EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE US FIRE SERVICE

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE US FIRE SERVICE REQUIRES TRAINING

PROGRAMS GEARED TOWARD ONGOING LEADER

DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL PERSONNEL

by

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Liberty University, School of Business

January, 2022

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of 50 personnel from four Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments, 23 firefighters and 27 officers, at varying experience levels and ranks to determine if there was leadership training throughout a firefighter's career that enhanced their leader development, improving teamwork needed to achieve operational objectives. Based on the analysis of the data retrieved from the participants, the proposed research problem does exist within all four departments: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. This study used the experiences of career firefighters and officers not only to prove that the problem exists but also to explain why it exists and offer solutions to address the problem based on the experiences of the participants and scholarly data outlined in the literature review. This study yielded several key findings. First, there is little to no formalized leadership training across all four departments. Second, many participants asserted that their success level as a leader was dependent upon informal training/development, which relies on how engaged and supportive their officers are. Third, nearly every participant asserted teamwork is crucial and is involved in every aspect of their fire service career, from responding to calls to everyday fire station life. Fourth, many participants found Kouzes and Posner's 5 practices of exemplary leadership relatable to effective fire service leadership and many of the emerging themes were associated with the 5 practices of exemplary leadership, which also aligns with servant, transformational, and situational styles of leadership.

Key words: Leadership, effective leadership, organizational culture, Five practices of exemplary leadership, followership

Approval Page

Dedication

There are a number of people that I owe a great debt of gratitude for their support, this includes family, friends, my brothers and sisters of the fire service that were willing to devote their time and honest thoughts in hopes to make our service better, and the Chiefs of the departments that supported this study. First and foremost, I thank my husband for his love and support because for many years he endured my countless hours of study and gave up our personal time to ensure that I could complete this arduous but important task. Jeff, you were always supportive even when I said you were not and I cannot ever explain how much I appreciate your support. Next I thank our children Kasey, Kiley, Kolton and Skylar for always supporting me, even if you did not know what I was doing. To my parents Pat and Ken, you have always been there for me and this venture was not any different. To my brothers John and Scott, sisters Jen and Leslie, and friends, you all know who you are as you have dealt with me over the years on vacations and get togethers as I continued to persevere through this process, I thank you all. Also, love and many thanks to my late mother-in-law, Carolyn. I expected her to be here for the completion of this work but God had a bigger plan. She was one of my biggest supporters, which was not an easy task. Our last vacation together was spent with me working on this dissertation, little did I know that we were on borrowed time. While I am greatly saddened that she in not here to celebrate, I know she is looking down on us all and is very proud of this accomplishment. To my brothers and sisters in the fire service, your support and valuable input was instrumental to the findings of this study. Thank you all! Finally, a huge thanks to my Chair Dr. Quinn and my Committee Dr. Maltzie, thank you for your time, feedback, and continued support. I would not have completed this without you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

This study explored if there is a lack of leadership training at varying levels of an employee's career that may result in poor leader development that hinders effective teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. While such a problem exists in many organizations this study focused on the United States (U.S.) fire service, specifically several large departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area. Cavnor (2018) explained that there are few studies that address effective leadership and leader development in U.S. fire service. Investigating leadership development in the fire service is crucial to ensure the creation of strong and confident leaders that can keep up with the complex environment encountered in the modern U.S. fire service. Therefore, exploring how different fire service organizations approach leader development, as well as identifying short falls and practical solutions to leadership issues, particularly several departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area, could benefit all fire departments across the United States. The evidence gathered from the stories of participants regarding their experiences supported the idea that effective leadership results from an ongoing developmental process of learning that requires education, training, and experience that results in personal growth. Therefore, the implementation of leadership training at varying levels of an individual's career will enhance effective leadership in the fire service.

According to Byrd (2017), department-wide leadership is not a well understood phenomenon amongst fire rescue and emergency services organizations across the United States. Therefore, an exploration of whether leadership training programs exist, as well as general leadership practices exercised by different fire departments is crucial to identify if there is a general link between accepted leadership practices that can translate to effective leadership training in fire departments across the nation. The exploration of the proposed research

phenomena started with defining the proposed research problem by providing the background of the problem and a problem statement. The foundational framework was also used to explain the purpose and nature of the study to the reader. These two areas allow the reader to understand the importance of the study and the reasons for the chosen research method. The conceptual framework provided a more detailed explanation of the concepts associated with this study. A definition of terms was also provided to ensure clarity throughout this paper. This section also provided assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and reduction gaps that exposed both the strengths and weaknesses associated with the research. A discussion regarding the implications for Biblical integrations and the relationship to the field added to the relevance of this study. The use of an exhaustive literature review offered support for foundation of the study and the themes that emerged from the stories regarding participants' experiences. The findings of the study showed that the research problem does exist within the four departments selected for this study. Also, the study supports the information in the literature review and makes a strong case that the research problem is likely to exist in many other departments across the United States.

Background of the Problem

The idea of leadership dates back to some of the earliest writings in human history, such as the Bible, Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513), and biographies of well-known leaders (Northouse, 2018). However, the concept of leadership has changed over the centuries and continues to evolve with changing cultural demographics and society. Northouse (2016) explained that currently, there are over 65 different theories of leadership. Therefore, no singular model identifies the perfect style of leadership, and more likely than not, experts will not agree on a singular leadership style (Northouse, 2016). This previous assertion supports the idea that accepted traits and behaviors of a leader is dependent upon cultural differences, whether

personal, geographical, or organizational (Schneider & Schröder, 2012). Leadership continues to be one of the most discussed topics in modern history and is the subject of many scholarly business studies as society attempts to remedy crucial issues associated with modern business (Dartey-Baah, 2021). Like many other organizations, the fire service attempts to understand the key to effective leadership.

While the term fire service is an accepted organizational term, there is not a singular entity that governs what departments must do regarding training and development of personnel. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provides some professional standards for fire department training, but the standards are merely recommendation for best practices (NFPA.org). Another example of an existing agency that provides training in many areas is the National Fire Academy (NFA). While the NFA offers classes for professional development such as executive leadership, these classes are optional and completed on one's personal time. Therefore, it is up to the senior management of each department across the United States to determine what they consider the most important training and education for their personnel. If the upper-level management of an individual department does not understand the importance of leadership training, they may miss the opportunity to develop leaders that engage in teambuilding behaviors necessary to complete operational objectives efficiently and effectively. Although there is a growing body of literature about leadership issues within the national fire service, the subject remains understudied. Few studies exist that attempt to identify specific problems plaguing fire service leadership, much less attempt to offer solutions to improve such issues (Cavnor, 2018). For example, Alyn (2011) suggested that the transformational style of leadership may be the fundamental component to successful leadership in the fire service. While transformational leadership may have a place in fire service leadership, it does not provide a continuing platform

for training that results in ongoing leadership development, nor is it an agreed upon leadership style within fire departments across the United States. Byrd (2017) explained that it is imperative to understand what characterizes effective fire service leadership, yet there is a lack of understanding of what constitutes effective department-wide leadership.

What continues to be overlooked is the importance of not just specific training and styles of leadership, but the continuous development of skills and abilities required to transform an individual into a strong and capable leader by creating a process that fosters ongoing development from the beginning to the end of a firefighter's career, regardless of rank or position. Warren (2018) asserted that the modern fire service must look for effective ways to maintain strong and effective leaders at all levels of the organization, both on and off the fireground. Warren (2018) further stated that the fire service is changing in profound ways and will continue to do so, making effective leadership development necessary. Continuous development of skills and behaviors based on education, experience, and training could be the key to fostering leaders that understand the importance of cooperation, collaboration and relationship building. However, regardless of the points made by Warren (2018), limited solutions were offered to address fire service leadership. For example, in his article Warren (2018) recommended professional development via reading books and participating in leadership programs. While the previous recommendations are good, they do not solve leadership issues from department to department. Fonseca (2017) suggested that while leadership courses are important, leadership development in the fire service should consider other avenues such as using mentors to help individuals figure out what they need to grow as leaders. The findings of this study supported Fonseca's assertion as 100% of the participants shared stories about their experiences with mentoring and how it contributed to their ability to become an effective leaders.

Fonseca (2017) and the findings of this study make a great case for a more comprehensive

approach toward developing leaders in the fire service. The fire service is just like any other

organization, they must depend on their people to ensure the efficient and effective

accomplishment of goals and objectives. Therefore, fire service leadership must build

relationships and invest time in making firefighters not only competent in their job skills but also

growing them into effective leaders, recognizing that their success yields organizational success

(Fonseca, 2017). Hughes (2016) elucidated that positive things happen when leaders focus on

mutual benefits, rather than individualistic gains and the desire for power; this is the power and

importance of effective leadership. Hughes assertion is strongly supported by the findings of this

study as 98% of the participants shared stories regarding how effective fire service leadership is

related to enabling others to act, encouraging the heart, inspiring a shared vision, and modeling

the way, which requires a relationship built on mutual respect and trust.

Problem Statement

        The general problem to be addressed is leadership training may not be provided at

varying levels of an employee's career which could hinder leadership development and

ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. Even though

effective leadership is considered a necessity for implementing a successful strategy, varying

types and sizes of organizations find it challenging to provide the right skills and abilities needed

to develop employees to rise to leadership positions within organizations, hindering

organizational success (Holt et al., 2018). Dartey-Baah (2021) supported the previous view by

explaining that organizations that do not adequately invest in practices such as leadership

training to develop and empower their employees are destined to fail because organizational

objectives may not be carried effectively. Vito (2018) explained that less than one-quarter of

nonprofit agencies in the United States consider the importance of succession planning, leading

to a lack of the advanced skillsets required for supervisory level and senior leadership positions,

resulting in ineffective leader skills, abilities, and behaviors. Effective leadership training goes a

long way in ensuring that employees understand the organization's vision and work toward

effectively achieving the goals required to complete the mission necessary for organizational

success (Dartey-Baah, 2021). Cavnor (2018) elucidated that fire service periodicals continue to

weigh in on deviant fire service practices related to poor leadership attributes. However, few

scholarly studies on leadership in the fire service exist, particularly in best practices for

structured leadership training that would develop today's fire service personnel into effective

leaders that inspire future generations in the service (Byrd, 2017). Hence, an exploration of what

types of leadership training exists within individual fire departments is essential. As Byrd (2017)

pointed out, a shared understanding of what constitutes department-wide leadership is non-

existent. Thus, exploring general leadership practices across different departments is crucial to

identify a general link between accepted leadership practices that can translate to departments

across the nation (Byrd, 2017). Therefore, the specific problem to be addressed is that leadership

training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington

D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect

teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of

Metro Washington D.C. firefighters at varying experience levels and ranks to determine if there

is leadership training throughout a firefighter's career that enhances leader development,

improving teamwork needed to achieve operational objectives. The use of a phenomenological

approach to explore the personal experiences of firefighters at varying ranks and different years of experience allowed for a deeper understanding of how leadership training has influenced their individual leader development throughout their career, ultimately affecting their ability to either function within, or lead a team toward achieving operational objectives. Since a phenomenological design allows the researcher to describe what the study participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomena, this design was crucial to the study since there is little to no scholarly research that supports the proposed research problem (Van de Ven, 2016). Therefore, the intent of this study was to explore if a problem exists so that future research will not only support the proposed problem but also provide solutions to rectify the problem.

The proposed problem was thoroughly researched using both an exhaustive literature review of current research and an in-depth study to explore if fire department leadership training programs exist, and if so, how such programs are implemented, and how a lack of these programs may affect leader development and effective teamwork that is needed to fulfill operational objectives successfully. Therefore, this research looked at several of the largest departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area to gain information that may help identify specific leadership issues and explain why such issues are occurring. Specifically, this study investigated if leadership training exists at varying levels of a firefighter's career, why and how firefighters may benefit from leadership training at varying levels of their career, how leadership development enhances teamwork and influences effective completion of organizational objectives and explain why poor leadership development may hinder operational objectives, ultimately reducing organizational success. Identifying a consistent set of issues shared across multiple departments of similar sizes and demographics could lead to a better understanding of specific leadership problems that exist and why such problems exist, thereby leading to a

solution or set of solutions that can improve leadership training and development practices. Providing solutions to enhance leadership and teamwork will result in the development of effective leaders that will enhance the fire service's ability to effectively and efficiently complete organizational objectives.

Nature of the Study

The nature of a study informs the reader of the methodology and design that a researcher will use (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative nature of this study involved a methodology and design that is inductive, emerging, and it built from the ground up based upon the collection and analysis of data that emerged from the experiences of those that share the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological design used the experiences of the participants to deeply explore the proposed problem from the perspective of those experiencing the research phenomenon (Adams & van Manen, 2017).

Discussion of Method

A research method is a strategy or technique used to collect data or evidence to understand a topic better or uncover new information (University of New Castle Library Guides, 2019). Williams (2007) elucidated that the chosen research method centers on the researcher's anticipation of the type of information needed to address the research question. The three types of methods used for conducting research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. A quantitative method is appropriate when the researcher wishes to gather numerical data to identify patterns or relationships, and generalizations, such as how much or how often something occurs, whereas the qualitative approach seeks to gather information about life experiences, emotions, or behaviors about complex problems related to social and cultural phenomenon and the meanings behind them (University of New Castle Library Guides, 2019). The mixed methods

combine both quantitative and qualitative methods; reporting, analyzing, and synthesizing statistical and textural data (University of New Castle Library Guides, 2019).

