if leaders possess favorable prerequisites or knowledge and skills.

Müller and Turner (2010) identify critical thinking, influence, motivation, and conscientiousness as common competencies of successful leaders. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) find that motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge set leaders apart

from non-leaders. Of leadership competencies, Thach and Thompson (2007) find honesty and integrity to be of the highest value. The high value of honesty and integrity is equally relevant to the public sector, private for-profit, and non-profit industries (Tach & Thompson, 2007).

Accountability and ethical leadership have a positive relationship with moral competence (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Sturm et al. (2017) find that a leader's character operates separately from one's identity as a working professional.

Character can enhance the relationship between leader competence and performance when the organizational environment promotes desirable behaviors (Sturm et al., 2017). When the value of character is not promoted in the workplace, individuals may develop a separate identity as a working professional that exhibits less desirable characteristics (Sturm et al., 2017). A study by Srividya Prathiba and Balakrishnan (2011) identify a lack of interpersonal communication, business management, and visionary competencies as the top reasons for leadership failure.

The motives, values, and organizational goals that influence leadership differ among industries. Darling and Cunningham (2016) argue that leaders in the private sector and public sector organizations experience different measurements of success and failure, and so require different sets of competencies for success. Leaders in public sectors need personal integrity, fairness, and rationality, while those in the public sector need competence in decision-making, adding value to clients, managing competing interests (Darling & Cunningham, 2016). Tach and Thompson (2007) identify honesty and integrity as a valuable competency in all sectors of leadership. Paterson and Huang (2019) find that when individuals view honest behaviors as part of their role expectations, they exhibit higher competence in honesty and integrity. Training in

self-monitoring behaviors and moral education can increase ethical leadership through an organization (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019).

Pavlica et al. (2013) find that one of the most significant challenges in management competencies is integrating leadership skills within the organization. Leadership competencies affect individual behaviors and organizational culture. Competencies control the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior (Wei et al., 2018). A relationship also exists with work engagement in the outcome of task performance (Wei et al., 2018). Dalal et al. (2012) find employee engagement to be one of the best predictors of overall employee performance. Kim and Kim (2013) find that moral competence, or the ability to determine universal human principles, positively affects employee task performance and organizational leadership behaviors.

The perception of leaders as role models influences interpretational relationships among employees and within the organizational culture (Lee, 2012). Larson et al. (2017) point out that malicious behavior may be more noticeable than positive behaviors because they are more natural to notice. Positive behaviors, such as listening and effective communication, are more challenging to measure. Deviant behaviors are more notable as they violate norms or rules and include actions directed at other individuals (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Different types of behaviors demonstrated at various levels of leadership are significantly related to employee attitudes and perceptions (Church, 1995).

While not a competency in itself, trust is a necessary element for effective leadership. Matzler and Renzl (2006) identify interpersonal trust as one of the most important drivers of quality, customer satisfaction, and productivity. Trust develops through the demonstration of select competencies. Communication competencies of attentiveness-coordination, composure,

and expressiveness positively correlate with trust (Sutherland & Yoshinda, 2015). The success of communication competencies depends on the effectiveness and appropriateness of communications (Mikkelsen et al., 2015). Sutherland and Yoshida (2015) find that attentiveness-coordination is the strongest predictor of trust. This competence involves two-way interaction between the communicator and the receiver to form a relationship. Personal connections that value accountability and shared vision build trust (Matzler & Renzl, 2006).

Alrawi and Alrawil's (2017) and Kacmar et al.'s (2012) research findings support the value of honesty and integrity as a leadership competency. Alrawi and Alwari (2017) find that words and actions of management are the most crucial factor in motivating trust between the organization and employees. The relationship between employees and supervisors and the relationship among employees is mediated by supervisor trust (Kacmar et al., 2012). Conflicts with trust in supervisors result in decreased employee confidence and increased negative behaviors (Kacmar et al., 2012). Employees who have higher confidence in their organization and leaders are more acceptable to changes in processes and policies (Alrawi & Alwari, 2017). Personality characteristics of leadership and organizational characteristics have an equivalent effect on workplace behaviors (de Vries & van Gelder, 2015). Leader competence is positively related to team psychological safety and positive perceptions, whereas the demonstration of self-serving behaviors has a negative influence on employee perceptions (Mao et al., 2019).

### ***Influence of Leadership Practices on Variables***

This study focuses on employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity within the National Park Service in response to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results. These results demonstrate negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity within leadership and employee commitment and motivation (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results

for National Park Service, 2018). The study will understand how perceptions of honesty and integrity in an organization's leadership affect levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. The existing literature will provide a background in the importance of employee behaviors, organizational culture, employee motivation, and employee commitment.

**Employee Behaviors.** Employee behaviors are susceptible to variabilities because they are voluntary actions that are not formally monitored or required and are influenced by others (Mackey et al., 2019). Those in supervisory leadership positions influence employee perceptions of organizational values. Supervisors who are perceived as fair leaders serve as change agents to facilitate behaviors of employees (Cantor et al., 2012). Leaders are in a position of influence to direct the desired behaviors of followers (Stojanovic-Aleksic & Krstic, 2016). The influence followers perceive can sometimes be unintentional. People perceive the potential effects of reward and punishment from those in roles of power and adapt their behaviors to the perceived reaction of the leader (Stojanovic-Aleksic & Krstic, 2016).

Grant and Sumanth (2009) find when employees perceive high levels of trust in leadership, motivation to act in productive manners increased. When the employee perceives the supervisor establishes a motive for acting reasonably, the employee exhibits an increased level of trust in the supervisor and will respond more positively to an event (Matta, Sabey, Scott, Lin, & Koopman, 2019). Trust and commitment are the ways employees exhibit loyalty to leaders and organizations (Guillon & Cezanne, 2014). Loyalty is built upon management's ability to demonstrate leadership competence through inspiration, active listening, selflessness, motivating others, and encouraging learning (Abbasi & Belhadjali, 2018). Transformational leadership has direct and indirect effects on employee loyalty and quality of work Al Qudah, N., Yang, Y., & Anjum, 2018). Loyalty provides a long-term benefit to the organization at a low to no cost

(Guillon & Cezanne, 2014). Loyal employees exhibit higher levels of effort to accomplishing their job duties and organizational goals (Rishipal, 2019). Employees who perceive strong ethical values of the leadership and the organizational culture are associated with fewer sickness absences (Kangas et al., 2017).

Selection processes often target desired behaviors in hiring and promoting employees. Once onboard, it is the motivational leadership systems that encourage continued desired behaviors (Jex, 2008). Leadership and organizational culture are two essential variables to consider in developing policies that promote ethical behavior (Lavena, 2016). Leaders who demonstrate more openness with employees contribute to psychological safety within the employee's mindset (Detert & Burris, 2007). Employees who feel safe are more likely to voice opinions and behaviors on issues that are both acceptable and unacceptable (Detert & Burris, 2007). Ethical leadership and leadership competence positively correlate with feedback-seeking behaviors (Moss et al., 2019). The honesty of leadership demonstrates a higher value to individuals, even when it results in lower payoffs (Galeotti & Zizzo, 2018).

Franke and Felfe (2011) examine the impact of intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence behaviors of leaders on the outcome of employees' well-being. Idealized influence behaviors are found to cause a psychological strain on employees' well-being and a negative effect on organizational commitment (Franke & Felfe, 2011). Leaders who place the value of the employees and the organization before their interests create a positive impact on organizational social capital and organizational citizenship behaviors and a negative effect on counterproductive behaviors that shape the contests for productivity (Mostafa & Bottomley, 2018). The increase in organizational social capital improves the quality of social relationships among employees and improves job satisfaction (Mostafa & Bottomley, 2018).



Leaders are influential when their values align with follows and the cultural norms (Jex, 2008). When leaders develop a trustful culture, employees experience a higher level of public service motivation and obligation to duty (Ugaddan & Park, 2019). A culture of accountability and a higher standard of ethics develops when leaders build trust within the group (Ugaddan & Park, 2019). Leadership committed to achieving results is a priority within the federal service. Results-oriented leadership focuses on managing programs making decisions based on results, and inspiring others to do so and a desirable leadership trait within the federal service (Managing for results, 2000). The influence of leaders' behaviors positively correlates with employees learning actions, collective vision, and sense of empowerment (Lu, 2000).

The perceptions of politics within the organizational culture can influence employee behavior. Political environments can cause those with low honesty and humility characteristics to engage in counterproductive work behaviors and experience higher stress (Wiltshire et al., 2014). Job tension and anxiety tend to run significantly higher on long-term employees who are highly engaged in the workplace due to increased levels of concern for the work (Rice et al., 2017). Leaders who demonstrate or tolerate behaviors of intentional unproductivity, arguing, and neglect encourage a culture of counterproductive workplace behaviors (Rishipal, 2019). Lee (2012) finds leadership behavior to be an influential predecessor of workplace harassment.

Zhou and Wu (2018) establish a positive relationship between humble leadership behaviors and practices to innovative employee behaviors and organizational learning. Zhou and Wu (2018) find that leaders are more effective in connecting with employees when demonstrating characteristics of humility, open-mindedness, and willingness to learn. Employees who have positive perceptions of leadership's integrity and character are less likely to engage in unethical behaviors (Tang & Liu, 2012). When employee perceptions of leadership's integrity

and character are low, they are more likely to behave in unethical manners (Tang & Liu, 2012). The perception of loyalty asymmetries between leadership and employees creates feelings of ethical violations (Hart & Thompson, 2007).

**Organizational Culture.** Organizational culture is a significant variable in establishing the perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the organization (Sims & Sauser, 2013). Cultural development begins in the early stages of organizational development (Sprajc et al., 2018). Organizational culture is composed of learned values and beliefs that consider artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions within the social exchange of a group (Schein, 2009). Organizational culture is centered on the mission and values of the organization (Ardichvili et al., 2009). The culture develops internal and external norms of behaviors and organizational processes (Sims & Sauser, 2013). The foundation formed through the development of the organizational culture affects communication and strategic relationships (Arayesh et al., 2017).

The values and learned assumptions of members within the culture develop as a reaction to the success experienced through problem solving and adaptations to issues (Schein, 2009). When members within the organization, especially those within leadership positions, demonstrate ethical behaviors and promote responsibility through accountability for unethical behaviors, the culture becomes committed to an ethical environment (Sims & Sauser, 2013). A leader's capability to behave ethically, reinforce ethical behaviors through employees, and open to discuss ethical issues reduced the occurrences of unethical behavior in the workplace (Kaptein, 2011). Ethical cultures tend to provide more opportunities for personal growth and development for all stakeholders (Cruise et al., 1998). The perception of the organizational

culture represents the organization (Sprajc et al., 2018). Leaders can serve as an ethical role model within and outside the organization (Kaptein, 2011).

Diversity of organizational culture can impact organizational outcomes (Choi & Rainey, 2010). The success of the effects depends on the leadership's ability to manage high levels of diversity effectively. Leaders that demonstrate competence in openness, learning and intuition can be more effective in managing diversity resulting in improved perceived organizational performance (Choi & Rainey, 2010). Ethical leadership has a significant impact on the perceptions of an ethical climate (Shin, 2012). When employees have a collective perception of ethical behaviors and values, they demonstrate higher positive work behaviors (Shin, 2012). Nazir et al. (2019) find a significant relationship between the innovative behaviors and commitment levels of employees with organizational justice, creative organizational culture, and perceived organizational support. The perception of organizational support is influential in employee behavior (Shore & Wayne, 1993). When employees perceive organizational procedures and policies as fair and supportive, they demonstrate more innovative behaviors and exchange information and ideas (Nazir et al., 2019).

Culture is a product of group learning and considers external adaptations and internal integrations (Schein, 1984). Employees' trust in an organization is determined by the ethical or unethical behaviors of the leadership and the origination's response to such (Xu, Loi, & Ngo, 2016). Zerella et al. (2017) find that perceptions of the organizational culture impacts employee job satisfaction and commitment. When organizations develop a clan or family-type culture that strongly values communication, collaboration, trust, and relationships, employees are more committed and satisfied with their jobs (Zerella et al., 2017). Leaders within a clan-type culture demonstrate higher values on teamwork and mentorship (Zerella et al., 2017). The organizational

culture can influence employee perceptions and expectations of the organization, leaders, and other employees. Leadership can be an intangible benefit that is important in the retention of employees (Noordin et al., 2010).