Considering that leadership often links to social and cultural behaviors, the qualitative method was the best research method for this study. Krapfl and Kruja (2015) proclaimed that leadership and culture are essential topics for any organization as a leader's actions influence culture more than any other single factor. A qualitative research method drove this study because it helped uncover cultural leadership issues that may affect the fire service by exploring the personal experiences and thoughts of various ranks and experience levels of fire service personnel. A qualitative approach and its associated design are the best approach when it is necessary to explore or investigate a problem that requires a complex and detailed understanding of an issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach also allows for an exploration of human experiences in both personal and social environments, which leads to a greater understanding of the factors that influence individual experiences (Gelling, 2015). Kelly (2017) explained that qualitative data offers a reliable method that helps solve real-world problems by observing the behaviors of others. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that a qualitative method is driven by a philosophical and interpretive framework that consists of the following five phases: the perspectives and experiences of the researcher, the philosophical assumptions guided by the researcher's beliefs, the researcher's choice of design, methods of collection and analysis, and an explanation of contributing factors that lead to the researcher's rigor, inferences, and use of findings. Qualitative research lends to a holistic account of a problem by reporting multiple perspectives, identification of a multitude of factors affecting the situation, ultimately rendering a big picture approach that best describes the complex factors associated with the stated problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Gelling (2015) elucidated that the development of research questions is one of the most crucial elements in any research design because it narrows the focus of the research, allowing for the starting point of a project. The use of interviews, observations, and surveys will help answer crucial research questions based on the experiences of those living the investigated phenomenon transparently, adding to the authenticity and trustworthiness of this qualitative research approach (Kelly, 2017). For example, exploring the thoughts and experiences of varying individuals within several large departments and at various levels of their career helped gain a deeper understanding of issues that may be hindering effective leadership within the fire service. Stake (2010) explained that professional knowledge depends on science, but each profession has a unique body of knowledge that separates it from scientific knowledge. After all, to truly understand human behavior, it is necessary to understand the world from the perspective of others (Gelling, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative approach was necessary to gain a deeper understanding of possible leadership and leadership development issues within the fire service by allowing for an exploration of multiple differing views from the newest and most inexperienced firefighters and officers to those that are the most senior and experienced.

Stake (2010) criticized that qualitative inquiry moves research away from cause and effect and moves it toward personal interpretation. However, considering that effective leadership attributes are often dependent upon organizational culture, a simple cause and effect approach will not be as beneficial as analyzing the organizational culture where a problem exists. While qualitative research faces criticism (e.g., Stake, 2010) for being interpretive, this researcher would argue that cause and effect based upon theoretical variables are not enough to explore the social issues associated with effective leadership. Therefore, the quantitative approach was not an appropriate method for this research study. However, the mixed method

may have its place for use in future studies on this subject. A mixed-method design could offer a

360-degree assessment of the issue, leading to an even more comprehensive approach that results

in the identification and implementation of the most appropriate solutions for addressing the

research problem (University of New Castle Library Guides, 2019).

Discussion of Design

A qualitative research method can consist of five different designs, phenomenological,

narrative, case study, grounded theory, and ethnography (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Simply put, a

research design is a way the researcher will conduct the study (Astalin, 2013). Astalin (2013)

asserted that a qualitative research design describes the purpose of research, the role of the

researcher, the stages of research, and the analysis method. The research design of this study

used a phenomenological approach to explore, understand, and discover essential information

about how to enhance leadership development within the fire service. Campbell (2014) explained

that a phenomenological design aids in the exploration of a subject by drawing on the

experiences of a group of individuals that share common experiences as they relate to a single

phenomenon. Although a phenomenological design can prove challenging due to its complex

philosophical, human science, and humanities traditions, it can offer deep insight into everyday

life and professional practices based on human experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017).

Creswell and Poth (2018) cited several challenges associated with this type of design which is

that its structure may prove too complicated for novice researchers, philosophical assumptions

are often abstract and difficult to communicate into words, and the participants must be carefully

chosen to ensure they are experiencing the phenomenon. However, this researcher's in-depth

experience in the fire service and the investigated phenomenon helps overcome the previously

cited issues. While such experience can also lead to bias, every effort to limit such bias was

made and explained. Creswell and Poth (2018) further expounded that this type of design uses a thorough exploration into individual experiences to identify and describe what participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomenon. Therefore, gaining insight from the experiences of firefighters at varying level of their careers was integral to both effectively answer each research question and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by providing both awareness and solutions to the problem. While Astalin (2013) explained that phenomenological research may not always offer definitive explanations, it will at least raise awareness and increase insight about the phenomena, which could lead to many future studies on this crucial topic. None of the other four designs, narrative, case study, grounded theory and ethnography offered an in-depth exploration of the proposed problem based on shared experiences of this important phenomenon, making the phenomenological design the best choice for exploring an issue so strongly associated with organizational culture.

A narrative design has a number of forms such as a focus on a phenomenon being studied, a narrative of an experience, or as a procedure for analyzing a story from the perspective of an individual experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the narrative design focuses on the thoughts, feeling, and experiences of either a singular person or small group of individuals. Since the intent of this researcher was to lay a foundation for future research, it was crucial to investigate the proposed problem using multiple perspectives from fire service personnel. Focusing on the experiences of a singular person or an exceedingly small group was not an effective way to prove that the proposed research problem exists, making a narrative design an inappropriate choice for this study. Also, a narrative design requires a researcher to have an in-depth and clear understanding of the individual's life, which helps ensure the proper interpretation of story as it told from the participant's point of view (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). The extensive knowledge required to appropriately translate the experience of a participant is not only time consuming, but also provides a limited point of view regarding the investigated phenomenon. On the other hand, a phenomenological approach allowed for multiple perspectives of individuals with various experiences regarding the research phenomenon. A phenomenological design not only allowed for a deeper exploration based on experiences from multiple views, but it also allowed for the identification of commonalities, which led to a deeper understanding of underlying issues associated with the phenomenon.

A case study is another design choice for conducting qualitative research. Both Yin and Stake are known as seminal authors on the subject of qualitative case study designs, and each defines case study differently (Knowles, n.d.). Yin (2018) viewed case study research as studying within the bounds of real-life experiences that exist within a contemporary context or setting. Whereas Stake defines case study research as a focus on the studied topic verses a methodological or comprehensive strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) shared Yin's thoughts on case study design and viewed it as a qualitative methodological approach that explores real-life experiences in a contemporary bounded system or multiple systems. Therefore, while a case study can involve either a singular or multiple case it requires numerous sources of information such as observations, interviews, audio or visual presentations, documents, and reports (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, as of now, there is not any research, documents, or visual presentations that prove that the proposed research problem exists. Since the main purpose of this research was to determine, based upon the experience of others, if the proposed problem does indeed exist, a phenomenological approach seemed more appropriate than a case study design. Price et al. (2013) explained that a phenomenon is "a general result that has been observed reliably in systematic empirical research" (Ch. 4, Phenomena, para. 1). A

phenomenological design allows the researcher to describe what study participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomena by identifying common themes, or experiences shared by participants (Van de Ven, 2016). Recognizing and identifying common occurrences helped reduce this researcher's bias by allowing the information to flow from participant experiences rather than just theories or ideas. Since this study intended to prove that an issue exists so that future research will not only support the proposed problem but also provide solutions to rectify the problem, a case study design did not seem appropriate because of limited research on fire service leadership. However, the use of a phenomenological design helped build a solid foundation for future studies on fire service leadership.

The grounded theory is a fourth type of qualitative research design that generates or discovers a theory or explanation by gathering data via the exploration of participant experiences, in other words, the theory is grounded by using participant data (Knowles, n.d.). The researcher uses participants that share the same experience in hopes to move past description and develop or discover a theory. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that the grounded theory has movement or an action that the researcher is trying to explain. This design concentrates on a process or actions with distinct steps, in hopes to develop a theory regarding the process or action (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although the grounded theory is inductive and emerging due to its qualitative nature, it is more systematic than any of the other qualitative designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that this design approach only yields a theory based on components such as a central phenomenon, conditions and contexts, casual conditions, strategies, conditions, contexts, and consequences. Since this study already had a central phenomenon and general research to support it, the grounded theory was not the appropriate design choice. Instead, the phenomenological approach was more appropriate because it allowed

for the exploration of the research problem from the lens of those experiencing it, resulting in the research needed to help make a case for the proposed problem, as well as offer solutions for rectifying the problem and provide a foundation for future research.

The fifth and final qualitative design choice is ethnography. Ethnography is both a process and an outcome (Knowles, n.d.). This type of design examines shared patterns of a large group of people known as a culture-sharing group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While the group can be small, this type of study usually examines a large group's interactions over a period of time, allowing researcher to describe and interpret the shared patterns of a culture, such as behaviors, beliefs, and values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Knowles (n.d.) explained that ethnography focuses on a complex and complete description of a culture, looks for regularities in behavior, uses theory to identify patterns in fieldwork, and relies heavily on participant views. The use of ethnography is intended to help the researcher understand how a culture works together (Knowles, n.d.). Ethnography has a very specific purpose, making its use appropriate when a researcher wants to develop a complex and complete description of a culture (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although this type of design may prove appropriate for future studies regarding leadership in the fire service, it is not the best design choice for this study. Instead, a phenomenological design is the best choice because it used the experiences of fire service personnel to help explore, understand, and discover essential information about how to enhance leadership development within the fire service.

Summary of the Nature of the Study

This study addressed the research problem using a qualitative method, which aided in gathering information regarding the complexities associated with effective leadership in organizations, particularly in Metro Washington D.C. fire departments. Since a

phenomenological study involves as many as 25 or more people if needed, it allowed for a selection of a group of people across several neighboring departments as participants, to determine if their experiences not only identify if the problem exists, but if such issues are similar or different from fire department to fire department (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological approach was the perfect design for this research because it promotes a deep learning, heightens perspectives, and increases thoughtfulness of the proposed issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological design allowed for a comprehensive exploration using the individual experiences of participants that share the investigated research phenomenon. The results of this study are a crucial steppingstone to future research. At the very least, the method and design of this study will bring awareness and greater insight about the research phenomena, as well as provide a foundation for future studies regarding the importance of developing effective leaders not only in the fire service, but in all types and sizes of organizations.

Research Questions

The use of several open-ended research questions helped guide the qualitative research. The open-ended research questions were meant to help this researcher gain a richer understanding of the proposed problem from the perspectives of firefighters and officers of varying backgrounds and experience. The research questions consisted of three main questions, followed by several subsequent questions. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1. How has a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of an individual's career affected the ability to accomplish organizational objectives?

RQ1.a. What constitutes leadership training?

RQ1.b. What is the difference between leadership training and leader development?

RQ1.c. What actions or behaviors contribute to a failure to implement leadership

training?

RQ1.d. What actions or behaviors could contribute to the effective implementation of

quality leadership training?

RQ1.e. How does a lack of effective leadership lead to poor morale?

RQ1.f. What are operational objectives, and why are they important?

RQ2. How can the implementation of leadership programs based on Kouzes and Posner's five

practices of exemplary leadership provide effective leadership training throughout an individual's

career?

RQ2.a. How can Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership instill

effective leadership actions in the fire service?

RQ2.b. What skills and abilities are required for effective leadership?

RQ2.c. What are three leadership theories that would offer a learning platform for

effective leadership in the fire service?

RQ2.d. How does leadership training enhance employee development?

RQ2.e. How does offering leadership training at varying levels of an employee's career

enhance leader development?

RQ 2.f. What role does effective leadership have on morale?

RQ3. How can continuous leadership training throughout one's career develop leaders that foster

engaged teams that effectively carry out the operational objectives of their respective

organizations?

RQ3.a. What is teamwork?

RQ3.b. Why is teamwork important?

RQ3.c. How does effective teamwork enhance organizational performance?

RQ3.d. What are the ramifications of poor or absent teamwork?

RQ3.e. What impact does ineffective teamwork have on organizational success?

RQ3.f. How does poor leader development hinder teamwork?

Discussion of Research Question 1

Research question 1 explored how a lack of leadership training at varying levels of a

firefighter's career (e.g., failure to align leadership behaviors with culture) may result in the

hindrance of operational objectives. This research also explored if fire rescue organizations are

implementing leadership training programs, as well as provide possible solutions for ensuring

effective leadership programs throughout one's career.

The Theory of Constraints (TOC) and Kaizen were discussed in the literature review to

provide possible solutions for issues with leadership training implementation. The TOC is a

business process improvement tool that promotes continuous improvement in many areas such as

marketing, management, delivery of services, and program implementation (Pacheco et al.,

2019). The TOC aids in identifying and solving poorly defined problems as well as identifies

cause-and-effect relationships that may generate constraints (Bauer et al., 2019). Bauer et al.

(2019) explained that the TOC is easily applied to both physical (a machine with lower capacity,

suppliers, people) and non-physical (the market, policies, procedures, standards and skills, daily

practices, thinking models) concepts linked to goal achievement.

Kaizen is another popular process improvement tool that focuses on changing processes

in small incremental steps, reducing wastes and increasing work performance (Marin-Garcia et

al., 2018). Marin-Garcia et al. (2018) elucidated that Kaizen identifies problems and their root

causes, provides solutions, and makes required changes in standards and operational methods to

ensure that resolved problems do not resurface. Applying continuous improvement process concepts may help identify underlying causes for the lack of leadership development at varying levels of a firefighter's career, such as an oversight of the many benefits associated with effective leadership.

Figure 1

Overview of Research Question 1 - RQ1

RQ1-How has a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career affected the ability to accomplish organizational objectives?

- Failure to align leadership behaviors to culture
- Implmentaion issues -Theory of constraints -Kaizen
- Organizations do not recognize the benefits of leadership training/programs
- Benefits of Kouzes and Posner as a leadership development framework
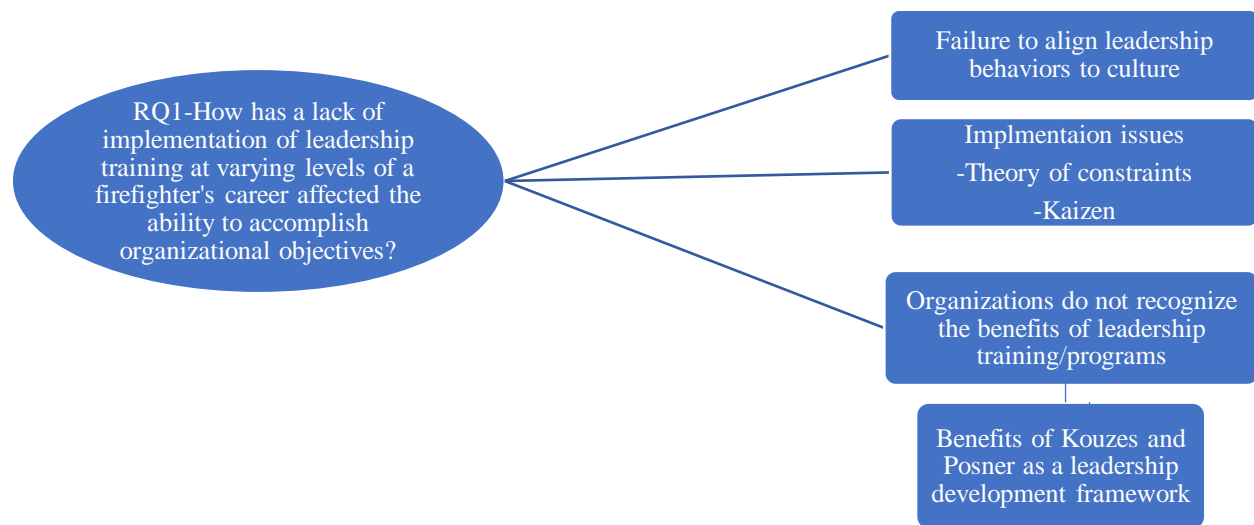
Discussion of Research Question 2

Research question 2 explored both the organizational and individual benefits of effective leadership. An investigation into the skills and abilities required for effective leadership helped set the stage for not only proving that leadership training is imperative for leadership development, but also for making recommendations about creating training programs that yield results. Concept two also explored the five practices of exemplary leadership as outlined by Kouzes and Posner (2017) as a learning platform that may align with current fire service culture.

This concept helped explain how leadership training will enhance employee development, specifically when leadership training is implemented at varying levels of a firefighter's career. Finally, a discussion on employee morale and the role it plays on effective leadership rounded out this concept. Researching such concepts helps understand why it is imperative to provide leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career.

Figure 2

Overview of Research Question 2 - RQ2
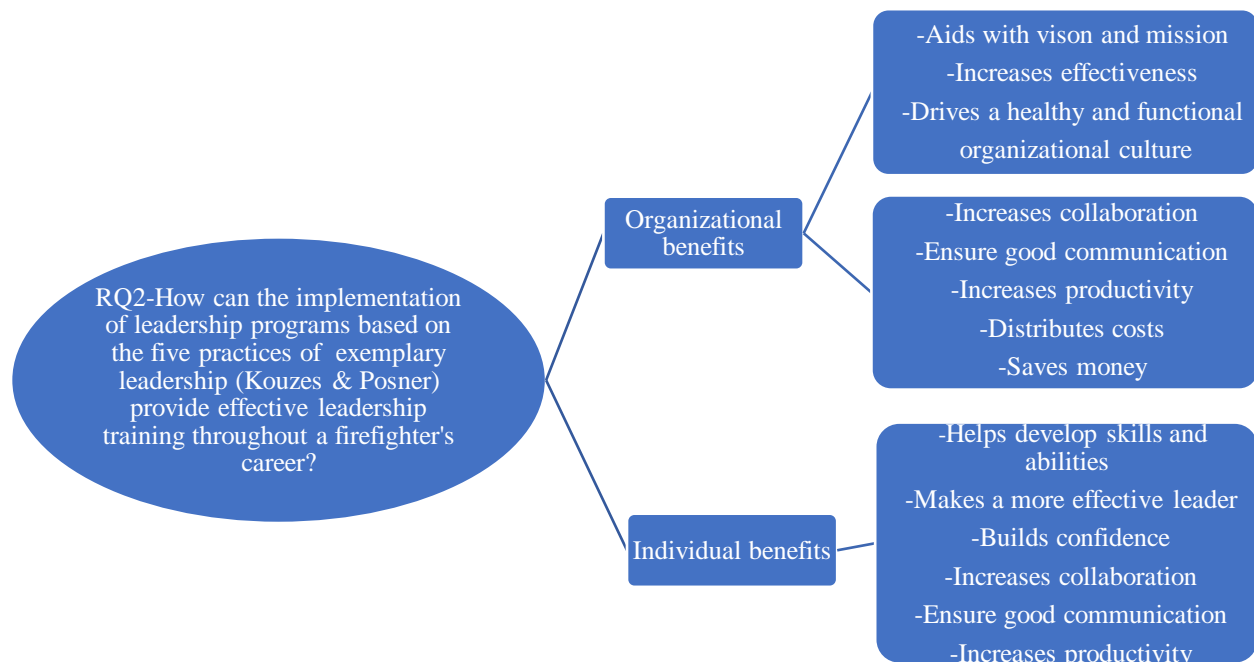
Discussion of Research Question 3

Research question 3 explored leadership more deeply than just the organization or the individual. The concept of teamwork addressed in this research question investigated why teamwork is crucial in carrying out operational objectives successfully. Starbird and Cavanagh (2011) explained that effective teamwork requires an alignment of organizational goals, which means that the organization and its employees must be on common ground. Therefore, Ord's Fluid Form was a crucial concept to consider how to ensure that an organization builds an

engaged team that ensures that goals are carried out effectively. Fluid Form refers to reducing the hierarchy and engaging employees at all levels to make decisions and move themselves into a position to make optimum impact at the right time, "The right people, in the right place, at the right time" (Starbird & Cavanagh, 2011, p. 222). This topic was discussed in-depth in the literature review.

This research question also considers the importance of understanding employee motivation, communication, collaboration, and the crucial role they play in ensuring effective teamwork, as well as its impact on effective leadership throughout the organization.

Figure 3

Overview of Research Question 3 - RQ3
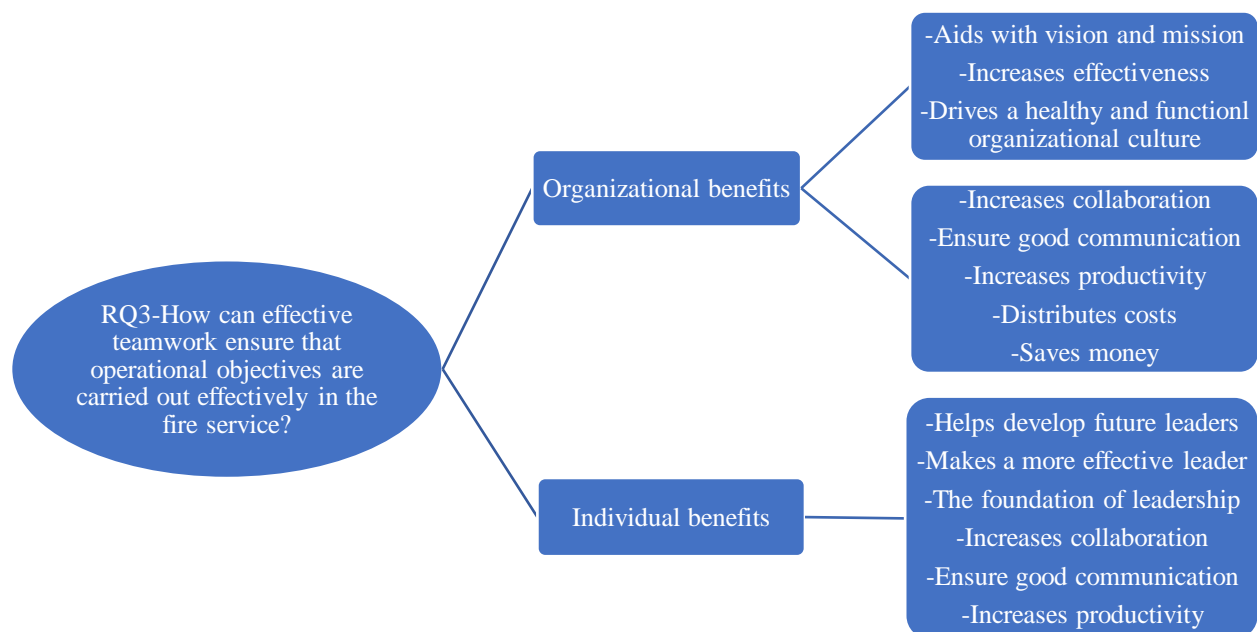
Discussion of Subsequent Research Questions

The subsequent research questions allowed for an in-depth understanding of each question and a consideration of additional theories that may aid in solutions to the proposed research problem. For example, would specific leadership styles such as Kouzes and Posner's

five practices of an exemplary leader offer a solid foundation for fire service leadership training

and development? Following such a framework helped ensure a deep exploration into the

proposed problem, resulting in not only a better understanding of the importance of developing

leaders, but also provided potential solutions to rectify particular leadership issues faced in the

modern fire service. Subsequent research questions include the following:

Research Questions 1

Figure 4

Overview of Subsequent Questions - RQ1

RQ1- How has a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of firefighter's career affected the ability to accomplish organizational objectives?

1.a. What constitutes leadership training?

1.b. What is the difference between leadership training and leader development?

1.c. What actions or behaviors contribute to a failure to implement leadership training?

1.d. What actions or behaviors could contribute to the effective implementation of quality leadership training?

1.e. How does a lack of effective leadership lead to poor morale?

1.f. What are operational objectives, and why are they important?

Research Question 2

Figure 5

Overview of Subsequent Questions - RQ2

RQ2- How can the implementation of leadership programs based on the five practices of exemplary leadership provide effeective leadership training throughout a firefighter's career?

- 2.a. How can Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary help instill effective leadership actions in the fire service?
- 2.b. What skills and abilities are required for effective leadership?
- 2.c. What are leadership theories that would offer a learning platform for effective leadership in the fire service?
- 2.d. How does leadership training enhance employee development?
- 2.e. How does offering leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career enhance leader development?
- 2.f. What role does effective leadership have on morale?

Research Question 3

Figure 6

Overview of Subsequent Questions - RQ3

RQ3- How can effective teamwork ensure that operational objectives are carried out effectively in the fire service?

- 3.a. What is teamwork?
- 3.b. Why is teamwork important?
- 3.c. How does effective teamwork enhance organizational performance?
- 3.d. What are the ramifications of poor or absent teamwork?
- 3.e. What impact does ineffective teamwork have on organizational success?
- 3.f. How does poor leader development hinder teamwork?

Conceptual Framework

Astalin (2013) explained that the conceptual framework is a key element of a qualitative study. The conceptual framework consists of a researcher's concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that will support and inform the body of the research (Astalin, 2013). The conceptual framework of this study helped explore and gain a deeper understanding of how a lack of implementation of leadership training throughout a firefighter's career may result in poor leader development that could hinder effective teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. An exhaustive literature review helped explore, answer, and support each research question and the subsequent research questions. Then, a study based on the experiences of chosen participants that have experience with the research phenomenon added to the research. Combing existing scholarly literature with the experiences of the participants supported the research concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories associated with the proposed research problem. The following diagram is the conceptual framework of this study:

Figure 7

The Conceptual Framework

Research questions

Interviews

Leadership
Fire service culture
5 practices (Kouzes & Posner)
Destructive leadership
Theory of followership
Teamwork
Mentoring
Coaching
Kaizen/TOC

Literature Review

Coding

50 individual interviews (23 firefighters – 27 officers)

Academic iournals

Professional pupublications

Breakdown core themes (NVIVO)

Business principles aid implementation
Credibility is the foundation of leadership
Fire service culture and leadership
How to achieve effective fire service leadership
Kouzes & Posner 5 practices align w/ culture
Departments offer little/no formal training
Most leadership training is informal
Results of no leadership training
Theories that build a foundation for effective leadership
Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
What followership looks like
Why process theories are effective in the fire service

Determine the presence or absence of formal leadership training

Model the way

Inspire a shared vision

Challenge the process

Enable others to act

Encourage the heart

Developmental?
Sporadic?
Absent?

Identify either the presence or absence of Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of an exemplary leader

Identify how the absence of Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices could affect teamwork and hinder objectives

Consider transformational, servant and situational leadership styles as the driving leadership principles

Ensure the phenomena is shared (screening questionnaire)

Validation

4 departments in the D.C. area

Validation

How do they align with Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices?

Process improvement tools for implementation?

Varying ranks and years of experience

Concept One: Key Concepts and Emerging Themes

The key concepts were a result of the responses from individual interviews and a focus group of participants who share the phenomenon related to the identified problem. The emerging concepts are determined by identifying consistent themes that emerge during interview questions and responses from the focus group. The themes were identified using coding, which is a method of classifying and sorting similar themes that arise during interviews (Stake, 2010). Stake (2010) explained that coding methods are common in all qualitative research to analyze and synthesize the perspective of the participants, increasing validation by limiting the researcher's bias.

Gilstrap (2007) asserted that leadership research has ranged from inventories of leadership attributes to advanced models of factor analysis, bringing research to a point where we are unsure where to go next. For example, analysis of the many leadership theories contains a complex web of connected and disparate methods and techniques that only lead to recommendations and not a solid framework that simplifies training and development of effective leaders (Gilstrap, 2007). Further research complications arise due to differing organizational culture and dynamics, which variables cannot be controlled (Gilstrap, 2007). The previously explained difficulty lends to the reasoning for approaching this study from the perspective of individuals that are experiencing the research phenomenon within their respective organizations. Since the Gilstrap (2007) article there are more and more leadership studies based on phenomenological designs. A phenomenological design allows for a deep examination into the phenomenon of how a lack of leadership training may affect firefighters without classifying or abstracting the proposed research problem (Saghafian & O'Neill, 2018). Further, since little to no research exists regarding the importance of effective leadership and leadership development in the fire service, its influence on teamwork and the role teamwork plays in completing

operational objectives, this type of design allowed for a deep exploration into several fire service organizations based on the experiences of fire department personnel. Therefore, exploring and identifying common themes based on the shared experiences helped determine how the lived experiences of firefighters and officers at different stages of their career may or may not experience leadership training that enhances leader development, which could affect teamwork and ultimately reduce the efficient and effective completion of operational objectives.

The findings of this study resulted from common themes that arose from participants' experiences with each interview question. The themes were derived from coding participants' responses, which resulted from transcribing and coding each interview using NVivo 12 software. NVivo 12 assisted with the exploration and identification of common themes across all the participant interviews. A total of twelve main themes arose from coding the lived experiences of each participant. Each theme consists of codes or sub-themes that support the central theme. The data were then used to provide a detailed description of the shared experiences regarding the research phenomenon of firefighters and fire officers across four different Metro D.C. fire departments. Each theme is discussed in-depth in Section 3 of this study. The themes and sub-themes are represented in the table below.