Ristino and Michalak (2018) find employee perceptions of the organizational culture to be most influenced by values, organizational practices, and fundamental beliefs. Organizational practices, driven by leadership behaviors, have the most influence on employee attitudes and behaviors (Ristino & Michalak, 2018). Leaders' behaviors can create feelings of respect and comfort within the organizational culture or have the opposite effect. A study by Huey Yiing and Zaman Bin Ahmad (2009) also establishes a relationship between leadership behaviors and organizational culture on employee perceptions of commitment and satisfaction. Leaders who demonstrate participative and supportive behaviors have a positive influence on the perception of a supportive culture in which employees feel a higher level of organizational commitment (Huey Yiing & Zaman Bin Ahmad, 2009).

An organizational culture that demonstrates dedication to the mission and goals and unwillingness to accept reduced performance fosters a receptive attitude toward change and quick response necessary to the business environment (Zabid et al., 2004). A positive relationship between leadership style and organizational culture allows organizations the flexibility to adapt and accomplish goals more easily and quickly than organizations that do not have a positive, established relationship (Asadi & Stefanescu, 2019). Encouraging social cultures promotes the sharing of ideas and values (Coffee & Jones, 1998). Solidarity cultures encourage the active pursuit of shared goals for the benefit of the organization without regard to the special effects (Coffee & Jones, 1998).

Jiwen Song, Tsui, and Law (2009) describe the employee response to leadership behaviors as a multi-step process in which the employee interprets the behaviors, calculates the return from the exchange, and responds with the interpretation analysis of the exchange relationship. When leadership exhibits behaviors of long-term investment and wide-ranging concerns, the employees respond with high levels of commitment and performance (Jiwen Song et al., 2009). Acceptance of policy and procedures and the level of social exchange within an organization are positively related to an employee's commitment to the organization (Nazir et al., 2019). For employees to perceive their manager's actions as authentic leadership, the manager has to actively seek to demonstrate behavior that can be interpreted as sincere, authentic leadership behaviors (Mehmood, Hamstra, & Schreurs, 2019).

Employees' perceptions of relationships within the organizational culture can influence several types of relationships. The social exchange facilitates a significant relationship between integrative culture and affective commitment (Jiwen Song et al., 2009). Employee perceptions of the level of social exchange within the organizational culture encourage the relationship between effective leadership and employee affective commitment (Jiwen Song et al., 2009). Perceptions of the organizational culture and occurrences of social exchange within are found to be more valuable in determining commitment levels and employee outcomes than pay and incentives (Jiwen Song et al., 2009). Bonds of social exchange contribute to more positive employee behaviors (Shore & Wayne, 1993). Individuals are more likely to overlook personality conflicts in the desire for positive social exchange relationships (Kamdar & Dyne, 2007). Leaders investing in socialization skills and training have the ability to build these characteristics into the organizational culture (Yanto et al., 2017).

**Employee Motivation.** Motivation is the desire to take action to work toward accomplishing a goal (Săseanu & Toma, 2019). Leaders act as a bridge between the organization and the employee (Godinho-Bitencourt et al., 2019). Leaders are in place to motivate employees through personal traits, leadership style, and response to events (Săseanu & Toma, 2019). Ethical leaders demonstrate integrity through conduct based on selfless motives that demonstrate accountability, care, and fairness toward followers (Bellé & Cantarelli, 2018). The relationship between narcissism and humility is mediated by self-efficiency and positivity in the leader (Chen, 2016).

Psychological empowerment provided by encouraging actions of leadership positively relates to intrinsic motivation that inspires employee creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). The motivating language used by leaders in an environment that supports employee creativity increases the employee perceptions of the workplace (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2017). Khan and Wajidi (2019) find that a team focused working environment and trusting relationships between leadership and team members generate motivation within the workforce. Negative perceptions from employees of leadership behaviors and treatment of others have decreased the level of self-confidence in employees regarding task performance and social interaction (Xia et al., 2019).

For employees to be motivated, there has to be a desire and need for action. Sotirofski (2018) finds that employee desire and need for motivation rises in proportion to the objectives of the organizational motivation through the influence of leadership that demonstrates value and care for employees. Leaders can effectively appeal to followers' ideas when the ideas and values are projected to align with those of the followers (Ilies et al., 2006). The alignment creates identified motivation within the follower resulting in increased commitment and production (Ilies et al., 2006).

Yidong et al. (2013) find a positive association between individual innovative work behaviors and perceptions of ethical leadership behaviors. Yidong et al. (2013) credit the positive impact on individual work behaviors to the increased outlooks of job impact, independence, and competence created through ethical leadership. Employee perceptions and relationships with leaders affect employee training motivation and success of outcome (Scaduto et al., 2008). Leadership substantially influences individual employees' motivation levels by demonstrating attitudes and behaviors that are perceived as ethical and honorable (Vandenabeele, 2014).

While salary is one of the most recognized motivators in the workplace, Krstic et al. (2019) point out that it is the actions and behaviors of the leadership of an organization that provides psychological feels of need and appreciation that are essential motivational factors. Sensitivity to employee needs has a positive and significant effect on employee motivation (Çınar et al., 2018). A leader's emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence competencies influence employees' motivation differently, depending on their age, gender, and work experience (Diskiene et al., 2019). Godinho-Bitencourt et al. (2019) find that the intrinsic motivation of Generation Y employees is significantly moderated by manager support. Verbal rewards received from those in leadership positions also positively affect intrinsic motivation (Nielsen et al., 2019). Leaders who demonstrate considerate behaviors towards employees positively affect employee motivation and organizational commitment (Brock et al., 2008). Aside from emotional appeals, intrinsic process motivation has the most influence on employee behaviors (Barbuto et al., 2002).

**Employee Commitment.** Organizational commitment is the degree at which the employee identifies with and is involved with the organization, accepts its values, and is willing to devote effort on its behalf (Beerli et al., 2013). Employee commitment and turnover intentions

are directly and indirectly affected by ethical leadership behaviors through modeling ethical behaviors that shape the perceptions of a cultural standard of ethics (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Demirtas and Akdogan (2015) find the moral authority of managers to have a “virtuous” influence on employees. The organization's cultural values develop from the moral values of the individuals within shared social exchanges with a significant impact deriving from the business values demonstrated by those in leadership positions (Jiang et al., 2011). These business values have a significant positive effect on individual perceptions of organizational commitment, job performance, and attendance (Jiang et al., 2011). Bolin and Heatherly (2001) find a significant relationship between intent to quit and dissatisfaction with absenteeism and privilege abuse.

Ethical leadership behaviors influence the effectiveness of the organizational code of ethics, contributing to a desirable work environment the results in higher levels of employee commitment (Beerli et al., 2013). Perceptions of ethical and unethical behaviors derive from fairness, loyalty, and authority moral foundations of employees within the organization (Egorov et al., 2019). When employees perceive the behaviors of leadership to be considered, a higher sense of emotional attachment to the organization occurs, resulting in a higher level of employee commitment (Wallace et al., 2013). Employees who feel a higher level of commitment to an organization perform at a higher level and deliver a higher quality of customer service resulting in a more vital organizational branding message (Wallace et al., 2013). Shahidul Hassan et al. (2014) find that ethical leadership behaviors reduce absenteeism in employees and have a positive influence on employees’ willingness to report unethical actions.

Perceived integrity in leadership directly affects employees’ trust in leaders and organizational commitment (Wei et al., 2019). When employees perceive leaders to be fair and honorable, organizations are more likely to attract, retain, and promote talented employees (Wei



et al., 2019). Behavioral integrity is the perception of the alignment of an individual's words and actions (Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2012). Positive perceptions of leadership integrity are necessary to build an exchange relationship between supervisors and employees to support organizational commitment (Cheng et al., 2015). When employees perceive a high level of support from leadership, dedication and perceptions of leadership's integrity increases (Cheng et al., 2015). Simons et al. (2015) find that behavioral integrity has a more substantial effect than moral integrity on employee commitment and is a stronger predictor of trust in leadership.

Authentic leadership behavior generates positive employee perceptions of behavioral integrity, enhancing the employees' work performance and sense of organizational commitment (Leroy et al., 2012). Yang et al. (2014) find a continuous relationship between behavioral integrity, charismatic leadership, and affective commitment. Employee affective commitment increases when leaders demonstrate behavioral integrity. The perceived increased support from employees, increase the exhibition of charismatic leadership behaviors resulting in a significant and positive influence on affective commitment. Organizational commitment is affected by the employee's perception of the leader's behavior integrity and charismatic leadership behaviors (Yang et al., 2014). Kannan-Narasimhan and Lawrence (2012) compare the impact of different levels of leadership and find that senior leadership behavioral integrity has a higher effect on organizational commitment, while direct line leadership has more of an influence on trust and organizational citizenship behavior.

Han et al. (2016) find a link between leadership style and organizational commitment through employee psychological empowerment. Senior leaders and frontline leadership have a direct and positive relationship to the employees' feelings of empowerment (Min et al., 2016). Leaders who demonstrate a transformational leadership style encourage learning and facilitate

knowledge sharing opportunities that, in turn, foster employees' sense of psychological empowerment and commitment to the organization (Han et al., 2016). A study by Fernandez (2008) analyzes federal employee perceptions of job performance and satisfaction related to leadership behavior. Relations-oriented behaviors exhibited by leaders positively and statistically correlated with job satisfaction, which influences organizational commitment (Fernandez, 2008). Fernandez (2008) found that pay and promotional potential and organizational culture had a more decisive influence on satisfaction and commitment than leadership behaviors. Mikkelsen et al. (2015) also find that employee satisfaction, motivation, and commitment are all effected by leadership competence and styles. Effective communication and relations-oriented leadership are the most impactful (Mikkelsen et al., 2015).

### ***Relationship Between Variables***

Employee commitment and motivation are essential factors for shaping attitudes and behaviors. Battistelli et al. (2013) confirm that emotional bonds directly affect attitudes and behaviors credited with regulating motivational levels and influencing commitment. Motivation causes employees to exhibit behaviors and intentions of performing effectively and implement innovative ideas beneficial to the workplace (Hartmann, 2006). Motivation arises from a reliable identification with the organization that is developed through a supportive culture and aligned values (Hartmann, 2006). Work motivation is predicted by ethical culture (Pavić et al., 2018). When employees adapt behaviors to the organizational culture, commitment, and motivation levels increase (Arumi et al. , 2019).

Nauta et al. (2009) find a positive relation between culture and career satisfaction and a negative turnover intention. The findings indicate that employees who were satisfied in their careers were less likely to change jobs or leave the organization. Martínez-Cañas and Fontrodona

(2013) also find a positive relationship between employee job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intention. Employees who feel valued and empowered within their organization demonstrate positive emotions and behaviors contributing to a healthy cognitive culture, which further influences positive behaviors and increased commitment (Men & Yue, 2019). Work experiences affect employees' organization identification (Stinglhamber et al., 2015). Employees' identification of themselves within the organization involves organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Stinglhamber et al., 2015). Self-actualization and workplace environment share a significant relationship with perceptions of leadership effectiveness and employee performance (Ogunsakin, 2015).

Social identification in the workplace occurs when employees define their sense of self regarding what they perceive the organization to represent (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Individual fit within the work environment determines the psychological needs that can predict commitment and performance (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). A positive relationship also exists with psychological need satisfaction, autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). O'Reilly (1989) explains organizational culture as a social control system that operates through norms developed from shared expectations that shape the behavior of the individual and groups. Organizational cultures can be categorized into four quadrants: clan, hierarchy, adhocracy, and market (Gardner et al., 2012). Each of these quadrants fit individual personality types and define what employees value about the organization and its culture (Gardner, 2012).

Feedback, clear communication, and utilization of reward and incentive systems are motivation techniques used by management to stimulate employee behaviors consistent with organizational needs and goals (Hartmann, 2006). Kuvaas (2006) finds that employee base pay

positively relates to performance behaviors and commitment that can be further strengthened through rewards and perceived value to the organization. Regular internal communication cultivates a positive emotional culture resulting in behaviors that demonstrate pride and gratitude toward other employees, customers, and the organization (Men & Yue, 2019). An organization's culture can reduce turnover intentions by improving employee job satisfaction (Cronley & Kim, 2017). It can also significantly affect deviant workplace behaviors through different personality traits (Di Stefano et al., 2019).

Austen and Zacny (2015) find a mutual influence between motivation and organizational culture that has a regulating effect on organizational commitment. Commitment is an individual's psychological bond to the organization demonstrated through compliance, identification, and internalization (O'Reilly, 1989). It connects individuals to a goal and a course of action to accomplish the goal (Meyer et al., 2006). Commitment to an organization is influenced by the self-identification of position and similarities (Meyer et al., 2006). Employees exhibit behaviors through job performance as part of an effort to project a self-image explicit to their role within the organization (Yun et al., 2007). The desire to establish self-image motivates employee performance (Yun et al., 2007). Exchanged based commitments make behaviors predictable develop from situated identity within the group (Meyer et al., 2006).

***Development of Employee Perceptions within Organizational Cultures.*** The managerial and organizational cultures act as models for creating individual identities that generate a sense of belonging to a group (Sergiu, 2015). The values established in creating these groups are vital to understanding a culture (Sergiu, 2015). Individuals who perceive support from a group develop a reliable identification with the group values, cultures, and norms (Bizumic et al, 2012). Long-term memory stores and organizes information from previous learning and judgments.

Individuals in group settings share impressions of experiences in a collaborative, distributive process that influences the teaching and perceptions of others within the group (Stroessner & Sherman, 2015). Individuals begin to act and think per group norms and behaviors.

Social learning, social identity, and social comparison influence the thoughts and actions of individuals to align with those of an accepted group (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2012). Shared events and experiences among group members can create similarities in attitudes and values that shape the characteristics and behaviors (Yzerbyt et al., 2003). Groups develop a shared common purpose that motivates similar actions and behaviors of individual members (Yzerbyt et al., 2003). Relationships develop within organizations from social interactions, shared tasks and goals, and behaviors (Kahn et al., 2013).

Group perceptions develop through the communication of individual members' experiences and social backgrounds (Otara, 2011). Perception develops from the observation, organization, and interpretation of experiences (Elnaga, 2012). Attitudes are the result of perceptions. Attitudes are the beliefs and feelings that direct the behavioral intentions in response to a situation (Elnaga, 2012). Moral values develop from concepts of fairness acquired from social and group norms (Sokol et al., 2013). Moral actions resulting from values are exhibited through emotions (Sokol et al., 2013). Shared goals of a group are regulated by individual members' ability to exhibit self-regulated, goal-directed behaviors (Hofmann et al., 2012).

Ethical culture is perceptual based on the opinions of individuals within (Key, 1999). Within a group or cultural setting, individuals interpret events differently. Individual interpretations affect how the individual represents themselves within the group and impacts how the group processes information and develops interpersonal relationships (Molden & Dweck, 2006). The social environment is essential to individuals. Because of this value, individuals can

be highly susceptible to peer influence to interpret ethical and desirable behaviors and characteristics of others (Kohlberg, 1969). Ethical cultures promote accountability and reporting of unethical behaviors (Kaptein, 2011). Development of the organizational culture is facilitated through individual and group motivations, goal clarity, and work impact to achieve a mission (Desmidt & Prinzie, 2019).

Leaders throughout an organization shape ethical norms and expectations of behaviors through shared perceptions and reward systems (Grojean et al., 2004). Leadership behaviors shape the organizational culture and influence group behaviors and thought processes (Grojean et al., 2004). When managers act as role models, they reinforce ethical standards within the organization and strengthen the subordinate trust (Kaptein, 2011). A leader who demonstrates ethical concern for individuals and the organization is more trusted by employees and builds a more productive, positive workplace environment (Church, 1995). Exchange relationships with members of the group set the tone for the establishment of relations and culture. The judgment of characteristics occurs within initial interactions that develop the relationship between individuals (Brown & Bernieri, 2017). Perceptions of openness and agreeableness are established within the initial acquaintance (Brown & Bernieri, 2017).

Within groups, exchange relationships among those in leadership roles and members of the group positively affect creativity and self-efficiency of individual group members (Liao et al., 2010). The exchange relationship can lead to differentiation among members jeopardizing group norms and perceptions (Liao et al., 2010). Nestle et al. (2019) find that within the organization, clusters develop smaller groups of employees with shared values and opinions and higher levels of trust between members. Mutual trust within the group members the homogenization of different individual perspectives (Nestle et al., 2019). Culture has a strong

influence on the interaction among employees and the determination of person-organization fit (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2014).

Within-group settings, interaction justice perceptions are more relevant than within individual settings due to the opportunities for comparison and competitiveness (Baran et al., 2012). Before injustices can be addressed, subjective awareness of such must occur (Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2016). This awareness is developed through shared group categorization of perceptions and action tendencies between different indices of injustice (Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2016). Perceptions of fairness and relationship quality become essential factors in developing group cohesiveness. Collective denial may occur within the development of group perceptions. Refusal of bad news and information avoidance occur amongst the group when it is beneficial to developing the social cognition of reality (Benabou, 2013).

***Influence Specific to the Public Service Sector.*** Park and Rainey (2007) recognize that public sector employees may have different values, motives, and goals than those in the private sector. Giauque et al. (2013) identify public service motivation as a unique variable influencing commitment and motivation to employees in public sector organizations. Employee commitment to federal service extends beyond the motive for public service and is affected by management style and attitude toward the organization (Pandey et al., 2012). Observations of unethical behaviors by employees in public sector organizations are reported at a rate of twice that of those in private industry (Kaptein, 2008).

Affective commitment, or identification with the organization, has the most substantial effect on employees' attitudes, performance, and intent to stay (Park & Rainey, 2007). Affective commitment is established through clear goals, individual empowerment, and supportive culture (Park & Rainey, 2007). The practice of empowerment is correlated with employee alertness to

innovation (Arnold, 2019). Organizational climates that encourage innovation have a substantial direct influence on commitment (Im et al., 2016). Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2015) find that for every one-unit increase in employee empowerment metrics on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results, the probability of an increase in job satisfaction responses increases. Federal employees specifically favored the empowerment practices of shared information about goals and performance, access to job-related knowledge and skills, and discretion to change work processes (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015). Kim and Fernandez (2017) find that managerial practices that promote empowerment increased job satisfaction and decreased turnover intentions among federal employees.

Organizational cultures that demonstrate strong ethical values at all levels develop engaged and committed employees and reduce risks from misconduct. Organizational commitment is mediated by trust in leadership (Liggans et al., 2019). Trust develops through reciprocal and social interactions (Park, 2012). Bureaucratic structures, processes, and cultures affect social exchanges and interpersonal communications in public sector organizations (Park, 2012). Leaders who demonstrate equality and fairness in the treatment of employees develop a bond of trust. Employees extend trust through the organization by demonstrating higher levels of commitment and lower turnover intentions (Liggans et al., 2019). The role of the leader in developing trust is expected to become increasingly important as the utilization of technology and remote work environments become more popular (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018).

The relationship between the employee and the supervisor influences the employee's attitude toward the organization (Porumbescu et al., 2013). Employee perceptions of the social exchange relationship between management and team members influence individual and overall performance (Ciobanu et al., 2019). Perceived compatibilities between federal employees and



their workgroups and supervisors significantly affect job satisfaction (Wang & Brower, 2019).

Wang and Brower (2019) suggest that demonstrating respect toward subordinates and interactive discussions between subordinates and supervisors can enhance job satisfaction and trust.

Interpersonal communication effectively builds vertical trust in public organizations (Porumbescu et al., 2013).

Kim and Ko's (2014) analysis of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results finds that trust in the supervisor had a positive and significant impact on employee knowledge sharing behaviors and perception of fair performance appraisal evaluations. Affective trust is driven by federal employees' intrinsic motivation (Park, 2012). Senior and supervisory leadership traits are positively and significantly associated with organization trust (Park, 2012). Federal employees report higher job satisfaction when leadership demonstrates ethical behaviors and traits (Moon & Jung, 2018). Toxic and inappropriate behaviors affect the team and individual performance by fostering negative interactions, passive hostility, defensiveness, blaming, and suspicion of others (Williams, 2018).

Public sector organizations are subject to the influence of other factors on employee perceptions and levels of commitment. Political and economic variables impact employee attitudes and commitment (Hampton & Williams, 2018). Cho and Lewis (2012) acknowledge that age and time in service are variables that are affecting commitment within the federal workforce. Employees within their first seven years of service and employees between the ages of 35 to 55 are more stable than younger or older co-workers (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Caillier (2013) finds that employee motivation decreases as employees spend more time in the federal service. Ertas (2015) finds no significant differences in work motivations among age groups of

federal employees. Ertas' (2015) study finds that all age groups value job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, recognition, and culture.

Management styles create a positive or negative effect on employee motivation (Caillier, 2013). Transactional and transformational leadership behaviors have a positive relationship with federal employee trust in leaders and organizational performance (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016). Interpersonal trust was more vital with leaders that demonstrate transformational leadership behaviors such as integrity and ethical behavior (Asencio & Mujkic, 2016). Transformational leadership behaviors are also found to increase levels of job satisfaction within the federal workforce (Asencio, 2016). To improve their Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results, OSHA developed a strategy that focused on training and education for managers on leading effective teams, motivating employees, and building successful leadership (Barnes, 2017). The efforts OSHA made to improve leadership style resulted in an average increase of positive responses by 3.9 percent per question (Barnes, 2017).

The relationship between motivation and commitment is strengthened by transformational leadership behaviors (Im et al., 2016). Transformational leaders encourage openness and trust in their relationship with employees (Caillier, 2015). Employees are more comfortable addressing unethical behaviors with transformational leaders (Caillier, 2015). Sabharwal et al.'s (2019) analysis of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey finds that the perception of openness and support in the workplace positively influences turnover. Federal employees who demonstrate commitment based on a high value to public service are positively influenced by a supportive work environment in performance, efficiency, and job satisfaction (Ciobanu et al., 2019)

Utilizing data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, Lee (2019) finds that federal employees are more motivated when receiving honest feedback from their supervisors at moderate intervals. Constant feedback and appraisal reduced motivation levels (Lee, 2019). Vertical communication patterns from top-down management have little to no effect on employee motivation (Fernandez & Pitts, 2011). Federal employees who perceive high levels of trust and confidence in their supervisors feel more innovative and satisfied with their jobs (Fernandez & Pitts, 2011). Notgrass (2015) finds a 20% variability in federal employee job satisfaction and perceived leadership interactions and a 21% variability in managerial focus on goals and objectives to employee job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has the most significant impact on work motivation than commitment and involvement (Caillier, 2013).

***Summary of the Literature Review.*** A review of the academic and professional literature demonstrates the significance and impact of honesty and integrity as a leadership competency throughout all sectors of leadership. Competencies demonstrated that though leadership can influence the organizational culture and employee behaviors. The existing literature establishes the influence of leadership practices on employee behaviors, organizational culture, employee motivation, and employee commitment. Trust and honesty demonstrated through leadership behaviors have an impact on each of the variables. Relationships exist between the variables indicating a complex response to influence on one or multiple variables, as demonstrated through the literature. The employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity affect several aspects of the organization. Within the public sector, the literature establishes further support for accountability of leadership behaviors and the impact within the federal workforce.

**Transition and Summary of Section 1**

Further investigation of the negative employee responses to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey questions regarding perceptions of honesty and integrity within the leadership of the National Park Service is necessary to develop an understanding of the reasoning of the negative responses. The case study design focusing on understanding is the best fit for the questions of the research. Qualitative research methods that focus on collecting open-ended information are necessary to this situation. The research provides insight that will be beneficial in decision-making and policy development within the agency. The presentation of professional and academic literature provides consideration of existing knowledge in the development and implementation of the project. Section two will present the research plans in detail on the design and method of the research and strategies for targeting a valid population and sampling. Presentations of these plans occur in the next section to describe the methods and instruments in the data collection process. The outline of data analysis procedures and methods ensures reliability and validity in the study.