Table 1

Emerging Themes from Participant's Interviews

Certain Business Principles can Enhance the Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Fire service and business models	7	11
Hiring the right people	19	57
No funding for leadership training	11	15
Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership		
Accountability	36	126
Building competence matters	44	328
Consistency matters	38	269
Credibility matters	13	69
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30	93
Leaders are learners	21	111
Showing trust instills confidence	49	309
Competence matters	49	507
Confidence matters	48	480
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training		
Assigned a preceptor or mentor	2	4
Organizational culture	48	543
Destructive leadership	37	164
Traits, behaviors, and skills	13	16
Everyone has something to offer	42	176
Failed to create effective leaders	48	171
Military para-military comparison	18	30
Prepared me to be an effective leader	15	23
Pursued leadership development on my own	17	29
How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Coaching	15	70
Communication enhances effective leadership	49	392
Effective fire service leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives	39	253
Effective leaders have buy-in	35	114

Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50	395
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	40	290
Explaining why matters	45	255
Integrating leadership into fire service culture	49	357
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Leadership training should be a building block approach	50	269

Kouzes and Posner-Five Practices Align of Exemplary Leadership with Fire Service Culture

Challenge the process	46	161
Enabling others to act	49	395
Encourage the heart	49	308
Experienced an exemplary leader	25	59
Identifies with Kouzes and Posner	30	52
Inspire a shared vision	49	274
Model the way	49	327

Most Departments Offer Little or no Formal Leadership Training

Department is starting to offer leadership training	19	48
No formal leadership training throughout one's career	49	211
Successful leadership training programs	10	21
Training does not start until LT level	29	59

Most Leadership Training Is Informal

Assigned a mentor	2	4
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50	395
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Informal leadership training	47	377
Officers influence matters	50	452

Results of no Leadership Training

Ineffective leadership	44	174

Lack of ongoing training for leadership development	49	216
Succession planning	47	285
Existing programs are not effective	50	424

Styles/Theories that Build a Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Explained characteristics of servant leadership	50	327
Explained characteristics of situational leadership	50	324
Explained characteristics of transformational leadership	50	323

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service		
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50	171
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50	350

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service		
The willingness to follow matters	45	238
Accountability	36	126
Building confidence in others matter	44	328
Consistency matters	38	269
Credibility matters	13	69
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30	93
Trust instills confidence	49	309
Competence matters	49	507
Confidence matters	48	480

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service		
Acknowledge the success of others	34	75
Adaptability matters	37	185
Important to know your people	42	251
Leadership is a relationship	50	416
Motivation matters	49	277
People learn differently	22	49
Putting the right people in the right place	22	69
Effective fire service leaders put others first	45	61

Discussion of Concept Two: Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2016) explicated that while every leader is different because of who they are as an individual, they are also similar due to definable skills, abilities, and mindsets. The Kouzes and Posner (2017) writings and assertions result from 30 years of research based upon millions of participants world-wide. Therefore, the Kouzes and Posner (2017) Five Practices of Exemplary leadership: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart were the basis for investigating and explaining not only the importance of effective leadership, but how it benefits both the organization and employees alike. Other scholarly articles regarding the benefits of effective leadership and the importance of leader development were used to compare and contrast the concepts of Kouzes and Posner's (2016, 2017) studies and assertions.

Kouzes and Posner's (2017) five practices of exemplary leadership are the pillars for effective leadership for this study. This concept was the basis of the interview questions and served as the foundation for aligning the emerging concepts derived from the participants with the five practices of exemplary leadership, which has led to the success of many types and sizes of organizations around the world (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Concept two allowed for an exploration of whether effective leadership principals were being implemented via ongoing training programs within various fire departments. This concept was also used to determine if there is presence or absence of formal and effective leadership training, if such training is consistent or sporadic, and identify how the absence of the five practices of exemplary leadership could affect teamwork and hinder operational objectives.

Discussion of Concept Three Transformational, Servant Leadership and Situational Leadership

Transformational, servant and situational leadership are several theories or styles of leadership that are gaining popularity as preferred leadership styles. Therefore, these three concepts were used to identify and determine their alignment with the emerging themes and the five practices of exemplary leadership. A positive alignment of principles allows for organizations to consider transformational, servant and situational leadership as the preferred values of fire service culture. Using these three styles of leadership as a foundation for initial leadership training could offer a more consistent approach toward leadership development in the fire service as these styles showed strong alignment with the organizational culture of the four departments that took part in this study.

Discussion of Relationships Between Concepts

The emerging themes derived from the participant interviews resulted in a strong alignment between the key concept, research questions and the literature review. The conceptual framework explored each research question and the subsequent questions using Kouzes and Posner's (2017) idea of exemplary leadership practices. Kouzes and Posner's (2017) 30 years of research supports that leadership is not something that only a few chosen people are born with, but something we all possess if we work at it. A look at transformational, servant and situational leadership as a basis for leadership development in the fire service will also be considered. For example, does transformational styles of leadership help develop exemplary leaders in the fire service? The exhaustive literature review consisting of scholarly research and the in-depth study involving people who have experienced leadership in the fire service helped explore the research problem and address the research questions extensively. The study consisting of four

departments in the Metro D.C. area provided further support that Kouzes and Posner's five practices of leadership not only align with fire service culture but also with transformational, servant and situational leadership.

Summary of Conceptual Framework

The design of conceptual framework facilitated the most in-depth exploration of the proposed research problem in an organized and procedural manner. Imenda (2014) explained that conceptual frameworks provide evidence of academic standards and procedure, offer explanations of why the study is pertinent, and explain how the researcher will address and fill the gaps in existing literature. Therefore, the use of existing scholarly literature combined with the experiences of the participants supported the concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories associated with the proposed research problem, as well as identified gaps and biases that could hinder the validity and reliability of the research. The proposed framework helped assess and address each research question methodically, lending to the overall quality of this study.

Definition of Terms

Effective leadership: When a leader engages the right traits in the right place at the right time (Northouse, 2018).

Fire department: an organization in charge of preventing or putting out fires, esp. one working for a local government. Many departments also offer emergency medical response for the sick and injured (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Leader: One who possess the capacity to lead others (Northouse, 2018).

Leadership: Centered on communication between leaders and followers and consists of various traits, skills, abilities, and behaviors that inspire others to follow (Northouse, 2018).

Leadership ability: A person who has a natural or acquired capacity (or both) to lead others (Northouse, 2018).

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA): The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is a global self-funded nonprofit organization, established in 1896, devoted to eliminating death, injury, property, and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. The NFPA offers suggested codes and standards, which are only enforced if states and local agencies chose to accept and enforce such standards. However, governmental grants and other sources of funding usually require NFPA compliance (NFPA.org).

Operational objectives: The objectives include all safety aspects for fire fighters that include response time to all fire emergencies (Carvalho et al., 2006).

Servant leadership: A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the top of the pyramid, servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible (Greenleaf, 2016).

Situational leadership: Focuses on leadership in situations, asserting that different situations require different types of leadership – meaning a leader must adapt their leadership style to both situation and individual (Northouse, 2018).

Teamwork: The ability for people to work together to accomplish a task (Northouse, 2016).

Transformational leadership: Considered as a new leadership approach, it describes leadership as a process that changes or transforms people and organizations (Northouse, 2018).

US fire service: This term refers to all fire departments, career, and volunteer, in the United States that engage in firefighting activities as outlined in the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) minimum professional standards and codes for safe firefighting activities.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions

Wargo (2015) explained that research assumptions are statements presumed to be true, often only temporarily or for specific purposes, such as building a theory or idea. This study was based on four specific assumptions, as well as several philosophical assumptions associated with all qualitative research. The first assumption was based on the expectation that all participants will answer each interview question in an open and honest manner. All quality research relies heavily on the honest responses of participants and other scholarly research to ensure that the most accurate information is used to draw on conclusions and suggestions for future research. Participant honesty often links to how comfortable they feel answering the questions (e.g., the responses will be anonymous and will not result in any negative repercussions; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this assumption gains strength by using confidentiality agreements, providing thorough explanation of the research process, as well as detailed explanations of all ethical practices and procedures.

Assumption two is that all participants have experienced the research phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) explicated that a defining feature of a phenomenological design is an emphasis on exploring the experiences of a group that shared the phenomenon being researched. Therefore, since the problem statement and the research questions are designed to explore the research problem based on experiences of a group of individuals, it is naturally assumed that all participants are chosen based on their understanding and experiences associated with

investigated phenomenon. This assumption was enhanced by creating an inclusionary survey that helped choose the best participants for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The third assumption was that each participant had a sincere interest in participating in the research and possessed no ulterior motives. Ulterior motives may lead to inaccurate information that will jeopardize the validity of a study (e.g., desiring to participate in a study even though one is not qualified). For example, participants may not deliberately lie about the information that they give the researcher once selected, but they may feel motivated to answer selection criteria questions in a way that would ensure that they meet the criteria for the study, even though they may not (Chandler & Paolacci, 2017). However, the researcher can only do their best to create the inclusion criteria and provide participants with the expected ethical guidelines of the study trusting that participants are participating in the study for all the right reasons.

The fourth and final assumption consist of philosophical assumptions that are a crucial element of qualitative research. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that four philosophical assumptions exist in qualitative research. Therefore, these four philosophical assumptions were also associated with this study. The first is the ontological assumption, which suggests that multiple realties exist, therefore, individuals participating in this phenomenological study will view their experiences differently (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, the epistemological assumption is that a researcher will gain subjective evidence by observing participants in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Third, is the axiological assumption where the researcher discusses values and biases, as well as includes their interpretation concurrent to the participant's views (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final philosophical assumption is the methodology. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a qualitative methodology process is inductive, emerging, and

shaped by the researcher's collection and data analysis. Therefore, every effort was made to approach the research consistently, by following a qualitative process that conveys the experiences of the participants in a complete manner, while limiting researcher bias by presenting an open and honest expression of the values and bias associated with the research.

Limitations

There were at least several limitations of this study. The first limitation of this study started with its qualitative nature. Each of the four previously discussed philosophical assumptions could lend to limitations of this study. For example, from an ontological view, how the researcher interprets the multiple realties of the individual participant's experiences is dependent upon the researcher's point of view (e.g., positivist or postpositivist; Scotland, 2012). Next, the subjective nature of a qualitative study (epistemological view) and the researcher's values and biases (axiological view) also present certain limitations. Stake (2010) explained that the disdainers of qualitative studies complain that its subjective nature makes it unscientific and suggest that such an approach is slow, tedious, and too personalistic. However, subjectivity is essential to understanding human behavior and the issues associated with this type of inquiry is quelled when the researcher is aware of, and states, his or her intellectual shortcomings (e.g., personal bias; Stake, 2010). These limitations are overcome by first acknowledging that they exist and then explaining the possible impact that they will have of the results and conclusion of the study (University of Southern California, 2019). Acknowledging limitations is a great way to make suggestions for future studies (University of Southern California, 2019).

Another limitation of the study was dependent upon how honest and open the participants are when answering each interview question. Chandler and Paolacci (2017) explained that participants who do not meet prescreening criteria (e.g., have experienced the research

phenomenon) is problematic and could jeopardize the validity of the study. For example,

fraudulent responses result in validity problems that lead to incorrect conclusions, and render the

research invalid (Chandler & Paolacci, 2017). This researcher understood that such an issue may

exist. However, it is key to not only discover new knowledge but to also confront assumptions

and explore what we do not know, making participant experiences an integral part of this

research (University of Southern California, 2019). The first-hand experience and in-depth

knowledge of the fire service aided this researcher with the proper selection of participants,

understanding their responses, and correctly assessing and synthesizing the participant responses

into the study.

      One last limitation to consider was the overall demographic of the study. Good research

is based on a diverse group, randomly sampled for their responses. However, a qualitative

phenomenological approach requires that each participant has experienced the research

phenomenon, limiting the ability to randomly sample participants. Therefore, the selection

process could appear as biased. The reduction of bias started with making sure that the reader

understands the premise of the qualitative phenomenological approach. For example, Shah

(2019) expounded that qualitative research is an exploratory scientific method used to describe

things, related characteristics and meanings, and observations and interpretations. Therefore, the

nature of this style of research relies heavily on interviews, participant observation, and focus

group discussions (Shah, 2019). Since the phenomenological approach is based upon the

experiences of individuals that have shared the phenomenon, making the selection of particular

participants is a must for this type of research. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed to find

individuals that have experienced the research subject the most, and then making selections

based on this information allowed for the reduction of bias in the selection process.

Delimitations

Delimitations can arise based on the researcher's choices, from the method and design to choosing participants from the study. Unlike limitations that result from the implicit issues associated with the method and design, delimitations are a direct result of the researcher's choices (Simon & Goes, 2013). Simon and Goes (2013) explained delimitations as characteristics that arise from the limitations within the scope of the study and conscious inclusionary and exclusionary decisions that the researcher makes during the development of the research plan. For example, if a researcher chooses a participant because he or she believes that the individual will likely support the expected or desired conclusion of the research, this results in a delimiting factor. However, a delimitation does not result when a researcher merely chooses one participant over the other, so long as he or she is not purposely eliminating or including experiences shared by differing individual experiences. Since the phenomenological approach uses a smaller number of participants that experienced the investigated problem, and the research unfolds based upon individual experiences, no delimitations are expected to be encountered in the study. This researcher eliminated any chances of delimitations by openly expressing any concerns, limitations, biases, or any other issue that arose during the research.

Significance of the Study

Effective leadership is a topic of discussion in almost every organization whether it is public, for profit, or nonprofit. Therefore, exploring if and why there is a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career, and how it results in poor leader development that hinders effective teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives could provide further insight into a larger problem. The Global Human Capital Trends 2014 survey published by Deloitte University Press, identified the need for leaders at all levels of an

organization, as one of the 12 most critical issues facing all organizations (Trapp, 2014). The

Deloitte (2014) survey also discovered that leadership "remains the number one talent issue

facing organizations around the world", with 86% of respondents to the survey rating it "urgent"

or "important" (as cited in Trapp, 2014, para. 2). Therefore, this study is significant to the fields

of business and leadership because it may help prove the importance of implementing leadership

training at varying levels of an employee's career as a crucial framework for developing

effective leaders at all levels of an organization. Although many leadership theories exist and

new theories are continually emerging, people continually debate not only about the best style of

leadership but also about the best definitions regarding leader and leadership (Kort, 2008). While

leadership theories offer ideas about effective leadership, they do not necessarily easily transfer

in practices or behaviors (Bayar & Kerns, 2012). Trapp (2014) echoed this assertion when he

explained that organizations must realize that developing leaders will require more than just

training programs. Leader development should consist of many types of opportunities that

broaden individual abilities and skills via a combination of training, education, mentoring, and

coaching (Trapp, 2014). Kouzes and Posner (2017) explicated that leadership does not only fall

into the possession of a chosen few, instead, it is something that we all have if we are open to

continuous growth and development. The previous assertions of Kort (2008), Trapp (2014),

Bayar and Kerns (2012), and Kouzes and Posner (2016) provided support for the significance of

this study as it pertains to not only identifying a problem, but also assists in offering solutions for

developing effective leaders. For example, a lack of training at varying levels of a firefighter's

career may result in poor leader development that hinders effective teamwork required for

carrying out operational objectives. This study brought awareness of the previously cited issue,

as well as offered solutions that will enhance effective leadership not only in the fire service, but any organization that wishes to enhance a leader's effectiveness.