## **Section 2: The Project**

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey allows employees to share their perceptions in a way that can be quantitatively measured (Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, n.d.). The goal of the survey data analysis is to provide senior leaders insight as to where improvements within the work units are needed (Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, n.d.). While the data analysis identifies areas that need to be addressed, it lacks an explanation of the cause of the issue. This project is constructed to provide insight into the relationship between employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership and employee motivation and commitment levels. The project is designed to allow survey participants to share perspectives in detail beyond numerical ratings. Semi-structured interviews will enable the researcher to focus on the specific variables of the study and explore further into participant responses. The case study into the survey question results of the National Park Service is to provide sight into the specific issues addressed to improve decision-making, policies, and processes.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand how negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership affect levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. It will use the case study design to explore employee perceptions within the National Park Service. Results of the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey demonstrate that the National Park Service employees have a negative opinion on senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). Government-wide responses to this survey question returned 55.2% positive results while the National Park Service employees rate responses 36.4% positive (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). The National Park

Service employee response (29.3% positive) to senior leaders' ability to generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce is significantly lower than government-wide results (43.8% positive) (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018).

The study will provide constructive insight into employee perceptions of leadership's honesty and integrity necessary to develop recommendations and action plans for improvement. National Park Service employees receive an invitation through social media communication forums to volunteer to provide feedback and input for data collection. The results will represent a generalized assumption of the employee population. The study explores the perceptions of a broad sector of employees on the topics of motivation and commitment to determine if perceptions of leadership behaviors impact them. The findings of this study will develop a conclusion representative of the general workforce that will allow organizations to measure the value in assessing employee perceptions on leaderships' honesty and integrity. It will demonstrate the influence leadership behaviors have on employee motivation and commitment.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher will take on a personal, interactive role fitting with the design of qualitative research. The researcher will interact with participants in this study through oral and written communication. The researcher will not utilize assistance from others in collecting or coding the data. Initial contact and query for participants will occur through social media. The researcher will identify as a doctoral candidate seeking participants for a study regarding the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results. As an employee of the bureau, it would be unethical for the researcher to contact participants through their bureau email addresses or

mailing addresses to solicit participation. It would be unethical for the researcher to indicate any association with the bureau as an employee or representative.

The researcher will ask open-ended, sensitive questions to each participant. Initial communication for recruitment will be conducted in writing through written social media communication. Participants will respond to the researcher through a private messenger. Comments will be turned off on the social media posting to maintain the confidentiality of those interested in participating. Once participants express interest in the study, a consent to participate form will be completed utilizing the Survey Monkey software program. Personal information will be stored on an encrypted flash drive and stored in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Data from both individual and group settings will be collected in writing. Coding will be used to conceal the identity of the individual participants.

Oral interviews will be conducted with those that prefer verbal communication over written. Questions for both processes will be the same. Transcription of oral interviews will also use coding to conceal participant identity. The researcher will have direct, open dialog conversations with participants. Discussions will address specific questions and have an unstructured format to allow for an in-depth inquiry to responses. Data collected will be analyzed by the researcher and coded for common themes. The researcher will identify common themes and establish relationships on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity within leadership and employee motivation and commitment levels.

### **Participants**

Recruitment of participants will occur through the social media platform, Facebook. An informal group within Facebook for National Park Service employees will be utilized to make initial contacts for interested, voluntary participants. The call for participants to this study will

ask those who self-identify to have participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The targeted number of participants is 35-50; however, that number may be adjusted based on the level of data saturation achieved as data collection occurs. The majority of participants of the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey were mid-career level employees within the GS 7-12 pay scale range, between the age of 40-59 years old, and of the white race (Report on demographic questions by agency, 2018). Data from Greenwood et al. (2016) on demographic groups of Facebook users shows that the user group is also mostly middle-aged, mid-career, and white. Specific groups are not being targeted; however, the researcher expects that the demographics of study participants will align with the participant and user groups of the survey and social media platform.

Only responses from those who participated will be considered in the data analysis. The target number of responses is 35-50; however, the final result may differ depending on the level in which the researcher feels confident in data saturation. Personally identifiable information is not collected during the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and is not available for further specific participant inquiry. Minimal personal information will be collected from participants in this group. In making contact through social media, the researcher will gain knowledge of the first and last name of the individual and one form of contact information (personal email address or a phone number). Participants will be assigned a number code for data analysis to conceal the identity of their responses. The researcher will maintain a file of documented conversations with participants by assigned numbers. Participants engaged through group interactions will maintain anonymity amongst each other. No personally identifiable information of participants will be collected.



## **Research Method and Design**

The first step to deciding on research design and method is to become knowledgeable about the characteristics and differences of each type (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018). Qualitative research differs from quantitative in that there is no single reality to the phenomena occurring (Teherani et al., 2015). Everyone within the context of the phenomena will experience and interpret it differently (Teherani et al., 2015). The phenomena in this research are the demonstration of honesty and integrity by leadership. The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey is a collection of individual perceptions of selected variables. Each qualitative research study is a unique design based on the reflexivity, evaluative skills, and decisions carried out through the researcher (Lloyd-Jones, 2003). Selecting the research method and design is a significant decision of the research process (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018).

### ***Discussion of the Method***

This research will follow the qualitative research method. Qualitative research is based on inductive reasoning that seeks to discover through observational data collection (Williams, 2007). This method allows the researcher to explore preconceived assumptions and gain an in-depth perspective in analyzing the issues (Jamshed, 2014). The results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey have provided insight on a matter of low perceptions of honesty and integrity in senior leadership and low perceptions of commitment and motivation in the National Park Service. Assumptions can be made from this analysis; however, the results do not provide an in-depth perspective of the issue. This study seeks an understanding of respondents' reasoning for negative ratings on survey responses.

Conventional methods of data collection in qualitative research include interviews and focus groups (Gill et al., 2008). Interviews explore the views and experiences of individuals where

focus groups use the dynamics of the group to generate data (Gill et al., 2008). In the recruitment of the study, individuals will be allowed to express interest in the individual interview or the focus group. The use of both methods is essential in the data collection to increase the validity of the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Initial contact with participants will occur using the social media platform Facebook and will target a group of users that self-identify as National Park Service employees.

The use of the internet has allowed for virtual means of communication and data collection. Participant decisions to contribute to the research partially depend on personal convenience (Heath et al., 2018). Heath et al. (2018) find that participants prefer interviews by telephone, followed by email. Participants in this study will be asked to complete a phone interview. Email will be available should they prefer. Offering flexible methods for participation and data collection can maximize the recruitment and quality of data collected (Heath et al., 2018). A voice-only meeting will be held for the focus group. Email or written communication will not be offered for focus group sessions.

Ratislavová and Ratislav (2014) find the email interview a good compromise when topics are sensitive, and participants are reluctant to discuss the issue in person. A discussion of feelings and experiences can be a sensitive topic. Contact through a social media messenger will be used first to gain consent to participate and determine criteria fit. Consent will be followed by a phone conversation or email if preferred. Participants who only express interest in communicating through email will not be able to participate in focus groups. It is unexpected that these participants would be willing to.

Jamshed (2014) suggests recording interviews as a more effective method of data collection than handwritten notes during the process, as this allows for verbatim transcription. Interview

methods can be structured to allow for consistency in each interview, unstructured to allow for depth when nothing is known about the subject area, or semi-structured that direct the area to be explored but also allow for further exploration into answers (Gill et al., 2008). This research will utilize a semi-structured interview approach when conducting an individual interview. For focus group discussions, a semi-structured approach will be used to direct the group discussion as well.

### ***Discussion of Design***

Rowley (2002) describes the research design as an action plan for getting from questions to conclusions. This qualitative research will follow the case study design using an analytical method. This design allows for the exploration of a phenomenon using a variety of data sources within the context to develop an understanding from multiple viewpoints (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The design of the study is to use various data collection techniques through individual interviews and focus group contacts on collecting in-depth information from employees of the National Park Service to understand their responses to specific questions on the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Explanatory case studies seek answers to research questions that aim to explain presumed casual, real-world links (Yin, 2003).

The research will be a single-case study that focuses on a phenomenon within one agency. Access to the agency, field resources, and data collection methods must be carefully planned (Tellis, 1997). The researcher has access to participants in the field of study without violating any ethical standards of the department or agency. An advantage of the case study design is investigating a phenomenon in its context and not through replication in an experimental setting (Rowley, 2002). The data collected in the study will be obtained from those active in the contextual field of the phenomenon. In the case of studies, the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of participants or contextual conditions of the study environment (Yin, 2003).

Boundaries are set in a case study that defines the breadth and depth, indicating what will and what will not be included (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study is designed to specifically address the questions on the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey that measure employee perceptions of leaders' honesty and integrity and reporting of employee motivation and commitment levels. It will not address other variables measured in the survey. This study will focus only on employees of the National Park Service and will not seek to explore employee perceptions from other government bureaus, agencies, or departments. The focus of a case study should be on the unit of analysis, and any sub-units (Rowley, 2002). The boundaries determine the sources and evidence gathered within the unit of analysis (Rowley, 2002).

### ***Summary of Research Method and Design***

The qualitative research method will be used for discovery through observed data to gain an in-depth perspective in analyzing employee perceptions of leaderships' honesty and integrity in the National Park Service. Interviews with employees from across the bureau will collect data on individual perceptions within the context, while focus groups will collect data in a group environment. The advantages of the technology will enable the researcher to utilize social media to recruit and interact with participants across geographical regions. The single-case study design of the research will incorporate the explanatory method of pursuing research questions through data analysis to understand the context of the phenomenon through multiple viewpoints (Yin, 2003). The focus of the research will remain only within the bureau of the National Park Service and address only the questions from the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey that measures employee perceptions of leaderships' honesty and integrity and employee motivation and commitment.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of a study defines the item(s) the research will focus on (Guest et al., 2013). The item(s) may not necessarily be people but could consist of groups, events, places, and points in or periods (Guest et al., 2013). A sampling of the population is determined by the purpose of the research and the questions it seeks to answer (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995). An adequate sample is fundamental to creating credible research (Marshall et al., 2013). The sample focuses on the scope and nature of the population to study (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995). The size and design of the sample must be compatible with the research purpose to add depth to the study (Omona, 2013). This research focuses on collecting data from the population of National Park Service employees. The study does not seek to focus on the 20,000 plus employee base of the National Park Service, but only those who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (About us, 2020). A sample is recruited from the population to focus on uncovering depth to the survey response questions addressing leadership honesty and integrity and employee commitment and motivation.

### ***Discussion of Population***

The targeted population for this study is employees of the National Park Service who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Participants will have to self-validate their participation in the survey, as participant information is not revealed in the employee survey analysis or codebook. Analysis of the survey reports the National Park Service employee population eligible to participate in the survey was 12,391 (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). The highest level of response in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey came from mid-career level employees within the GS 7-12 pay scale, between 40-59 years old, and of the white race (Report on demographic

questions by agency, 2018). Since this data aligns with that of reported Facebook users (Greenwood et al., 2016), the researcher anticipates participants in this study to fit within the same range of pay scale, age, and race of those who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

Recruitment and primary contact will occur through the social media site, Facebook. Participants will be active Facebook users engaged in un-official National Park Service employee groups. Participants who volunteer to provide feedback but did not respond to the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey will be excluded from the study. Study participants may be current employees or have separated since the survey period. Information will be collected on survey participation, employment status, career-level, age, race, and gender.

### ***Discussion of Sampling***

Sampling methods need to be considered in the initial design stage of the research to determine the duration and resource allocation of the project (Robinson, 2014). The sample, or smaller part of the employee population, will be selected to provide an in-depth perspective to survey questions regarding the honesty and integrity of National Park Service leadership. The sample population for the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey consisted of 6,805 National Park Service employees (2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results for National Park Service, 2018). The sample population for this study will target only those employees who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

Patton (2007) describes sampling approaches as one of the main differences between quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are purposeful, where quantitative methods are typically selected randomly (Patton, 2007). The data in this study will be collected using a non-probability sample to provide information that can give insight into the perception

that is representative of the larger population (Acharya et al., 2013). This study will use a purposive sampling method to recruit participants chosen because of convenience and timing (Acharya et al., 2013). The sample population will be accessible through online social media forums. It will be current users of the forum that are actively engaged at the time of the study's recruitment for participants.

Nonprobability sampling has received criticism claiming limitations based on the subjective nature in selecting samples and misrepresentation in generalizing results (Etikan et al., 2015). The selection for this study is purposeful and designed to fit the needs of the research (Coyne, 1997). The researcher is seeking individuals that can contribute essential perspectives on the issue (Robinson, 2014). The goal of the researcher is not to produce a generalized result but to provide insight into the subject and identify common themes in responses. The purposeful sampling method is especially useful in this research sample due to the large, dispersed population of National Park Service Employees and the limited time available to conduct the study.