Discussions and writings on the topic of leadership in the fire service continually emerge in fire service magazines, on websites, and in blogs. However, there does not appear to be much progress toward defining what leadership means in the fire service or how to implement continuous leader development throughout one's career, at least not from a scholarly standpoint. For instance, an opinionated article written in Fire Rescue 1, *13 things that make fire department leaders great*, offers a list of what it means to be a great leader in the fire service, yet there was no discussion about how to accomplish such a list (Buckman, 2017). There appears to be much discussion about being a good leader and exercising leadership in the fire service, yet there also appears to be minimal action to provide the tools needed to develop effective leaders, which highlights, yet another reason for the significance of this research. Lamar (2017) asserted that training and development programs, especially those centered on transformational leadership may lead to optimized outcomes in the fire service. However, such an outcome requires upper-level management to adjust their leadership training efforts if they wish to address the challenges facing the modern fire service (Lamar, 2017).

Unfortunately, many departments are failing to offer any formal leadership. This study concluded that that 98% of all participants, officers and firefighters, had not experienced formal leadership training throughout their careers. For example, all four departments failed to offer formal leadership training throughout a firefighter's career, and if and when they did, there was a complaint that the training was sporadic, started too late in people's careers, and was said to be nonexistent unless one aspired to be an officer. Also, this study showed that strong leaders engaged in teamwork enhanced the efficient and effective completion of operational objectives,

making this study relevant not only to fire service leaders, but leaders of all types and sizes of

organizations. One hundred percent of the participants' agreed that teamwork was essential in all

that they do, from life in the firehouse to mitigating the most complex incident. Furthermore, this

study makes a case that adding leadership training at varying levels of a one's career could yield

more effective leaders as 100% of the participants shared stories that explained how a building

block approach enhanced their leadership growth at varying point of their career.

Reduction of Gaps

Research gaps are areas in research literature that have not yet been explored or are

underexplored and can consist of the sample population, research method, data collection, data

analysis, or any other research variables or conditions (Northcentral University Library, 2019).

Currently, there is little research regarding how leadership training at varying levels of an

employee's career can enhance leader development throughout every level of an organization.

There is even less literature that directly focuses on developing effective leaders in fire

departments and the repercussions associated with a lack of leadership training and development.

Byrd (2017) explained that while some studies exist regarding fire ground and incident command

leadership, there are not empirical studies that address department-wide organizational

leadership. Therefore, this study fills in some gaps in the current leadership studies by addressing

the importance of developing effective leaders via a building block approach that offers

leadership training at differing levels of one's career (e.g., varying promotional or supervisory

levels). Addressing such gaps will expand beyond the fire service as such findings will have

applications in all types and sizes of organizations. While it was critical to conduct an exhaustive

literature review to truly identify research gaps, the phenomenological design of this study

fostered great insight based upon the experiences of the chosen participants. The information

gleaned from both the literature review and study participants provided a vast amount of

information that can help identify and fill gaps in existing research.

Implications for Biblical Integration

The Bible serves as a guide to ensure we understand and carry out God's will. The idea of

leadership is represented throughout the Bible starting with the Book of Genesis, which means

that part of God's plan for us is to lead others as He would. Scripture shows us both the good and

bad traits and behaviors associated with the term leader. Examples such as King Ahab and the

Herods teaches us that effective leadership requires more than authority, title, or rank. Instead,

leadership is about inspiring others to do the right thing, which requires humility and integrity.

Jesus is the epitome of an effective leader as he was humble and kind and placed the needs of

others above his own, Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count

others more significant than yourselves" (ESV). Following Jesus' example of leadership outlines

the importance of building effective leaders. Therefore, Scripture strongly supports the concepts

and theories of this study, from growing and learning from our mistakes and the mistakes of

others to fulfilling God's purpose by serving as stewards of His creation. Effective leadership

requires continuous introspection and retrospection to ensure personal growth that leads to

understanding a higher purpose, which is to honor God's plan and serve others above ourselves

(Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). John's gospel chronicles the growth of Jesus' exemplary leadership

and provides lesson after lesson that leadership is about continuous learning and putting others

needs above our own (AllAboutJesusChrist.org, 2019). God created us in His own image to be

stewards of creation by serving others and the profession of firefighting is one of many ways to

protect and serve in the way God intended. Therefore, ongoing leadership training is the key to

developing leaders that are humble and serve the greater good by putting others needs above

their own, making this study imperative to ensure the continuous growth and development of each and every individual in the fire service.

Relationship to Field of Study

This study investigated more than defining leadership or settling on a singular theory that represents the best way to lead. This research looked not only at the positive outcomes associated with effective leadership, but also how to develop effective leaders. A leader is not born as the Great Man Theory once suggested. Instead, Kouzes and Posner (2016) posited that leaders are born, and since we are all born, everyone possesses the basic abilities to lead. Leadership is a developmental process that must include education, training, and experiences to ensure the continuous personal growth required to build relationships with others. Therefore, it is imperative to the field of leadership studies to provide evidence that will support the importance of leadership development verses agreement on a universal definition or a singular style or theory that is most effective. Kouzes and Posner (2016) asserted that the greatest challenge to exemplary leadership is to overcome myths, misconceptions, and false assumptions associated with what leadership is and is not. Therefore, this study is a step towards overcoming myths, misconceptions, and false assumptions by exploring how and why organizations such as fire departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area, regardless of their definition or chosen leadership theory, should ensure that leadership training is an ongoing developmental process.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

This study hopes to bring awareness about the lack of implementation of developmental leadership programs and offer solutions that will enhance effective leadership in not only the fire service, but other types of organization as well. By recognizing and addressing gaps in current research this study can help open new inquiry and findings that will help enhance effective

leadership in every organization. The implications associated with the Biblical integration of this study offer a strong link between effective leadership and carrying out God's plan for each of us, adding to the significance of this research. There is also a plethora of research that suggests that effective leadership is a requirement to ensure that an organization is successful in achieving their goals and objectives, adding further to the significance of this study. Therefore, the idea that effective leadership relies upon an ongoing developmental process that requires education, training, and experience directly relates to both business administration and leadership.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This study looked at possible issues associated with leader development within organizations, particularly the United States (U.S.) fire service. The study involved a qualitative inquiry of several fire departments in the Metro D.C. area exploring their attempts to establish leadership training that results in effective leadership development at every level of the organization. The literature review consists of an exhaustive examination of three main research questions that explore leadership development, starting with a broad organizational perspective that shows implications for all types and sizes of organizations. The literature review also specifically explains how similar issues are affecting fire service departments across the United States, and finally it discusses the specific findings of the study and how they relate to other research findings. The three main concepts looked into why there may be a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career, why it is imperative to implement leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career, and how effective leadership enhances teamwork, which is essential to carrying out operational objectives effectively in the fire service. The study focused on several departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area which helped round out the research regarding the three main concepts

that address the following proposed research problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within the Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The exploration of each concept used current literature consisting of peer-reviewed studies, periodicals, books, and professional publications that focus on leadership, leadership practices, organizational behavior and concepts, training and development, leadership, and organizational culture and behavior within the U.S. fire service. This exhaustive review of current research not only showed that the proposed problem exists but also offered solutions for addressing and correcting leadership development, and how to successfully implement the right training programs in fire departments across the United States.

Effective Leadership Drives Organizational Performance

Effective leadership is a crucial element to completing goals and objectives that affect organizational performance and sustainability (Kollenscher et al., 2018). For example, 78% of the participants in this study explained that effective leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives. No matter how successful an organization is, it is only a matter of time before the ramifications of poor leadership will result in a negative effect on organizational outcomes. Steve Jobs serves as an example of the adverse consequences resulting from poor to absent leadership skills, behaviors, and actions. Kollenscher et al. (2018) explained that although Apple's strategy was compatible with the market, it was Jobs' self-centeredness and ego that resulted in the overreliance on his intuition leading to the frequent dismissal of anyone else's opinions, often leaving him blind to the facts. Jobs' poor behavior ultimately resulted in his resignation, proving that no matter who you are or where you are in the hierarchy, respect is a two-way street. Luckily, Jobs' realized the error of his ways and returned to Apple with a new attitude and a

better leadership approach, one focusing on the integration of leadership throughout the organization (Kollenscher et al., 2018). As the founder of Apple figured out, introspection into one's behaviors is the key to personal growth, which is a must in leader development. Steve Jobs' also realized the benefits of actively engaging others in decisions about organizational goals and objectives. A culture of collaboration is paramount for effective leadership. Collaboration is the catalyst for organizational success because it helps build relationships and establishes contacts necessary to take advantage of the next opportunity or address needs and challenges as they arise (Iacono, 2015).

Although many organizations budget a large amount of money for leadership training programs, most still feel that such programs are ineffective, which calls into question the effectiveness of current leadership development initiatives (Lacerenza et al., 2017). Organizational leaders need to understand that a commitment to their employees helps with personal growth, resulting in a maximum contribution to the organization (Leheney, 2008). Singh and Vanka (2019) emphasized that people matter, making it imperative that organizations acknowledge employee needs, engage in connecting with their employees, and make a commitment to their leadership development. Regardless of the type of organization, leadership development must be a top priority to ensure the accomplishment of organizational objectives. Therefore, each department within the U.S. fire service must take every opportunity to increase organizational success by implementing training programs that yield leadership development throughout a firefighter's career, from entry-level training of the most junior personnel to the highest level of chief officer. However, many departments across the United States may be failing at developing effective leaders, resulting in reduced organizational effectiveness. The findings of this study supported the previous assertion as 78% of the participants explained that

successfully achievement of goals and objectives require effective leadership, yet 98% have not received formal leadership training throughout their career, if at all. Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained that effective leadership practices require continuous learning that results in developing and honing a leader's skills, behaviors, and actions.

The National Fire Academy (NFA) and Leadership Training

The National Fire Academy (NFA) is run by the US Fire Administration (USFA), which is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The intention of creating the USFA was to support and strengthen fire and emergency medical services (EMS) and stakeholders to prepare, prevent, mitigate and respond to all hazards (US Fire Administration, n.d.). According to the USFA (n.d.) website, The NFA offers free training courses and programs in an effort to enhance the ability of fire and emergency services professionals to effectively deal with fire and related emergencies. The delivery of courses consists of classes at the NFA campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland, online classes, and classes at varying locations across the United States (U.S. Fire Administration, n.d.). While the courses are helpful, it is up to each individual if they wish to participate. Therefore, there is not a set standard that translates to all departments in the United States. While the term fire service relates to all departments that engage in fire rescue services, there is not an organized entity that strictly governs the training and development of the many departments that exist across the United States. Therefore, each department and its group of leaders have their own ideas concerning the types of training and development that they believe best suits their fire service personnel. Like many other organizations, the topic of leadership in the fire service is on the rise. While most of the writings and discussion about leadership in the fire service are opinions based on rank and experiences highlighted in online forums and fire service magazines, there is some scholarly

research that is starting to surface on the topic of fire service leadership (Buttenschon, 2016; Lamar, 2017). Scholarly research such as Buttenschon (2016) and Lamar (2017) started a foundation for further research that can help establish best practices for fire service leadership and the development of training programs that will develop effective leaders in departments across the United States.

Limited Scholarly Research on Effective Leadership in the U.S. Fire Service

The success of any organization depends on the quality of its leaders, making effective fire service leadership critical to ensure safe and efficient execution of operational objectives (Buttenschon, 2016). However, it is difficult to find scholarly studies that address effective leadership, especially in the area of leadership development, in the U.S. fire service. Buttenschon (2016) supported the previous assertion when she explained that research on leadership development in the fire service is limited. Buttenschon (2016) offered one of the few studies that attempt to address leadership in the fire service. Unfortunately, the study fell short of explaining what effective leadership in the fire service looks like and how to achieve it.

The Buttenschon (2016) study interviewed only 12 fire service leaders that were mostly officers with an average of 30 years of experience, and half the participants were retired within the last 5 years of the study. This group of participants represented a tiny portion of today's fire service, not to mention how leadership theory and studies have evolved over the last 30 years. However, Buttenschon (2016) serves as one of the few platforms to build on future studies. The emerging themes of Buttenschon (2016) did represent a need for addressing formal training within individual departments, and this study begins to fill the gaps in research regarding leadership development in the fire service.

Based on participant feedback, the Buttenschon (2016) study asserted that leadership

training exists informally and formally in the fire service: informal (personal experience) training

at the department level and formal training at the state level through agencies such as the NFA.

The findings in this study supported the previous assertion regarding informal training as 94% of

the participants described leadership training as an informal process and 100% asserted that their

leadership growth was the product of informal mentoring. Therefore, it was found that formal

programs may exist sporadically but are not credited for one's leadership growth. Furthermore,

30% of participants shared experiences where their department has prepared them to be effective

leaders but 100% explained that any training that does exist has not been effective for ongoing

leadership development. However, it is important to note that when people referred to "their

department" it was not that upper management provided specific leadership training, instead, it

was based on their informal experiences throughout their career. Such a finding is alarming and

makes a strong case for the need for departmental training programs that provide individuals

with ongoing training that develops a leader throughout their career. Buttenschon (2016) failed to

address the fact that it is difficult for most to attend NFA classes unless they are both willing and

able to either travel to Emmitsburg, MD, or hope that the desired class is available online or

taught somewhere close to where the desired participant resides. Also, while some NFA training

courses may address leadership (e.g., the Executive Fire Officer program (EFO), they are limited

and may still fall short on aligning the most effective leadership actions to departmental culture

(e.g., there are cultural differences that exist based on geographical locals across the U.S.).

Furthermore, the demographics chosen for the Buttenschon (2016) study tend to support

leadership based on a hierarchical position, such as rank, rather than an ability to develop it

through training and experience. Instead, drawing from Kouzes and Posner's (2017) years of

research, the philosophy that leaders are born, and we are all born, means that everyone has the capacity to lead, it just takes training and experience to develop into an effective leader. While some training is better than none at all, sporadic training is likely less effective than a building block approach that helps a firefighter develop their leadership skills as they grow and promote within their respective departments.

The Lamar (2017) research looks at transformational leadership as a basis for leadership development of fire service Lieutenants. The problem with focusing on a singular approach toward leadership training is that it misses the holistic approach required for effective leadership. For example, effective leadership requires considerations of both the leader and the follower resulting in a growing consensus that a variety of leadership approaches are needed to address and respond to the uniqueness of both leaders and followers (Lovelace et al., 2019). Therefore, Lovelace et al. (2019) communicated the need for more nuanced perspectives that will help us better understand how different types of leadership styles result in varying outcomes, increasing the tools in a leader's toolbox. For example, effective leadership requires more than understanding theories. The development of skills and abilities that enhance effective leadership behaviors such as collaboration and teamwork are a must if one wishes to become an effective leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Northouse (2018) explained that leadership consist of many things such as traits, abilities, skills, behaviors, relationships and a process of influence, which results in varying perspectives regarding effective leadership. Leadership theory perspectives consist of leader-centric (e.g., charismatic leadership and transactional), follower-centric (e.g., transformational and servant leadership), or a combination of both (e.g., situational leadership). However, effective leadership requires understanding the behaviors of both the leader and the follower and applying practices

that foster the leader and follower relationship (Northouse, 2016). Therefore, effective leadership

will require a blend of approaches, skills and abilities that results in ongoing personal growth and

development. Lamar (2017) asserted that leadership training must not exist only at the upper

management ranks and suggested that that the transformational style of leadership must start at

the lieutenant level to achieve organizational effectiveness. While transformational leadership is

a popular and relevant leadership style, effective leadership requires more than a single style of

leadership.

     First, leadership training must consist at every level of an organization as waiting for

training at a specific rank or title, more likely than not, hinders overall leadership development.

Lovelace et al. (2019) echoed this assertion when they explained that promoting an

understanding of leadership across all levels of an organization and at varying stages of an

individual's career is likely to yield positive organizational outcomes. Second, while a

transformational leadership style offers some benefits, a one size fits all approach to leadership

does not exist. Effective leadership requires understanding what a leader has to do to encourage

followership, making the transformational leadership a one-sided approach that if relied upon as

the standard of leadership may cause up and coming leaders to miss other crucial elements of

leadership such as relationship building (Uhl-Biena et al., 2014). According to Kouzes and

Posner (2017), relationship building is paramount as it helps a leader better understanding why

someone is willing to follow, allowing a leader to adjust his or her behaviors appropriately. This

study supported the previous assertion as 100% of participants described stories that explained

that effective leadership requires a relationship between a leader and follower. Some areas that

participants identified as actions that inspire people to follow in their department are

accountability, building confidence, consistency in actions and behaviors, establishment of

credibility, willingness to acknowledge mistakes, imparting trust in others, being competent, and being confident in one's self as well as showing confidence in others. As Lamar (2017) found in his work, the majority of his participants (fire service lieutenants) suggested that more mentoring and coaching is needed in the fire service, citing that it helps develop relationships that enhance follower development, which further supports both the assertions of this researcher, Kouzes and Posner (2017), and Uhl-Biena et al. (2014) that effective leadership requires establishing and fostering relationships between the leader and the follower. This study supported the previous assertion as 100% of the participants shared stories regarding the importance of mentoring in their personal leadership development and 30% discussed how coaching could benefit leadership training in their department.

The previous assertions are not to say that some fire departments are not taking steps to develop leaders within their organizations. However, such an important topic should not rely on those that are revered by title, rank, and time on the job. Nor should leadership training consist only of highly debated theories that only result in bits and pieces of what leadership is. Instead, effective leadership starts with understanding what effective leadership is, aligning organizational values with leadership actions, and then providing the proper training and tools that will foster ongoing leadership development throughout each person's career, regardless of rank or title. Kouzes and Posner's (2017) years of research and findings are evidence-based and provide a solid base for understanding effective leadership and what it takes to achieve it, from both a leader and follower perspective, and absent the focus of leadership theories that result in a great debate between scholars. Mr. Kouzes and Mr. Posner's ongoing studies yield information from people around the world that actively engage in effective leadership practices, moving away from theory and focusing on feedback from effective leaders that are getting the job done.

A Deeper Look at Leadership

A Brief History of Leadership Theory

Leadership theory started in the late 1800s with the Great Man Theory, which suggested that great leaders are born. Thomas Carlyle developed the Great Man theory in 1840 under the premise that certain men are gifts from God intended to uplift human existence; heroes meant to save humankind (Spector, 2016). Northouse (2016) explained that the Great Man Theory focused on innate traits and characteristics of great political and military leaders, and as such was referred to as the trait approach. The trait approach or theory derives from the Great Man theory and is one of the earliest systematic attempts to study leadership (Northouse, 2016). The trait theory became the main topic of leadership studies for a number of researchers until the 1940s. Spector (2016) asserted that the Great Man theory is often marginalized, as it could provide a robust discourse on how and why individual leaders regarded as heroes continue to intrigue society. However, many would vehemently argue that such a theory has no place in modern leadership behaviors. For example, Raelin (2015) asserted that modern leadership requires collective, self-correcting models where participants engage with each other and reflect on their actions to achieve personal growth and development as a leader. The trait approach suggested that leadership derives from specific traits such as drive, honesty, integrity, charisma, and self-confidence (Pidgeon, 2017). However, while some traits may equate to effective leadership more than others, there is not a universally established trait list that ensures positive leadership outcomes, which gave rise to new theories (Pidgeon, 2017). The trait theory became challenged in 1948 by Stogdill's years of research, which suggested that no specific traits identify a leader from a non-leader, shifting leadership theories away from the possession of specific traits and moving them toward a relationship between people in a social situation (Northouse, 2016).

A Harvard Business Review article written by Robert Katz and published in 1955 attempted to address the issues associated with the trait approach by looking at leadership as a set of developable skills such as technical, human and conceptual (Northouse, 2016). The skills approach changed the focus on specific traits of a leader and instead fixated on the development of skills and abilities that will result in effective leadership (Northouse, 2016). Megheirkouni et al. (2018) explained that skills relate to one's ability to use knowledge and competencies to accomplish a set of goals or objectives. Although the skills approach may have some merit since leadership training programs often focus on the teaching skills that enhance leadership, Northouse (2016) asserted that it is rarely used in an applied leadership settings. However, the skills approach continues to be the subject of many studies as scholars continue to investigate leadership and its increasingly important role in ensuring the success of any organization (Megheirkouni et al., 2018).

The behavioral approach is another attempt at correcting the issues associated with the trait and skills approach (Northouse, 2016). The behavioral approach drove leadership studies toward an emphasis on identifying specific behaviors of a leader up to the early 1970s (Northouse, 2016). Such theories revolve around the idea that appropriate leader behavior must match relevant aspects of each situation (Phillips & Phillips, 2016). However, Northouse (2016) expounded that problems associated with the behavioral approach were similar to the trait and skills approach as specific behaviors that lead to effective leadership were not conclusive, which gave rise to the contingency theory of leadership.

The basis of the contingency theory is that there is not a singular or best approach to effective leadership because leadership styles continually evolve (Lord et al., 2017). Vidal et al. (2017) asserted that effective leadership depends not just on characteristics but also on each

situation that a leader finds themselves in. Lord et al. (2017) provided support to this research as the authors asserted that organizations must not rely on a singular leadership approach as it could stunt leadership development. Vidal et al. (2017) explained that the contingency approach results in more effective leadership because it allows a leader to adapt their style based on the nature of the group, the situation, and the required objectives. Since the contingency theory, many other theories continued to surface as an attempt to define leadership.

Today, many different ideas and theories regarding leadership exist, and more are likely to surface. Transformational leadership has grown as one of the most popular, which focuses on the instrumental role a leader plays in building follower commitment and inspiring them to achieve their goals (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Other modern theories are moving toward the relational view that leadership is a relationship between a leader and a follower (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). As new theories arise and traditional leadership theories continue to evolve, they offer new insight into what effective leadership encompasses, often making the explanation of effective leadership seem complicated. However, relational theories help explain why leadership is multifaceted, because as cited many times over in the works of Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2017), effective leadership relies on appropriate behaviors that yield a functional relationship between a leader and those that choose to follow. Therefore, Kouzes and Posner (2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017) also look at leadership beyond just a relation view and appear to embrace a holistic approach that considers skills, abilities, behaviors, traits, and processes of influence, which align with the concepts often used to attempt to define leadership as outlined by Northouse (2018), which are also listed as traits, abilities, skills, behaviors, relationships, and an influence process. Thoroughgood et al. (2018) is one of many authors that share the idea that leadership is a holistic approach as they explained it is a dynamic process that involves the

cocreation of processes between leaders, followers, and their environments. Although many theories or styles of leadership exist, no singular approach should be held in higher regard than the next. Instead, leadership must focus on the right behaviors as they pertain to individuals and organizational culture. Northouse (2018) supported the previous point when he asserted that the way individuals practice leadership depends on how they or their organization define it and their beliefs about what constitutes effective leadership.

Effective leadership requires adaptability of a leader's style, traits, behaviors, actions, etc. because each person's followers are driven by personal beliefs, values, and emotions that make-up their unique personalities, which Northouse (2016) asserted is driven by culture. Culture directly influences leadership and is discussed in-depth later in this paper. Although theories that align with cultural values are a great basis for teaching and developing organizational leaders, other guiding practices, such as the five practices of exemplary leadership should serve as the basis for effective leadership. Kouzes and Posner's (2017) five practices of exemplary leadership encompass what most consider effective leadership behaviors and practices, regardless of culture or demographics. Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2016, 2017) continuously asserted that while the context of leadership changed over the last 30 years, the content remains the same regardless of geographical location or demographics. The five practices of exemplary leadership prove and continue to prove through ongoing data collection and studies over the last thirty years what leadership actions and behaviors constitute effective leadership that yields organizational success, regardless of the types, size, or geographic location of an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The participants in this study sounded resounding support for this previous assertion when 60% asserted that they identified with the five practices of exemplary leadership and believed that it provides a solid foundation for effective fire service leadership.

The Gospel of John offers an interesting perspective of the complexities associated with understanding how multi-faceted leadership is. The Gospel of John is the fourth book in the New Testament that provides a unique perspective on the life of Jesus. John's gospel chronicles the leadership actions of Jesus and offers many life lessons about how we should treat others (AllAboutJesusChrist.org, 2019). Colan (2016) cited Jesus as an example of an effective leader based on His integrity and servant behaviors, explaining that integrity is a prerequisite for followership, and if people do not follow you, you are not leading. Kouzes and Posner (2011) asserted that throughout their 30 years of global research, regardless of the type, size, or culture, integrity is continually one of the top four leadership traits required by a leader's constituents. Mr. Colan does not identify himself as Christian, nor is his article found in a Christian publication; the fact is that the many examples of Jesus' exemplary leadership qualities are just too good to ignore. Colan (2016) further asserted that leadership is an inside job, meaning it takes heart and a good character, and it was Jesus' pure heart and unfailing character that resulted in the following of billions of people nearly 2,000 years after His death.

Explaining all that leadership encompasses, regardless of religious beliefs or not, is much like the end of John's gospel when he explained that there are not enough books that will ever contain all that Jesus is and what he said and did (AllAboutJesusChrist.org, 2019). One could easily say that the previous assertion is also true regarding leadership. Leadership is difficult to define as it often seems as elusive as faith because it embroils the proper mindset and actions of an individual and the ability to adapt to the needs and expectations of those that they lead (Kruse & Bradberry, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2011) explained that leadership requires interactions between people, and these experiences constantly change from leader to leader, individual to individual, and on a day-to-day basis. Leadership involves social influence, regardless of titles,

personality traits, or attributes, it relies upon how we treat others; therefore, there are many styles

and paths to exercising effective leadership (Kruse & Bradberry, 2017). Kruse and Bradberry

(2017) asserted that leadership is about accomplishing the greater good, not about something that

is given but earned by gaining the trust and respect of those that one leads. Kouzes and Posner

(2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017) continually cited that earning the trust and respect of others

requires the ability to build relationships, making leadership a relational activity that requires

skills and behaviors that build relationships. The participants in this study supported this

assertion when 100% related their experiences with effective leadership as relationships based

upon mutual respect and trust. Therefore, building relationships starts with appropriate

leadership behaviors, which usually depends upon both the individual and organizational culture,

making an understanding of culture imperative for achieving effective leadership.

The Antithesis of Leadership

Before addressing the vital role that organizational culture plays on effective leadership,

it is essential to understand certain behaviors that will stifle positive leader outcomes. Many

scholarly articles, professional publications, and other writings discuss what leadership is and

what it means to be a leader, but far fewer writings provide an in-depth explanation of what

negative leadership behaviors are. Lovelace et al. (2019) explained that criticisms of the

dominant leadership perspectives are on the rise, causing a growing number of scholars to call

for more complex and conceptually sound theories. However, looking at leadership from a

relational approach that consists of behaviors that result in a mutually beneficial relationship

between the leader and follower does not need a complex theory. Kouzes and Posner (2017)

asserted that their empirical data gathered over the last 30 years paints a clear picture that while

the context of leadership may change, the content has not. To truly understand what it means to

be an effective leader, one must also understand what actions and behaviors result in ineffective leadership. For example, false self-perception of leadership is just as much of a detriment as poor leadership behavior because both can lead to poor or disastrous organizational outcomes (Vogel & Kroll, 2019). Inaccurate self-assessments about one's ability suffocates a leader's growth and results in poor performance, which negatively effects a subordinates' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Vogel & Kroll, 2019). This previous assertion sheds some light on why 60% of the participant of this study shared stories about the importance of a leader acknowledging their mistakes and 42% highlighted the importance of a leader's ability to continuously learn and grow based on experiences, both good and bad.