The target sample size in this study will range from 35-50 participants depending on the quality of the data collected. Participants will be current or former federal employees of the National Park Service who volunteer to be interviewed and meet the criteria for identifying as a participant of the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Participants are selected by accepting those meeting the criteria and conducting data collection until the sample size quotient is full (Robinson, 2014) or data saturation has been achieved. The sample size will adjust as the researcher determines no new codes and concepts are emerging from the data (Van Rijnsover, 2017). An assumption is made through convenience sampling that data collected will identify the same themes and common variables as other qualitative sampling methods (Etikan et al, 2015).

Utilizing social media networks in recruiting for research projects helps overcome the challenge of finding and interacting with geographically dispersed participants (Sibona & Walczak, 2012). The desired population for this study targets employees across all geographical regions of the United States that pose significant difficulties to interact with outside of social media networking groups. Sibona and Walczak (2012) tested social media recruitment for survey takers and found a positive response in outreach and completion rates when utilizing online social network sites.

### ***Summary of Population and Sampling***

This study focuses on the employee population from the National Park Service, specifically those that participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. A sample of this population will be interviewed to collect data on more in-depth responses to employee perceptions of leaderships' honesty and integrity. The researcher has set a target number for interviews to conduct; however, the purpose of the study, the specificity of the information collected, quality of dialogue, and theoretical background will determine the final number of interviews conducted (Malterud et al., 2016). Few guidelines exist for establishing a quantitative definition of sample size in qualitative research (Marshall et al., 2013). The sample size is determined by the level at which data saturation is achieved (Boddy, 2016). The selection of participants for sampling will be purposeful and convenience-based. Social media will be essential to the recruitment of and communicating with the sample population. The population and sampling design have been selected based on the purpose of the research and the research questions.



## **Data Collection**

The selection of the study population and sample goes hand in hand with the data collection process. Qualitative research is purposive (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The sample has been purposively selected because of their ability to provide the data collected for analysis. Qualitative data is primarily collected in the form of spoken or written language to capture the human experience as it occurred in relation to a phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 2005). This study will use the researcher and interviews to collect data on employee perceptions of leaderships' honesty and integrity and the relationship with commitment and motivation. Planning of the process addresses any pre-conceptions the researcher may have on the issue to minimize any bias or influence (Bengtsson, 2016). The researcher must have some familiarity or background information on the issue of study to understand the context of the interview conversations and circumstances to detect misrepresentations (Bengtsson, 2016). The exploratory nature of the study is considered when developing the data collection techniques, and the existing knowledge is central to organizing the data (Devers & Frankel, 2000).

## ***Instruments***

Two instruments will be used in the data collection of this study – the interview and the researcher. In semi-structured and unstructured qualitative interviews, the researcher is an instrument (Pezalla et al., 2012). The researcher's role is to ask questions (Dilshad, 2013). Characteristics of the researcher set the tone for the interview facilitation and information sharing (Pezalla et al., 2012). It is crucial for the interviewer to remain neutral and not express or contribute any individual opinions during the interview process (Kajornboon, 2005). Preparing for the interview process and developing pre-established questions can help set the tone neutrality and clarity in the interview (Turner, 2010). The interviewer in this study will be the

researcher. The researcher does not have a strong opinion on either side of the topic of study. The motivation of the researcher is curiosity and action for improvement. Interview questions will be pre-established as outlined in Appendix C for the individual interview and Appendix D for the focus group interview. The interview process will be flexible in seeking a further explanation of respondents' answers.

The objective of the interview process will be to obtain in-depth information from respondents. The researcher will inquire about the subject until they feel the question has been fully addressed. Utilizing interviews allows for emphasis on the detail of the phenomenon and exploration of the experiences from those within (Dilshad, 2013). The individuals being interviewed are the primary data source for the study (Kajornboon, 2005). In-depth interviews allow for confidential sharing of information and expression of opinion that may not be shared in a group setting (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Interviews can also be held in group settings, or focus groups, in which multiple individuals share responses to a set of questions (Dilshad, 2013). Focus group meetings will utilize a web-based meeting where users will be assigned a unique log in. Log in information will be tied to the demographic information provided.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

The researcher will utilize an unofficial National Park Service Employees social media group with nearly 10,000 members to reach out to interested participants meeting the criteria for participation. Kosinski et al. (2016) find that Facebook samples provide high-quality data despite distractions and multitasking while conducting virtual conversations. Participants will be asked to participate in either individual interviews or focus groups via written email correspondence and telephone conversation. Participants will be asked to complete a form to consent to participate (Appendix B) and be given the option to provide demographic information after

completing the individual interview and focus group secessions (Appendix C). Interviews conducted individually and within focus groups will be semi-structured to ask open-ended questions while allowing for further probing questions as necessary.

The interviewer will follow the written protocol outlined in Appendixes C and D with each interview ensuring consistency in information shared with each participant. At the beginning of the interview process, participants will be provided in an opening statement necessary information about the purpose of the interview and the research project, the number of structured questions to be asked, the documentation method for the interview, and confidentiality (Kajornboon, 2005). When participants can anticipate the distance to completion, they are more engaged (King et al., 2014). Boyce and Neal (2016) recommend no more than 15 main questions to guide the interview. However, this research will consist of 10 main in-depth interview questions aligned with the purpose of the research and the research questions. The main questions will be consistent across each interview. Probing questions will occur as needed. Interview questions will be open-ended. Open-ended questions allow participants to contribute as much information as they chose to and offer room for the interviewer to pull out more details through probing questions (Turner, 2010).

Before organizing a focus group, the researcher must set the objective for the focus group session (Dilshad, 2013). The objective of conducting focus group discussions in this research is to obtain information on the subject within a group setting and to triangulate the data. The focus group session will be conducted via telephone conference with a small group of approximately five individuals. The researcher will act as the moderator, keeping the group focused on the subject and asking pre-determined and probing questions. The session will be recorded so the research may transcribe the conversation after the meeting. Within the focus group setting, the

interview will consist of five main questions seeking the objectives of the research questions of the study.

### ***Data Organization Techniques***

Documenting with accuracy is vital to the interview process (Dilshad, 2013). To ensure accuracy and inclusiveness of information, all telephone interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed after the event. Notes will be kept during the process by the interviewer on other ques that may be picked up on such as agreeableness, tone of voice, or hesitation to respond. Interview transcriptions and notes will be reviewed by the researcher to begin the process of coding. Coding interviews requires making sense of the data to identify themes or concepts (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Information collected in a semi-structured and unstructured interview can be challenging to analyze and code (Turner, 2010).

The development of a coding system is necessary to understand a phenomenon (Weston et al., 2001). Developing a coding system to establish the parameters of analysis will ease the process and minimize the inappropriate influence of context and assumptions (Weston et al., 2001). Given the depth of information gathered through the interview process, the code development will be data-driven, emerging from the raw data, and documented in a detailed codebook (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). The codebook will establish and define the codes used in the analysis to ensure consistent processing as further information is examined and coded. The codes should reveal how the data relates to the research questions and enhances the current literature (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011).

### ***Summary of Data Collection***

Preparation in data collection is vital to the success of the study (Turner, 2010). The sample of the study is purposively selected based on the information they will be able to

contribute to the data collection. The process of planning will allow the researcher to determine any issue of biases that must be addressed before the data collection process begins when utilizing the researcher as an instrument. Interviews will be used to allow for in-depth data collection from individual and group settings. Social media and technology will allow for the active recruitment of individuals across the multiple regions of the National Park Service. Interviews will be semi-structured. A coding book will be developed as the data is analyzed to ensure consistent coding throughout the review of the interview transcripts. The data collection technique and analysis has been chosen for this study based on the purpose and targeted sample population.

### **Data Analysis**

Interviews and focus group sessions conducted during the research will be transcribed and stored along with the participant information collected through the consent to participate form. All data will then be entered into the ATLAS.ti 8 software program. This software is designed for research projects to help organize, sort, and code data (What is ATLAS.ti?, 2020). The program allows for semantical linking of data and ease of identifying themes and developing visual representations of findings and interpretations (What is ATLAS.ti?, 2020). Utilizing a software program such as ATLAS.ti will help the researcher stay organized with a large amount of data and provide for an efficient, consistent method of coding. While utilizing a software program, researchers should keep in mind the pitfalls of such efficiency. Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) find that the ease of creating new codes can lead to too many codes being generated. It can also cause the process of analyzing data to lose its reflective, analytical depth and become mechanical (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The coding process has been developed in consideration of these points.

### ***Coding Process***

Coding is a decision-making process in which the researcher or coder must decide the data (Elliott, 2018). Data is carefully reviewed and assigned a word or short phrase that captures the essence or summarizes what is being said (Saldana, 2015). Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019) state that for data findings to remain unbiased, the codes should come from terms and phrases used by the participants rather than fitting responses into the theoretical vocabulary. For this data analysis process, multiple reviews of the data will occur during the coding process. Each review will take into consideration the research questions. To ensure analytical depth is not lost in the coding process, each line of data in the interview and focus group transcripts will be carefully reviewed before continuing to the next. In this study, the researcher will be the individual reviewing and coding all data.

It is common for coding to occur in multiple cycles. Creswell (2015) describes his coding method as a multi-step process in which data is coded into approximately 30-50 codes and then reviewed for redundancy. Codes are reduced into five to seven themes that become significant headings in the reporting of the findings (Creswell, 2015). The coding of data in this research will follow a similar process. The first level of coding will use broad, summarizing descriptions (Elliott, 2018). The goal is not to reduce data, but to summarize or condense it (Saldana, 2015). The ATLAS.ti software will keep tracks of codes used and interpretation of them. As coding is developed based on the data, the program will compile a codebook available as a sidebar for viewing as data is reviewed. Once a list of codes grows, the researcher can drag codes from the sidebar to the selected piece of data to assign the code (What is ATLAS.ti?, 2020). After the first level of coding, the researcher will review the work to ensure they agree with the initial interpretation.

The second cycle of coding will look for pattern development (Elliott, 2018). Patterns can be characterized by similarities, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, or causation (Saldana, 2015). These patterns will be reviewed in the third cycle of coding to develop themes to be reported in the findings. The major themes can be compared to those identified in the literature review for an analysis of the study findings (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). In each cycle of the coding process, it is essential to be aware of the data and not move too quickly on coding. Data is brute or waiting to be interpreted while codes are meaningful (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

### ***Summary of Data Analysis***

This research is exploratory in nature. The codes will not be predetermined but will arise from the data as it is interpreted and coded. Utilizing the ATLAS.ti software will allow for an efficient review and organization of large amounts of data. The view panes of the program will allow for visualization of the coding as each interview and focus group transcript is reviewed. The automation features of the program will develop the codebook and help identify common themes. While the coding process is simplified through the use of the program, the obligation still falls to the researcher to ensure analytical detail is provided to each piece of data. A quick review and coding of the data are not sufficient to capture the essence of the participant responses. The coding process will take a multi-tier approach to ensure that the information is reviewed, captured, and categorized adequately. Time and consideration applied during the coding process will enhance the validation data analysis and presentation reporting findings.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Validity refers to the integrity of the methods and precision of the research to accurately reflect the data, whereas reliability is the consistency within the analytical procedures (Noble & Smith, 2015). Careful consideration has been given to the design, data collection, and data analysis procedures of this research to ensure reliability and validity. The researcher has been

considerate of multiple viewpoints and bias in representing the data and has planned for consistent and efficient processing and analysis with the assistance of computer software developed for the coding and collection of qualitative data. The creditability of research depends on the instrument, which in qualitative research is the ability and effort of the researcher (Golafshani, 2003).

### ***Reliability***

The reliability of research considers the consistency of the analytical procedures and biases in the research method or researcher that may influence the findings (Noble and Smith, 2015). The data collection and analysis process of this research has been developed to ensure consistency within individual interviews, the focus group, and coding. The development of the interview guides provides consistency in the questions asked and information sought. The data from these interviews and the focus group will be transcribed into the ATLAS.ti software. As the data is analyzed, a codebook will be developed and available for reference as additional data analysis occurs. The codebook developed in the program allows for the recording of the definition of the coding, ensuring consistent interpretation of the code meanings and applicants.