Liborios (2017) highlighted the importance of having subordinates that are willing to follow. The use of the term subordinate is not a negative term. Instead, it merely explains that a hierarchy exists in almost all organizations, as everyone answers to someone, even the top-level CEO answers to shareholders and stakeholders. Good relationships consisting of trust and mutual respect must exist at all levels of the organization. The Harvard Business Review (2019) recently republished a 1979 article regarding subordinate predicaments, which are a result of human behavior and emotions, and thus, still ring true today. Human behavior and emotions will always play a crucial role in relationship outcomes. For example, Guillaume et al. (2017) asserted that the effects of relational demography in the workplace appear to affect intergroup bias and information-elaboration because of an inability to understand how to interact with others due to demographically dissimilar experiences, which may result in fear and distrust of others. A relationship characterized by fear and distrust will not yield lasting value and can result in adverse organizational outcomes, making the understanding of the behaviors and emotions of others a critical element of leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Also, Neilsen and Gypen (1979)

asserted that when people feel their skill level is in doubt or they feel they lack specific skills,

they will avoid feedback, misinterpret performance criteria, and become devastated by critical

evaluations (as cited in the Harvard Business Review, 2019). Therefore, individuals viewed in

leadership roles that belittle and berate performance or are quick to judge an individual's actions

without stopping to evaluate why decisions are being made shut people down by making them

feel underappreciated, disrespected, and attacked (Leheney, 2008). For example, Leheney (2008)

explicated that people will make mistakes, but if a person's performance is genuinely

substandard, getting constructive feedback from a leader is far more productive than berating or

criticizing. The participants added support to the assertions of Kouzes and Posner (2012),

Neilsen and Gypen (1979) and Leheney (2008) as 74% of the participants shared stories about

how destructive leadership negatively affected themselves and others, hindered teamwork, and

prevented efficient and effective completion of operational objectives. This previous finding is

alarming considering that 78% of the participants also explained that effective fire service

leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives. However, on a positive note, many of the

participants explained that they learned a lot from destructive leadership experiences, such as

behaviors and actions that do not facilitate effective leadership.

Destructive Leadership.

A dysfunctional or bad relationship will result in leadership failure, often referred to as

destructive leadership. Destructive leadership emerges when a person in power uses their

influence for their personal gain, disregarding the consequences it causes for individuals and the

organization (Northouse, 2018). Destructive leadership can diminish or destroy trust across an

organization, which can create many issues. Gen (2019) cited trust as a primary precept for

relationship building, and without trust, a relationship will not exist. Rousseau and Aubé (2018)

explained that abusive supervision is prevalent in many organizations and results in unethical behaviors that hinder effective leadership and destroy trust. Abusive supervision behaviors can consist of putting an employee down in front of others, being rude or dismissive, or any other type of behavior that berates or belittles a subordinate (Rousseau & Aubé, 2018). Goldman et al. (2006) argued that organizational cultures could reduce dysfunctional behaviors, such as abusive supervision, through appropriate leadership behaviors. Thoroughgood et al. (2018) pointed out that while destructive leadership is not acceptable, further studies should focus on a more holistic definition to move beyond the leader-centric behaviors and consider follower and organizational perspectives. Thoroughgood et al. (2018) made a good point regarding a holistic perspective on defining destructive leadership because solutions and preventative remedies for these toxic situations will not exist without a more rounded perspective of the effects on both individuals and the organization. Effective leaders are an essential determinant of organizational culture, making their actions and behaviors either an asset or detriment to an organization (Goldman et al., 2006). Thus, Goldman et al. (2006) deduced that organizational culture and its associated behaviors could either contribute or diminish the creation of healthy relationships that will promote organizational performance and effectiveness that yields positive outcomes.

Leadership Requires Building Relationships

More and more researchers are suggesting that effective leadership requires an ability to build relationships. Kouzes and Posner (2012) asserted that leadership is a relationship between those that lead and those that choose to follow. A relationship between a leader and constituents consists of mutual respect and confidence, built on a foundation of trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Therefore, it is no surprise that the study of the employee–organization relationship in workplaces has grown over the years, especially the interest of employee engagement. According

to Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2017), employee engagement is "an active, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that includes a strong identification with the organization and self-expression" (p. 526). Employee engagement is a crucial consideration because it plays a massive role in the relationship between employees and an organization. Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot (2017) asserted that regardless of the type of organization, employees today are looking for a connection to their organizations so they can satisfy their needs for self-actualization and personal growth, which play an integral role in the employee–organization relationship. A connection requires healthy relationships built on trust. Gen (2019) explicated that trust is a paramount tenet of cultural values as it helps build constructive relationships of mutual pride and loyalty, which are vital for group cohesion and organizational success. The previous assertions help explain why leadership studies are moving toward theories and practices that build relationships based on mutual respect and trust. The finding of this study provided much support as 100% of the participants shared stories about the importance of building relationships to help foster effective leadership. As Uhl-Biena et al. (2014) explained, effective leadership requires not only a leader's actions and behaviors but also an understanding of why an individual or group of individuals will follow.

The Followership Theory

Although many scholars continue to research and debate the numerous different leadership theories, effective leadership requires far more than all the collective theories can offer. Effective leadership requires a relationship between the leader and follower, and one cannot exist without the other. The followership theory expresses the importance of looking at leadership from the lens of the follower. After all, leadership does not exist if there are not people that are willing to follow (Uhl-Biena et al., 2014). Northouse (2017) posited that 65

different leadership theories have arisen over the last 60 years, each attempting to explain

leadership. As discussed earlier, leadership theory is classified by whether it focuses on the

leader, the follower, or a combination of both. The perspective of each theory is grounded in the

researcher's worldview on leadership (e.g., leader-centric, follower-centric, or relational views).

Unfortunately, Uhl-Biena et al. (2014) elucidated that most leadership theories focus on leaders,

overlooking the importance of followership, making leadership studies incomplete. The

followership theory studies "the nature and impact of followers and following in the co-creation

of leadership" (Uhl-Biena et al., 2014, p. 96, sect. 4.1). Uhl-Biena et al. (2014) echoed the ideas

of the current leadership studies of Mr. Kouzes and Mr. Posner and the point of view of this

researcher, that leadership is a process mutually created in social and reactional interactions

between people. Kouzes and Posner (2017) used evidence-based research from millions of

people around the world to investigate leadership from both the leader and follower perspective.

For example, how do people become the kind of leaders that others want to follow, and how does

a leader get other people to follow them, by free will and free choice, to move forward in pursuit

of a common vision? Kouzes and Posner (2010, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017) repeatedly asserted

throughout their many works that leadership is a relationship between the leader and follower.

Effective leadership results from a complete picture that requires understanding what people look

for in those that they choose to follow, making understanding followership a crucial element of

leadership studies and practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Exemplary Leadership: The Works of Kouzes and Posner

Since no singular definition or theory encompasses all that effective leadership is, Jim

Kouzes and Barry Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership was used in this study to

explain a possible best practice approach for building a foundation for effective leadership.

Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2017) explained the five practices of exemplary leadership as follows: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge processes, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. It was found that 60% of the participants believed that the five practices of exemplary leadership not only align with their organizational culture but also serve as a foundation for building effective leadership in their departments. However, only 50% of participants stated that they had experienced an exemplary leader at some point in their career and only 30% believed that their departments had prepared them to be effective leader at all. One hundred percent of the participants shared stories about how officers inspired them to be effective leaders through either positive or negative experiences. Positive leadership actions aligned with the five practices of exemplary leadership as every participant was able to share stories of how the five practices had a positive influence on themselves and others. As previously discussed, 100% of the participants shared stories of how relationships built on mutual respect and trust between them and those that they viewed as a leader led to effective leadership and inspired them to lead in the same way. The years of studies conducted by Mr. Kouzes and Mr. Posner support the idea that effective leadership derives from mutually positive relationships that encourage followership. Therefore, the many writings of Kouzes and Posner (2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017) provided the framework for explaining effective leadership in this study. Kouzes and Posner's (2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017) writings on leadership reach far beyond opinion, as their work involves over 30 years of research conducted at varying types of organizations around the world, yielding quality research based upon millions of participants. The five practices offer a framework for effective leadership in any organization and was supported by the experiences of the participants in this study. For instance, since organizational culture drives acceptable traits and behavioral expectations, the five practices are effective in any organization when they align with

organizational values and norms. The importance of organizational culture and its alignment

with effective leadership behaviors are discussed throughout Kouzes and Posner's (2012, 2017)

literature and is addressed extensively later in this paper. This researcher and many other authors

and researchers in the field of leadership echo the findings of Mr. Kouzes and Mr. Posner's

research, from concepts such as leadership is a relationship to the agreement on the most

essential characteristics of a leader. Quite simply put, leadership is not about who you are (e.g.,

rank or title); instead, it is about what you do (e.g., how you treat others; Kouzes & Posner,

2017).

Other Leadership Research Supports the Five Practices

The first practice of exemplary leadership is to model the way, which equates to leading

by example (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2011) asserted that leading by

example, builds credibility amongst a leader's constituents. Chng et al. (2018) shared the views

of Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2017) when they postulated that leadership is a relationship

between those that aspire to lead and those who decide whether they wish to follow. One

hundred percent of the participants in this study supported Chng et al. (2018) and Kouzes and

Posner (2012, 2017) by sharing stories about how building relationships is paramount to being an

effective leader. This study also supported the importance of modeling the way and explained the

role credibility plays in building relationships needed to achieve effective leadership. Therefore,

a leader should always do the right thing even when no one is watching, making credibility a

paramount tenant for effective leadership. Leaders that fail to demonstrate relevant job

knowledge and engage in behaviors that do not represent organizational culture damage

credibility; however, those that demonstrate behaviors that reflect competence and

trustworthiness greatly enhance credibility (Chng et al., 2018). Ninety-eight percent of all

participants shared stories regarding the importance of modeling the way and how the right

leadership behaviors build the credibility needed to affectively lead in their departments.

While the term credibility was not used as often as this researcher expected, many other

terms associated with earning credibility were the subject of a considerable number of participant

experiences. Twenty-six percent of participants discussed the importance of credibility, while

many others spoke of additional terms associated with credibility as a foundation for leadership

which are competence, confidence, and trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). For example, 98% shared

stories regarding how much competence and trust matters and 96% discussed how much

confidence matters to achieve effective fire service leadership. These terms were discussed as

mutual behaviors, meaning both the leader and follower must earn credibility by ensuring they

are competent in their abilities, there must be mutual trust, and there must be confidence in one's

self and each member of the team. Such actions of both a leader and those that they lead require

a relationship built on mutual respect and trust and this is earned by building individual

credibility. Once again, Chng et al. (2018) echoed the views of Kouzes and Posner (2011) and

this study's findings when they asserted that credibility is the foundation of leadership. In fact,

credibility is the foundation of leadership, arose as a common theme amongst participants and

the findings are discussed in-depth in Section 3 of this study. Communication researchers regard

trustworthiness, expertise, and dynamism as the source of credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2011).

Kouzes and Posner (2011) further explained that the three sources of credibility defined by

communication researchers align with the findings of their studies, where three of the top four

most important characteristics of an admired leader are honesty, competence, and inspiring.

Constituents follow leaders because of their ability to exude credibility via behaviors such social

intelligence (e.g., empathy and interpersonal skills) and job-related knowledge (e.g., ability to

accomplish tasks), all which build trust, and demonstrate both expertise and dynamism (Chen et al., 2014).

The second practice of an exemplary leader is inspiring a shared vision. Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2017) explained inspiring a shared vision as the ability to imagine exciting and ennobling possibilities, which inspires commitment. Garton (2016) expounded that inspired employees are more productive and tend to inspire others to strive for greater heights, resulting in increased organizational success. According to Bain Research, "inspired employees are more than twice as productive as satisfied employees" (as cited in Levin 2018, para. 12). The Levin (2018) assertion shared Kouzes and Posner's position on the importance of inspiring a shared vision when she asserted that inspiration encompasses passion and purpose, making it an essential leadership trait. Ninety-eight percent of the participants in this study also supported the importance of inspiring a shared vision. Participants further explained how necessary it is to achieve buy-in, as 70% discussed that buy-in is crucial to ensure that people are willing to follow, making the ability to inspire a shared vision an important leadership practice. The rapid rise and popularity of transformational leadership serves as another example of why effective leadership requires the ability to inspire others. Transformational leaders inspire those that they lead to achieve extraordinary outcomes not only in processes but also in one's ability to develop their personal leadership capacity (Clavelle & Prado-Inzerillo, 2018).

The Clavelle and Prado-Inzerillo (2018) article on transformational leadership recommended the use of Kouzes and Posner's exemplary leadership framework and tools to support transformational leadership as this style of leadership inspires others to take the initiative, think innovatively, and improve outcomes within their organization. A Harvard Business School study that assessed more than 50,000 leaders also supported Kouzes and

Posner's assertions regarding inspiring others to act. The study identified the ability to inspire

others as an essential leadership competency as it results in the highest levels of employee

engagement (Levin, 2018). This study also supported Clavelle and Prado-Inzerillo (2018) and

Levin (2018) as process styles of leadership such as transformational leadership align with

Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership. Sixty percent of the participants in

this study stated, without prompt, that the five practices would serve as a solid foundation to

build leadership training that would develop effective fire service leaders. Furthermore, the idea

of using transformational leadership as a foundation for training derived from the findings of

100% of the participants as they shared stories about effective leader behaviors that align with

the characteristics of transformational leadership. The stories revolved around the importance of

understanding what motivates others and inspiring people to accomplish goals that will also

benefit the team.

        The third practice of an exemplary leader is to challenge the process as challenge is the

crucible for greatness; leaders make things happen (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, 2017). The ability

to implement appropriate and effective change is critical within any organization, which is why a

leader needs to challenge the status quo (Morrison, 2018). For example, past practices are fine

for the way things used to be, but the ever-changing organizational environment requires

continuous change conducive for learning and growth that will result in a successful

organizational outcome. Therefore, continuous improvement within an organization requires

effective leadership geared toward developing an agenda that is adaptive to the needs of both the

organization and its people (Morrison, 2018).