The ATLAS.ti software will allow a practical application of consistency and transparency in data analysis. Software analysis tools enhance transparency and openness when generating theory from qualitative data (Sinkovics et al., 2012). Text-analysis programs can help in maintaining systematic and standardized coding as well as coherent code-sets (Sinkovics et al., 2008). Sinkovics et al. (2008) find that computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software increases the reliability of the research findings and provides a tremendous advantage to the analysis process.



In qualitative research, it is not practicable to set a pre-determined sample size (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Instead, researchers should determine an initial analysis sample and a criterion to determine when the data has been saturated, and new themes or ideas are no longer emerging (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Two areas of saturation to consider are code saturation in which no additional issues arise, and meaning saturation in which no further insight is identified (Hennik et al., 2016). If saturation has not been achieved with the initial analysis sample, then more data collection will need to occur. If data saturation were accomplished before reaching the initial analysis sample size, it would be appropriate for the researcher to stop data collection. For this study, the initial sample size is 35-50 participants who meet the criteria for being National Park Service employees who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.

### ***Validity***

Validity can be considered the truth-value in the research. It recognizes that multiple realities exist, bias can occur, and accounts for an accurate representation of participant perspectives (Noble & Smith, 2015). Utilizing more than one form of data collection allows for capturing multiple realities that exist in individualized and group settings. Planning of the research design, data collection, and data analysis techniques had addressed any preconceptions or biases the researcher may have and has allowed these to be addressed before research being conducted. The interview guide and codebook will enable the research to be performed and analyzed in a manner that most accurately represent participants' views.

Validity can be tested through triangulation. The purpose of triangulation is to ensure confirmation and completeness in the data collection process (Breitmayer et al., 1993). This study uses both method and data source triangulation. Method triangulation uses multiple methods of data collection (Carter et al., 2014). Various methods of collecting data lead to a

more robust construction of the realities (Golafshani, 2003). Data collection methods for this study include interviews and focus groups. Transcriptions of the individual interview and focus group session will be coded and common themes identified. The themes between the two different types of data collection will be compared for triangulation and saturation. Data source triangulation is accomplished by collecting data from different types of people to gain multiple perspectives (Carter et al., 2014). This study utilizes individual interview contacts and focus group contacts on developing a broader understanding of opinions and accomplishing full breadth in the data collection.

### ***Summary of Reliability and Validity***

Good qualitative research involves recognizing and interpreting multiple realities and documenting and presenting the process so that it is transparent enough to be replicated. This case study builds validity in data collection through proactively seeking various viewpoints. The targeted sample size is 35-50 participants, but the researcher recognizes this value is fluid based on the saturation of the data for both code and meaning interpretation. The utilization of computer-assisted software will build on the consistency and transparency of the coding process. Interview guides, documentation of contact templates, and the development of a codebook will build the reliability of the process and the results.

### **Transition and Summary of Section 2**

The conception of this project begins with the goal to gain insight into the effect of low scores on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership and employee motivation and commitment levels. The qualitative case study design will help provide an understanding of the situation within the National Park Service. The researcher will be an instrument within the research interacting with participants to collect data and conduct analysis. The participants are

chosen based on their self-identification of completing the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey in which the research questions stem.

Through individual interviews and focus group sessions, the researcher will explore preconceived assumptions and gain an in-depth perspective on employee perceptions. The case study design of the research will use an analytical method to examine the perceptions of honesty and integrity through various data courses from multiple viewpoints increasing the validity and reliability of the data. The use of the data software program, Atlas.ti, will provide for consistency and transparency in the data analysis process. Data collected will be analyzed to understand the perceptions of honesty and integrity of leadership within the National Park Service that can be used to improve decision making and policy focus on employee commitment and motivation. Outside of the National Park Service, leadership from private and public sector organizations will gain insight into the impact employee perceptions of leadership behavior have on the workforce.

### **Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change**

The existing literature establishes the influence of leadership practices on the variables of employee behaviors, organizational culture, employee motivation, and employee commitment. These variables are the focus of the research questions and interviews conducted with employees who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The findings of the study support the relationship between the variables. Employees shared viewpoints on the value of these variables with consideration to senior leadership positions. Employee feedback is used to develop recommendations for further action on filling vacant positions, creating a communication plan, and establishing accountability.

#### **Overview of the Study**

This study began with reviewing the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results for the National Park Service. Two responses negatively stood out from the government-wide results in employee perspectives on senior leaders' honesty and integrity and employee motivation and commitment levels. This case study is designed to explore the general problem of negative employee perceptions of leadership honesty and integrity and the resulting low levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. Individual interviews and a focus group session were conducted to gain insight from employees to understand the reasoning behind the negative survey responses.

The researcher spoke with employees of the bureau who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The questions addressed in the discussion focused on the opinions of senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity, the impact on employee commitment, and the impact on employee motivation. Participants expressed the values of a mission-driven organization and concern over a lack of communication and trust in leadership. This study finds

that employees desire a partnership of values, techniques, and fundamental beliefs with senior leadership positions. Action taken to building upon the connections of accountability and shared vision will build employee trust with leadership within the organization.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

This study uses both method and data source triangulation through individual interviews and a focus group session. Collecting data from multiple methods helps ensure confirmation and completeness in the data triangulation process (Breitmayer et al., 1993). Multiple sources were sought to gain different perspectives on the situation. A total of 30 individual interviews and one focus group session, consisting of six individuals, was conducted. Individuals were recruited through a social media site. Demographics did not align as closely to the survey demographic as expected. Most participants fit into the 25-35-year-old range and were lower career level employees in the GS 5 to GS 9 range. It is uncertain if this is due to higher use of social media by certain age groups or if older or higher level employees utilize social media but refrain from posting or sharing opinions through public platforms. Data collection provided insight into the effect of low scores on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership and employee motivation and commitment levels.

Data was coded as it was collected. After 30 individual participants, the researcher was confident in the level of data saturation achieved. One focus group session was conducted. The responses in the focus group did not significantly vary from the individual interviews and shared common themes. As responses were being coded, the number of new categories of themes was reduced considerably, and the major themes started standing out in the coding. The researcher expected a more comprehensive range of responses but found many similarities in the responses

between individual interviews and the focus group session. Common themes in the data collection were commitment to the mission, lack of communication, and lack of trust.

### ***Commitment to the Mission***

Participants overwhelmingly demonstrated employee commitment to the mission of the organization. The core of the National Park Service mission, established through the Organic Act (16 U.S.C. §1), is to conserve park resources and provide for their use and enjoyment in such a manner and by such means, as will leave them unimpaired for future generations (NPS Organic Act, 2015). Regardless of the questions and discussion about opinions of leadership's integrity, levels of trust and confidence in leadership, or employee commitment and motivation, the majority (two thirds) of responses counteracted concerns in leadership with a positive note about the desire to perform their duties due to motivation by or commitment to the organizational mission. Discouragement in leadership did not affect their commitment to conserving park resources for future generations. Responses were found to be in support of the Battistelli et al. (2013) findings that a demonstrated emotional bonds influenced the attitudes and behaviors regulating motivational levels and controlling commitment. Participants showed a bond to the mission that was not reflective of their thoughts on leadership.

Responses demonstrated a culture that has developed value to the mission. No answers indicated that any encouragement or influence to support the mission was motivated by or impacted by senior leadership. This finding demonstrates that employee perspectives are of leadership does not have an impact on the commitment to the mission. The aligned values were a common theme demonstrated among employees supporting Ardichvili et al.'s (2009) statement that culture is centered on the mission and values of the organization. Zabid et al. (2004) find that mission-driven culture demonstrates an unwillingness to accept reduced performance.

When asked about the effect of senior leadership on employee performance and intent to seek outside employment, 87% of participants said they are satisfied with their job. Their motivations for job satisfaction and continued performance were more affected by a personal commitment to the organizational mission than from perceptions of leadership behaviors or competencies. Repetitive phrases in the individual interview and focus group session included “making a difference,” “contributing to the public,” and “preserving history.” Employees value the organization and its purpose.

### ***Lack of Communication***

Regular internal communication cultivates a positive emotional culture resulting in behaviors that demonstrate pride and gratitude toward other employees, customers, and the organization (Men & Yue, 2019). A lack of communication from senior leadership was a common theme in employee responses to the interview questions, seconded by a lack of confidence in the information that is received. When asked about the level of honesty demonstrated by senior leadership, participant #2 stated that “a bigger issue is lack of openness.” Participant #7 indicated that they feel confident about communication on the park level but only hear from senior leadership when something negative ends up on the news. In discussing the reliability of the information received from senior leadership, participant #1 stated that it was, “full of fluff.” Participant #15 felt that senior leadership was at the mercy of the political administration and even those who desired to lead honorably were “dragged through the mud.” In the focus group, participants expressed feelings that they had to “read between the lines” to interpret the truth behind the message and in that the communication was often a late response to a more significant issue (i.e., addressing growing reports of sexual harassment only after employees went to the mainstream media as an outlet).

Fernandez and Pitts (2011) stated that vertical communication patterns from top-down management have little to no effect on employee motivation. Most communication from senior leadership is made to human resource managers, park superintendents, and/or administrative officers through leadership meetings or email groups who then forward the information to employees. In the focus group, a participant stated that communication from senior leadership was disappointing, but they were still willing to do the work. Participant #14 described them self as neutral on the topic. They felt that senior leadership was too busy to consider the effect communicating decisions had on those in the field, which was frustrating. Still, they were motivated to build their career to a senior leadership level that can contribute from experience in the field.

In discussing communication from leadership, conversations often lead to dialog on the employee performance evaluation system. In the focus group session, mention of this topic leads to other group members expressing discouragement in the evaluation system. Feedback, clear communication, and utilization of reward and incentive systems should be motivation techniques used by management to encourage employee behaviors toward organizational needs and goals (Hartmann, 2006). Instead, employees cited minimal justifications or supervisor feedback given on evaluations. One participant stated that in their first job at the National Park Service, they were not aware of performance evaluations until the end of the year when they have presented a vaguely written assessment. Several statements shared a common conception that supervisors do not put much effort into writing the supervisor feedback section of the performance evaluations or orally communicating performance with employees. Wang and Brower (2019) suggest that demonstrating respect toward subordinates and interactive discussions between subordinates and supervisors can enhance job satisfaction and trust, increasing positive perspectives of employee



perceptions of leadership. A lack of communication in this area demonstrates a lack of trust and confidence at the employee and supervisor level.

### ***Lack of Trust***

Trust develops through reciprocal and social interactions (Park, 2012). In a geographically dispersed organization, social interactions can include those that occur through technology-enabled platforms. In this study, a lack of communication also revealed a lack of trust. All of the participants indicated during the interviews that they are not confident in the reliability of the information they have received as an employee from senior leadership within the National Park Service. This indication did not come in response to one specific interview question, but the theme appeared across various questions.

Participants that reported dissatisfaction with their jobs cited different reasons: micromanaging, lack of integrity, delayed actions on essential issues (sexual harassment), and brushing issues under the rug until they become big (sexual harassment). Three participants specifically cited they felt leadership is motivated by politics and self-preservation. Park (2012) states that bureaucratic structures, processes, and cultures affect social exchanges and interpersonal communications in public sector organizations. The comments shared with dissatisfaction in delayed reactions and political motivations demonstrate this effect on social interactions and interpersonal relationships.

Alwari (2017) find that words and actions of management are the most crucial factor in motivating trust between the organization and employees. As previous comments state, participants felt that the actions of senior leaders were always reactive instead of a proactive nature. Two responses specified the National Park Service reaction to sexual harassment as an example of an issue that did not become a priority until news stories started surfacing sexual

harassment claims against those in leadership positions at larger parks. The action was only taken after an issue became a large scale. Minimal measures were taken to prevent major issues in the workplace before this occurrence in the news. Kacmar et al., 2012 stated that trust in leadership effects relationships between employees and between employees and supervisors. Conflicts in this trust can increase negative behaviors (Kacmar et al., 2012). Further research would be needed, but these results could indicate that trust issues encourage negative behaviors that contribute to the growing problem of harassment.

### ***Relationship of Themes/Patterns to Research Questions***

The first research question of this study was to discover reasoning for the high negative response to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey on the opinions of senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity. A common theme *that* developed through discussions was a lack of trust. As mentioned, comments by participants indicated concern of political motivations and frequent turnover in leadership. In August of 2019, the National Park Service's website listed three vacant positions in its senior leadership and seven positions filled by employees temporarily acting in the positions (About us, n.d.) A press release by the National Parks Conservation Association in October of 2019 noted that at that time, the National Park Service had been without a permanent director for more than two and a half years (Trump administration continues to ignore park service director nomination, 2019). The lack of permanent leadership and frequent turnover may cause a lack of trust and negative responses to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Without any permanency outlook for leadership, employees find it difficult to form trust in those positions.

The second research question was to explore employee opinions of senior leaders' honesty and integrity the impact on employee commitment. An overwhelming response to the

discussion of employee commitment led to the discussion of employee's commitment to the organizational mission. Regardless of the opinions on senior leadership, employees demonstrated passion and motivation to preserve the natural and cultural history within the units of the National Park Service. The commitment to the mission had a more considerable influence on employee intent to seek a job outside of the agency and job satisfaction than perspectives of senior leadership. Two-thirds of participants stated that they intended to stay with the National Park Service. The ones that said they plan to move or have moved on since participating in the 2018 survey all indicated that their career goals remain in public sector work. No one expressed interest in seeking work in the private sector. Participants communicated that perceptions of senior leadership were demotivating in the job performance, but quickly reacted with statements of a motivational drive to the mission. Participant #7 stated, "I love being able to contribute to the public's enjoyment of this fantastic place."

The third research question explores how an employee's perception of senior leaders' honesty and integrity affects individual motivation. The consensus of the individual interview and the focus group was that the perception of senior leaders is discouraging, but the impact on motivation is minimal. Participant #14 stated, "My performance never wavered. My respect did." Participant #20 responded that while frustrations and can be disheartening, the drive to contribute to the overall mission of the service was not impacted. One participant did state that their perception of poor performance by senior leadership encouraged them to work harder so they could "move up the system and change things for the better."

When asked about the impact on an employee's motivation to seek developmental opportunities, the response was split. About one-third of the group said there was no impact. They sought developmental opportunities to improve one's self and one's job performance.

Another third commented that they did not feel there were many developmental opportunities within the National Park Service, so there would be no impact. The other third of the employees commented that they avoided management because they did not like the environment or culture within that organizational level. Participant #11 stated, “I am not motivated to get further into an environment I have no respect for.” Participant #23 commented that they were happy at their level of fieldwork and did not seek to progress into management or supervisory level positions. Participant #30 commented that the next step in their career would be much fewer hands-on and more entangled in bureaucracy, so they had no incentive to progress. Those higher in tenure expressed less motivation, as they were higher in pay grade and more involved in managing the next step of their career would be management.

### ***Summary of the Findings***

A review of the existing literature established the influence of leadership practices on the variables measured in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: employee behaviors, organizational culture, employee motivation, and employee commitment. The literature establishes a relationship between the variables, which is supported by the findings through this case study. Tach and Thompson (2007) identify honesty and integrity as a valuable competency in all sectors of leadership. Study participants express concern for the level of honesty and integrity in leadership and reveal that the workforce would value a leader that can gain trust in this area. Trust is one of the most important drivers of quality, customer satisfaction, and productivity (Matzler & Renzl, 2006).

An analysis of the responses concludes that concerns with a lack of communication influence the low levels of trust in leadership. Communication competencies positively correlate with trust (Sutherland & Yoshinda, 2015). Jex (2008) stated that leaders are influential when

their values align the cultural norms. Employee responses indicate that a leader who aligns with the mission of the National Park Service can be highly influential within the workforce and build trust and motivation. Trust can be gained through a focus on improved communication with the field from senior leadership. Leaders expressing their commitment to the mission of the service can effectively communicate that to the field can provide a positive effect on trust between employees and senior leadership. A trustful culture produces a higher level of public service motivation and obligation to duty (Ugaddan & Park, 2019).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Participants of the study demonstrate the value of a mission-driven organization. Participants expressed concern over a lack of trust in leadership, but exhibit a continued work ethic committed to the mission and success of the organization regardless of these concerns. Potipiroon and Ford (2017) found that within public service organizations, moral values and intrinsic motivation are strengthened by ethical leadership in the positive influence on employee organizational commitment. Leadership positions in public service organizations can experience frequent turnover, making it difficult for employees to build trust with individuals in these roles. The findings of this study indicate that filling these vacant positions in leadership with individuals that demonstrate competencies in mission commitment and communication could be beneficial to increasing employee trust in leadership and leadership decisions. Within public service organizations, the study findings support Giauque et al. (2013) in that motivation to public service is a unique variable to consider in public service organizations and as Ciobanu et al. (2019) find, the work environment and job satisfaction strengthen it.

The measurement of successful leadership has shifted to focusing on personal characteristics and competencies (Müller & Turner, 2010). Participants in the study expressed

concerns about the motivation of those in senior leadership and politically appointed positions. A perception of self-preservation and political interest capped problems in discussion of undesirable leadership traits supporting Mao et al.'s (2019) findings that demonstration of self-serving behaviors negatively influences employee perceptions. Leadership values aligned with the mission were the most desirable. Leadership that demonstrates the importance and focus aligned with the mission of a public service organization would be the most effective in improving employee commitment and motivation and building trust across the organizational levels. When employees perceive leadership decisions and actions are motivated by a desire to accomplish organizational goals, they exhibit an increase in trust and are more receptive to change (Matta et al., 2019). These findings align with Ristino and Michalak's (2018) findings that employee perceptions of the organizational culture are most influenced by values, practices, and fundamental beliefs. When leaders build connections that demonstrate values of accountability and shared vision, they can build trust (Matzler & Renzl, 2006). Participants showed a relationship between the perceptions of leadership values with the level of confidence.

In public service organizations, a trustful culture experiences higher public service motivation and obligation to duty (Ugaddan & Park, 2019). Participants in the study expressed a high level of commitment to the mission and responsibility to duty, but low levels of trust in leadership. Participants desired a leader that they could feel is motivated to the mission of the service. An essential competency in developing confidence is through communication (Sutherland & Yoshinda, 2015). Demonstrating openness through communication contributes to psychological safety within the employee's mindset (Detert & Burris, 2007). Comments from participants conveyed a lack of communication from leadership at all levels beginning with deficiencies in performance feedback through employee evaluations. There is value to

organizations in developing communication competencies within all levels of leadership. Attentiveness and communication are the strongest predictors of trust, but two-way communication is required to form a relationship between the parties (Sutherland and Yoshida, 2015).

God's intention for His Kingdom is for individuals to work together to improve each other and the environment around them (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Proverbs 27:17). It is a self-less reflection expression of love and respect for each other. Mission statements establish a shared vision driven to produce an outcome beneficial to the organization and those it encounters. Leaders are placed in an honorable position to move others toward that mission (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, 1 Timothy 3:1). Participants of the study demonstrated respect and value toward expressing expectations of trust, communication, and drive for the mission.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The research revealed three main themes in the data: high level of employee motivation to the organizational mission, employee lack of trust in leadership, and lack of communication from leadership to employees within all levels of the organization. Action focused on these areas will build a culture that shares a unified drive for the mission. The workforce is showing discouragement from a lack of permanent leadership. It has expressed a desire for leadership that shares motivation to the mission and builds trust through communication. A step toward improving employee perceptions of leadership is for the National Park Service to make a focused effort to fill senior leadership positions with permanent, long-term appointments. Employees find it hard to build trust in leadership that is only a temporary placement.

Study participants identified “mission-driven” and “communication” as competencies that would improve the success of individuals in leadership positions. These competencies should be a focus of recruitment efforts in filling the current vacant leadership positions. While not recognized as a core competency in the five core qualifications for Executive Service appointments of senior leadership positions, they can be integrated into the current Executive Service appointment plan and targeted for training and developmental opportunities. The current practice for selection and development of positions in Executive Service appointed positions to focus on core qualifications (leading change; leading people, results-driven, business acumen, and building coalitions) and competencies of those qualifications (Senior Executive Service, n.d). It would be possible to integrate the competencies identified as valuable to employees into the current competencies in the core qualifications plan.

The first qualification, “leading change,” identifies strategic thinking and vision as core competencies for this qualification (Senior Executive Service, n.d). It defines this as “implementing plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization,” “building a shared vision with others,” and “influencing others to translate vision into action” (Senior Executive Service, n.d). The definition of these competencies is similar to the responses employees gave in discussing communication and mission-driven vision. A review of the application selection process should be made to determine if any part of the assessment seeks to evaluate candidates' communication and establish a mission-driven vision. If not, consideration must be given to such matters under the same methods utilized for other competencies. In the competitive service, this would mean assessment and interview questions that measure employees' abilities in these areas. For Executive Service recruitments, assessment questionnaires are not utilized, but interviews, conversations, and career accomplishments can



consider performance in these areas. Once selected, the accountability of leadership efforts to give and receive information from the field needs to be established through the critical elements of the performance evaluation for each leadership position. Developmental and training opportunities to build on these competencies should be incorporated into the Individual Development Plan (IDP) goals.

Improvements in communication from leadership to employees can improve employee levels of trust in leadership. Participants expressed concern for lack of communication and lack of trust. Establishing some fundamental practices through a communication plan can ensure that all levels of employees are receiving important information from senior leaders and have a method to communicate feedback. The first practice can institute a central email account monitored by an already established staff assistant position as a collateral duty to provide a method for employees to direct communication to senior leadership. A central phone line for communication would not be efficient, as it would require a significant amount of time to answer, respond, document, and follow up with inquiries. Emails can be tracked, and common questions can be efficiently responded to through pre-documented responses and/or regular communication for frequently asked questions distributed to all employees through email or posting on the intranet page. All National Park Service employees have an email account and availability of a government network to check the account.

As a second method, communications targeting the broad employee populations can be posted on the organizational intranet page, InsideNPS, as news stories or through developing a centralized communication page accessible through InsideNPS. A summary of the frequently asked questions from the monitored email account can be posted monthly through a central communication page. Video blogs, recorded messages, and other visual types of communication

can be posted through an internal communication page. Geographic dispersity of the 421 National Park Service units travel limitations makes electronic forms of communication the most effective in accessibility for all levels of employees. .Former Director Jonathan Jarvis would utilize the Inside NPS intranet site to host town-hall type meetings to share information and allow employees to comment in a monitored chat box during the meeting to which he would respond. These meetings were open to all employees. This method of communication has degenerated since his departure. A proactive effort to revitalize visual communications can be an impactful addition to email communications.

A third piece to the communication plan should extend a communication responsibility beyond direct senior leadership to the supervisor level and set a standard of accountability for the supervisor to employee communication. Some of the responses from participants regarding communication from leadership expressed disappointment in the employee performance evaluation system. It would be valuable to the communication plan to establish accountability in communication from supervisors to employees of all levels regarding feedback on individual employee performance. The current electronic evaluation system utilized for all positions should set the comment field for the rating of each critical element as a required box, and requires supervisors to certify a date that a conversation was completed regarding the employee's performance. Other action buttons can be added on the employee review of the final performance rating certifying that an oral (or equivalent) conversation was conducted regarding this evaluation. Audits and system reports can hold supervisors accountable for conducting complete and proper performance evaluations. Adequate and timely performance evaluations can be added as a critical element to supervisory performance evaluations.

The organizational culture of the National Park Service is mission-driven. Employees value the cultural and historical significance of the places in which they work and want to see those places preserved and their stories shared. The drive to the mission is a common ground that leadership and employees can both agree on and utilize to build and restore trust.

Communications to the field would be most effective if they demonstrate how change and decision making supports the mission of the service. A communication plan that validates shared values between leadership and employees can build employee trust and confidence in leaders.

This study finds that the National Park Service workforce desires partnership of values, techniques, and fundamental believes with leadership. Building upon the connections of accountability and shared vision will build trust within the organization. Improved communication will begin to restore trust in employee perceptions of senior leadership. Accountability through the annual performance evaluation process needs to be established. Results from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey can be built into the metrics of performance evaluation plans to the measurement of core qualifications and establish accountability. Focus on a unified drive for the mission, and improved communication will build trust within the organization that will influence employees and leaders throughout the entire service.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study demonstrates the value in exploring the deeper meaning of employee responses on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Focusing on low scores and seeking feedback on their reasoning can provide insight to decision-makers that will improve trust and confidence in the organization and its leadership. This study was limited to a small number of participants in perspective to the total workforce population but provided insight that can

potentially affect large-scale outcomes. Expansion of the research questions to a broader audience may provide more detail and concepts for improvement. Three areas of concern revealed in the data analysis were lack of permanent leadership, lack of communication, and lack of trust. These three topics correlate with one another and merit further exploration in workforce desires for leadership competencies. A recommendation for further study is to consider competencies the workforce desires in leadership and selecting for those competencies in building trust and unification in the organization.

### **Reflections**

The most significant discovery in data collection was the expression of commitment to the mission from employees at all levels of the workforce. It was an unexpected result, but eye-opening. Based on the researcher's previous work experience in the private sectors, the researcher obtained an assumption that mission statements were overlooked at the employee level and only utilized in leadership discussions. Interview and data collections revealed to the researcher in public sector organizations, mission statements motivate and drive the workforce. The mission of the organization drives employees to perform their job duties to the best of their ability despite feelings toward senior leadership. The researcher has gained a new perspective on the value of mission statements. The researcher is humbled by a respect for the workforce for selfless dedication to public service and conservation of America's public lands and places.

It is a solid belief of the researcher that God desires people to utilize unique, given gifts in cooperation with others to cultivate and care for the world around them. The dedication of National Park Service employees exemplifies this vision. Participants did not discuss religion or belief systems but demonstrated shared value toward protecting and caring for their environment for the education and enjoyment of others and future generations. Responses and discussion with

participants give the researcher confidence in the care and future of National Park Service protected sites and land. Reactions from participants support the characteristics of a good leader described in 1 Timothy 3:27 (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001): honorable, self-controlled, respectable, and able to teach.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

This research was developed as a case study of employee perceptions of honesty and integrity within National Park Service leadership and the effect on employee motivation and commitment. The purpose of this study is to provide an understanding of the negative responses to the questions on the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey regarding employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in an organization's leadership, employee motivation, and commitment within the workforce. Existing literature recognizes a relationship between the variables but fails to understand the effect on organizational performance and policies. The goal of the outcome is to give insight into the value of exploring employee perceptions of leadership behaviors and the impact on the organization.

The research method sought discovery through observed data in gaining an in-depth perspective of employee perceptions of leaderships' honesty and integrity in the National Park Service. Individual interviews and the focus groups discussion collected data from both individual perceptions and well as those in a group environment. Technology and the availability of contacts through social media networks allowed for diverse participation. Coding data as it was collected proved to be advantageous to the researcher in gauging data saturation. Data analysis reveals a workforce committed to the mission of the organization and desires a leader that exhibits the same. It revealed feelings of a lack of communication and trust in leadership and provided insight for improvement in this area utilizing a unified drive for the mission and public

service. This study demonstrates the value of understanding employee perspectives and the value it can have to develop a unified organizational culture.

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## Appendix A

## Recruitment Posting on Social Media Group Page

I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate in Business Administration degree at Liberty University, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and have been a career or career-conditional employee of the National Park Service who participated in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a one-hour individual interview or focus group discussion to be conducted via telephone or a virtual meeting platform. After discussions, participants will be asked to complete an optional 5-minute survey to provide general demographic information. Participation will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please click here (include a hyperlink to participation form) to complete a participation form. If eligible to participate, you will be directed to an electronic consent form to sign and submit. I will then contact you to set up an interview or schedule a focus group.

Sincerely,

Christy Strand

Candidate for Doctorate of Business Administration, Liberty University

Cstrand2@liberty.edu

*(Comments to this posting will be turned off. Members of the group will not be allowed to post comments in response to the recruitment request.)*

## Appendix B

**Consent to Participate in Study**

**Title of the Project:** Employee Perceptions of Honesty and Integrity within National Park Service Leadership

**Principal Investigator:** Christy Strand, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University School of Business

**Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and have completed the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey as a career or career-conditional employee of the National Park Service. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to understand how negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership affect levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce. Results of the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey demonstrate that the National Park Service employees have a negative opinion on senior leaders' ability to maintain honesty and integrity.

**What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. Participate in an individual interview or focus group session.
  - a. Individual interviews may occur utilizing the telephone. If needed, participants may request to complete an email questionnaire of the interview questions. Phone conversations will be recorded.
  - b. Focus groups will be conducted over a recorded group conference telephone line.
  - c. Individual interviews and focus groups will be expected to last an hour each.
2. Complete an optional, 5-minute demographic survey.

**How could you or others benefit from this study?**

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

**What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

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



**How will personal information be protected?**

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

Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of coding. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Individual interviews and focus group sessions will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. If you are participant in a focus group, focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Christy Strand. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [cstrand2@liberty.edu](mailto:cstrand2@liberty.edu) or 931-397-6464. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Amy Puderbaugh, at [apuderbaugh@liberty.edu](mailto:apuderbaugh@liberty.edu).

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

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

**Your Consent**

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

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

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

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## Appendix C

### In-depth Interview Guide

#### Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. This study is completed as part of my requirements in the Doctorate of Business Administration program at Liberty University. I have ten questions I would like to ask you for your opinion on. This interview will be approximately one hour. If it is ok with you, I will be recording the session so I can refer back to it later for my data. Your personally identifiable information will remain confidential during this study.

#### Topics of Discussion

- How do you describe the level of honesty demonstrated by senior leadership in the National Park Service?
- How confident are you in the reliability of information you have received as an employee from senior leadership within the National Park Service?
- How have you found that these perceptions affect your level of commitment to the organization?
- What are your career intentions of staying within the bureau of the National Park Service versus seeking other agencies or private sector employment?
- How satisfied are you with your job?
- What influence does your opinion on the honesty and integrity of senior leadership have on your job satisfaction?
- How has your opinion of honesty and integrity by senior leadership affected the effort you put into your job performance?

- How have your performance evaluations been over the past two years verses past performance?
- What is the impact of honesty and integrity demonstrated through senior leadership on your motivation to perform your job duties?
- How has this affected your intent to seek developmental opportunities?

Do you have any questions or comments for me?

### Closing

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I appreciate your assistance in helping me achieve my doctorate goals. Just to reiterate, your personally identifiable information will remain confidential in the documentation and presentation of the data for this study.

## Appendix D

### Focus Group Interview Guide

#### Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. This study is completed as part of my requirements in the Doctorate of Business Administration program at Liberty University. I have five questions I would like to ask you all for your opinion on. This focus group session will last approximately one hour. If it is ok with all participants, I will be recording the session so I can refer back to it later for my data. No personal information will be collected from this group. Everyone will remain confidential among each other.

#### Topics of Discussion

- How would you all describe the level of honesty demonstrated by senior leadership in the National Park Service?
- How have these perceptions affected your level of commitment to the organization?
- What influence do the opinions of on the honesty and integrity of senior leadership have on your level of job satisfaction?
- How have you found the demonstration of honesty and integrity by senior leadership has affected the effort you put into your job performance?
- Have you found that these perceptions impact your level of motivation in performing your job duties?

Do you all have any questions or comments for me?

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I appreciate the assistance of each of you in helping me achieve my doctorate goals. Just to reiterate, your personally identifiable information will remain confidential in the documentation and presentation of the data for this study.

## Appendix E

## Permission Request Message to Web Group Administrator(s)

[Insert Date]

Dear Administrator:

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the degree requirements. The title of my research project is “Employee Perceptions of Honesty and Integrity within National Park Service Leadership,” and the purpose of my research is to understand how negative employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in leadership affect levels of motivation and commitment within the workforce.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research within the “National Park Service Employees” Facebook group and recruit for participants from group members through a posting on the page to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to go to a Survey Monkey link and click to complete the attached consent to participate survey so that I may contact them to schedule an individual interview or focus group participation. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by through messenger.

Sincerely,

Christy Strand

Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University School of Business

## Appendix F

## Communication Guide

**Follow Up Email to Recruitment Interest for Individual Interview**

Dear (Insert Name),

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my research study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in the National Park Service leadership. I would like to set up a time to conduct a one-hour interview with you to gain insight into your perspective on the issue. Would you be available (insert date) at (insert time) at the phone number you provided in the consent to participate (repeat phone number)? Please respond to this email, or you may also reach me by phone at 931-397-6464.

Thank you,

Christy Strand

Candidate for Doctorate of Business Administration, Liberty University

**Follow Up Phone Conversation to Recruitment Interest for Individual Interview**

This is Christy Strand. I am calling for (insert name).

I am following up with your interest to volunteer to participate in my research study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. I would like to set up a time to conduct a one-hour interview with you to gain insight into your perspective on the issue.

Would you be available (insert date) at (insert time)?

If not, is there a date and time that will work best for you?

Is the best number to reach you at during that time (repeat phone number)?



Great! I will give you a call then. I appreciate you volunteering for this research.

**Follow Up Email to Recruitment Interest for Focus Group Participation**

Dear (Insert Name),

Thank you for volunteering to participate in a focus group discussion for a research study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. I am scheduling group sessions and would like to include you in one of the three sessions:

Session 1: (Date, Time)

Session 2: (Date, Time)

Session 3: (Date, Time)

Each session will be limited to 8 participants. We will utilize the (enter WebEx platform). Participants will be assigned a unique participate log in number so that personal information remains confidential among others on the line. Please respond to this email with your preference, or you may also reach me by phone at 931-397-6464.

Thank you,

Christy Strand

Candidate for Doctorate of Business Administration, Liberty University

**Follow Up Phone Conversation to Recruitment Interest for Focus Group Participation**

This is Christy Strand. I am calling for (insert name).

I am following up with your interest to volunteer to participate in my research study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. I would like to schedule you for a focus group session. I am conducting sessions at three different times:

Session 1: (Date, Time)

Session 2: (Date, Time)

Session 3: (Date, Time)

Would one of these work best for you?

Each session will be limited to 8 participants. We will utilize the (enter WebEx platform).

Participants will be assigned a unique participate log in number so that personal information remains confidential among others on the line. I will email the login information to you. Is (enter email address) the best address to send that to?

Great! I will schedule you for this group. I appreciate you volunteering for this research.

### **Email Confirmation Scheduling for Focus Group Participation**

Dear (Insert Name),

Thank you again for volunteering to participate in a focus group discussion for my research study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. This email confirms you have been scheduled for the session on (Date) at (Time).

Please use the phone number and participate code for the call:

(Phone number)

(Meeting Code)

(Participant Code)

Sincerely,

Christy Strand

Candidate for Doctorate of Business Administration, Liberty University

**Response to Individuals that Do Not Qualify for Participation**

Thank you for your interest in participating in my survey on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. This study specifically utilizes the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results. Only individuals who responded the 2018 survey are eligible to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

Christy Strand

Candidate for Doctorate of Business Administration, Liberty University

**Follow Up Email after Participation**

Dear (Insert Name),

Thank you for taking the time to provide your input for my study on employee perceptions of honesty and integrity in National Park Service leadership. As a follow up to our conversation, I would like to ask you to provide your demographic information. Disclosure of this information is optional. You may complete the survey at: (link).

Sincerely,

Christy Strand

Candidate for Doctorate of Business Administration, Liberty University

## Appendix G

## Participation Form

(Administered through Survey Monkey Link)

(Text Box) I may be contacted by phone at:

(Text Box) I may be contacted by email at:

(Radio Button) I would be most interested in providing information on my perception of honesty and integrity within National Park Service leadership through individual interviews, focus groups, or either.

(Yes/No) Are you 18 years of age or older?

(Radio Button) At the time you completed the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey were you a career or career conditional employee of the National Park Service?

\*(Yes/No) Did you participate in the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey response?

\*If answer is no, survey will end. Individual will be contacted by researcher. If answer is yes, individual will be directed to the consent to participate form.

## Appendix H

## Optional Demographic Survey

(Administered through Survey Monkey Link)

(Radio Button) Are you: male, female

(Radio Button) Please select the racial category or category with which you most closely identify: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, White, Two or more races (Not Hispanic or Latino)

(Radio Button) When you completed the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, what was your pay category/grade? Federal Wage System, GS 1-6, GS 7-12, GS 13-15, Senior Executive Senior Level (SL)/Scientific Professional (ST), Other

(Radio Button) When you completed the 2018 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, how long had you been with the National Park Service? Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 4 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years, more than 20 years.