        Llopis (2017) asserted that many people that identify as leaders get excited about the idea

of challenging the status quo because it results in a positive organizational transformation that

leads to endless possibilities but fail to do so because organizations do not provide the necessary

tools or support to make this happen. Therefore, challenging the status quo is not easy. For

example, Llopis (2017) explained that most people in positions to make changes fail to do so for

the following reasons: they do not want to accept accountability, are afraid of risk, do not know

how to get started, lack organizational support, and have not evolved as leaders. Ninety-two

percent of the participants in this study shared stories that aligned with challenging the process.

While this was the least supported area of the five practices, it is still a very high percentage. The

phenomenological theme was helpful in identifying this practice within the participants' stories.

At first, many of the participants viewed this practice negatively, as pushing back on top

management, which would be out of line in a hierarchical organization such as the fire service.

However, once the participants understood the true intent of challenging the process, they were

able to share many stories of effective leadership as it pertained to this practice. This previous

assertion lends support to Llopis' (2017) explanation regarding why most people in positions to

make changes fail to do so, in this case, participants saw challenging the process as inappropriate

and a risk because it is not a practice supported with their organizations.

   The fourth practice of exemplary leadership is to enable others to act, which requires a

leader to foster collaboration by building relationships and trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, 2017).

As explained earlier 100% of the participants in this study expressed the importance of building

relationships and 98% identified trust as a key tenet for strong relationships between leaders and

followers. Positive organizational outcomes require knowledge sharing at all levels of the

organization (Salem et al., 2018). Goman (2019) also asserted that collaboration is a must in

today's organizations, which aligns with Kouzes and Posner's (2012, 2017) thoughts on how

great organizations accomplish goals. Goman (2019) explained that an organization which

fosters collaboration does the following: rewards collaborative behavior, communicates transparently, encourages networking, aligns unified goals, creates innovation via diversity, focuses on the customer, builds relationships on trust, and embraces leadership behaviors that focus on positive influence instead of position.

Llopis (2013) echoed Kouzes and Posner (2012) when he explained that an effective leader creates an approachable environment where others feel safe to speak-up and confidently share their perspectives. Eighty-four percent of the participants explained that everyone has something to offer, which increases collaboration, effective teamwork, and builds strong relationships necessary to effectively lead. Salem et al. (2018) expounded that a leader should facilitate interaction and information exchange within an organization. This study supported the previous assertion with 98% of the participants sharing stories of how good communication is a must because it builds strong relationships, enhance teamwork and ensures effective leadership. Ninety-eight percent of the participants also explained that enabling other to act fosters relationships, teambuilding, and cohesion that results in achieving goals and objectives efficiently, this is the power of good collaboration. However, collaboration requires the establishment of a relationship built on trust. Therefore, possessing the ability to enable others to act is another example of why a leader must have the ability to cultivate relationships. Kouzes and Posner (2012) explained that people work better together when they trust one another. A leader's ability to step back and let others make decisions also helps encourages others to act. Llopis (2013) supported the previous assertion when they explained that effective leaders keep attention from themselves and encourage others to step up and voice their opinions, which Kouzes and Posner (2012) outlined as an exemplary leader behavior. Therefore, fostering

collaboration by building trusting relations helps lead others via positive influence, encouraging

individuals to make good decisions that will benefit the organization as a whole.

Finally, the fifth practice of exemplary leadership, according to Kouzes and Posner

(2012, 2017), is encouraging the heart of others. Encouraging the heart of others requires a leader

to recognize contributions and elicit high performance from constituents (Kouzes & Posner,

2012, 2017). Budhu (2015) expounded on the previous assertion when she explicated that caring

is the most significant form of leadership growth as leaders who practice care, love, and peace

promote and encourage the best behaviors in their followers. For example, leaders that engage in

positive communication, delegation, and various other tasks, foster a safe and productive

working environment (Budhu, 2015). Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2017) asserted that exemplary

leaders encourage the heart of others by showing they believe in people, communicating clear

goals and rules, provide regular feedback, offer personalized recognition, provide incentives,

getting close to people, and just saying thank you. The participants in this study made it clear

that encouraging the heart is a paramount practice for any leader, as 98% shared stories regarding

how encouraging the heart of others inspired them not only to follow but to make this crucial

practice part of their leadership repertoire.

The practice of servant leadership is another style of leadership that is the subject of

many recent studies and is discussed later in this paper. It is important to note that the principals

of servant leadership share many of the same concepts and ideas as Kouzes and Posner's

exemplary leader behaviors. For example, Northouse (2016) asserted that servant leadership

results in improved outcomes at individual, organizational and societal levels and Kouzes and

Posner's (2012, 2017) asserted that leadership is a relationship that requires behaviors that build

trust. One hundred percent of participants provided insight regarding what effective leadership

looks like in the fire service and shared many stories that highlighted the use of servant leadership, making it another style that would provide a great foundation for leadership training that yields effective fire service leadership. Many organizations are looking at servant leadership because of the shift in societal expectations of a leader, moving from a hierarchal construct to a relational one. For instance, a servant leader cultivates an organizational culture that focuses on their constituents by inspiring them and empowering them to serve others above themselves; this is a true representation of encouraging the hearts of others (Liu, 2019). As mentioned earlier 100% of the participants' stories regarding effective leadership outline leadership as a relationship and 98% discussed the importance of encouraging the heart of others, adding support to Liu's (2019) findings.

One other style of leadership that aligns with Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership it the situational approach. A situational approach enhances effective leadership by providing a framework that helps a leader adapt their style based on the situation, as follower needs will vary (Northouse, 2016). This approach makes a case for leadership as a relationship because it highlights the importance of getting to know people and understand why they are willing to follow a leader, which is discussed in more depth later on in this paper. One hundred percent of the participants in this study explained that an officer's influence matters and 98% regarded the importance of modeling the way as an effective leadership quality. Since people view different traits and behaviors as important leadership qualities effective leadership requires the ability to adapt to different people and situations. This previous assertion was supported by the stories of participants regarding the ability of a leader to adapt, as 74% explained that an effective leader adapts to their environment and takes time to listen and understand the needs of their followers.

Focusing on a framework supported by proven practices that results in positive organizational outcomes could simplify leadership development and its associated training in any organization. Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2017) asserted that the five practices of an exemplary leader are the core leadership competencies proven by the analysis of personal best leadership cases around the world, explaining how effective leaders get extraordinary things done. The five practices provide a simple framework that organizations should consider when creating leadership training programs. Focusing on leadership as a relationship rather than complex theories, may simplify leadership development in organizations, regardless of the type or size. However, there are a couple of styles of leadership that align with the research of Kouzes and Posner that could benefit in leadership training initiatives, these are transformational, servant and situational leadership, which are discussed more in-depth later on in this paper. Without some type of framework that aligns leadership behaviors with organizational culture, figuring out what leadership means and how to implement it could seem exhaustive and always out of reach. Therefore, before the establishment of any type of framework or style of leadership, it is essential to have an understanding of leadership and how it pertains to organizational culture.

Leadership and Culture

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture influences effective leadership behaviors and practices. Kostova et al. (2018) explained that opinions on what leadership means result from cultural differences based on interpretations of authority, compliance, and relations between individuals and social groups, which are core tenets of relationships within an organization. Liu (2019) concluded that sociopolitical meanings of race, gender, sexuality, age, and class determine whether a leader's style of leadership is accepted or rejected. Organizational culture and its effects on relationships

are powerful. Taras et al. (2010) asserted that cultural values could predict certain organizational and employee outcomes even more so than individual personality traits. Therefore, an understanding of organizational culture directly links to building healthy relationships, which is an absolute must for effective leadership. Effective leadership development will require an organization to accept and define what they consider essential leadership behaviors and actions. The values of effective leadership must be part of the organizational culture, continually communicated and executed in every aspect of the organization.

Defining culture can get rather tricky and complicated. Bellot (2011) explained that while there is a growing consensus regarding the definition of organizational culture, a considerable disagreement amongst researchers also exists. The controversies that surround the definition and operationalization of organizational culture exist not because the concept is weak or ill-defined but because the study of organizational culture, much like leadership, is a continually developing body of research (Bellot, 2011). This paper will limit discussion to the most frequently cited constructs of organizational culture, which consists of shared assumptions, symbols, beliefs, values, and norms (Provitera & Ghasabeh, 2017). These constructs of organizational culture specify how employees perceive problems and appropriately react to them. Iacono (2015) elucidated that a collaborative culture will embrace the idea of working together to identify and appropriately solve issues to ensure that organizational objectives are accomplished. For instance, the participants in this study strongly supported the idea that teamwork is crucial within their organization as 100% shared stories that support that teamwork is essential because it enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness.

The Jossy (2019) study countered Iacono (2015) when he concluded that his findings challenge the idea that strong organizational cultures lead to increased effectiveness. However,

the Jossy (2019) study does not discuss possible biases or limitations that may affect the outcome

of his study. One example of a limitation of the Jossy (2019) study is that it focused only on

Indian software firms. While the study challenged the idea that strong cultures increase

organizational effectiveness, he could not overlook the finding that organizational values affect

organizational effectiveness. There is a plethora of other research that suggests that positive

organizational outcomes result from collaborative cultures that embrace effective leadership

actions. Kouzes and Posner (2017) and this study supported the previous statement when they

pointed out that exemplary leadership behaviors such as collaboration builds trust and

strengthens self-determination by developing competence, resulting in effective leadership.

The good news regarding effective leadership behaviors and culture is that characteristics

associated with exemplary leadership appear to be similar regardless of the culture or type of

organization. After 30 plus years of continuous research, Kouzes and Posner (2011) reported that

constituent's rate honesty, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent as the top four

characteristics of any leader around the world. Although the order ranking of characteristics may

change, the top four characteristics of an exemplary leader remain constant across organizational

cultures on a global scale (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). The results of Kouzes and Posner's past

works, as well as their ongoing studies, make their exemplary leadership framework a solid

foundation for building leadership training that yields ongoing leader development in the fire

service. As in the many organizations around the world, the five practices of exemplary

leadership are easily adapted to fire service culture, which is explained in the next few sections.

The participants in this study supported the previous assertion as 100% of the participants shared

stories of how at least some if not all of the five practices translate to effective leadership and

60% identified with the practices and saw it as a solid foundation for leadership training.

Fire Service Culture

Like any other culture, the U.S. fire service has certain beliefs, values, and behaviors accepted by fire service personnel. While each department may have unique differences, most that serve in the fire service share a core set of values. The values and beliefs defining the fire service is a direct result of hundreds of years of history. Professional firefighting began in Boston in 1678, and then the first volunteer fire company was started by Ben Franklin in 1736 (Golway, 2005). Well-known leaders such as Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, and George Washington served as volunteer firefighters, adding to the prideful history of firefighting (Golway, 2005). Therefore, pride, honor, and respect are values held near and dear to most firefighter's hearts. Rothmeier (2017) elucidated that fire service culture consists of a time-honored walk into hierarchal service-oriented heroism making senior members revered (Defining Culture, para. 2). Mills and Marantz (2019) asserted that teamwork is the cornerstone of the fire service and is evident in every aspect of the fire service profession, from training to incident response. This previous assertion showed to be true for the participants in this study, as 100% shared stories about how teamwork is crucial in every aspect of their departments.

While Mills and Marantz (2019) identified teamwork as a time-honored tradition, it must be implemented and fostered within each individual; otherwise, it is just a word that sounds good. With the growing issues associated with a more diverse workforce, teamwork is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. Lencioni (2002) explained that trust is the foundation of teamwork and must be fostered through relationships built on effective leadership principles that establish a relationship of mutual trust and understanding. This study highlighted the crucial role that teamwork plays in the fire and added support the Lencioni (2002) assertion. The topic of teamwork is discussed later on in this literature review and also in Section 3 of this study.

Kouzes and Posner (2011) also discussed the importance of trust but asserted that credibility is the foundation of leadership as trust is never established if a follower does not first believe in their leader.

As much as honor and tradition flows through the time-honored profession of firefighting, resulting in some positive attributes, the U.S. fire service has suffered from issues that many other types of organizations face today. Block and Noumair (2017) explained that today's organizations face a rapidly changing workforce, yet many organizational cultures are static, making them very slow to respond to change. Two examples of issues facing many fire departments across the United States are the inability to look past traditions and implement changes that will help the profession grow, both individually and the organizationally, and the issues that arise from a more diverse workforce (Rothmeier, 2017).

Rothmeier (2017) asserted that through both empirical evidence and personal observation that many fire service organizations around the United States are operating in a dysfunctional capacity, citing culture as the root of the problem. One negative attribute of fire service tradition is its resistance to change. It is not a secret to fire service members that the fire service as a whole, struggles with accepting change. Although resistance to change was not investigated in this study, nor did it arise as a common theme, it was discussed by many of the participants. It is important to add that the research questions were not constructed in a manner to shed light on this topic. However, there is a well-known saying that exists across the fire service, regardless of size and location of departments, it is said that "Hundreds of years of tradition unimpeded by progress" (Rothmeier, 2017, para. 2). Participant O1 provided an example of what resistance to change looks like,

So, it's been almost a 16-year journey, more or less trying to convince our chief training

officers or anybody that would listen, hey, we should do this crazy thing, train officers.

And it was a lot of getting patted on the head. That's cute. Does it cost us any money?

The state already does this. So, there was a lot of failure because of resistance, and

particularly from the people I was working the hardest with, the chief training officers. I

felt they were the ones that were in the position to implement any sort of training or

education. Some of them were highly dysfunctional, but some of them were very

functional. Some of them were at strategic levels in the organizations. But they just didn't

see it. They didn't have that vision. They fell into what the fire service always says, 'that's

not what we do'. We're here for basic training and that's all we need to do. That's where

our focus is. We don't have the budget, whatever it was, they just resisted.

The fire service also has a strong aversion to outside influence, and often promotes within and

ignores the pressures of other agencies regarding operating practices (Rothmeier, 2017).

The difficulties encountered by a more diverse workforce often hinder teamwork due to

difficulty in communications based on differences in perspectives, which can result in mistrust.

Kouzes and Posner (2011) asserted that a leader must earn trust and competence by

demonstrating their credibility. Credibility leads to trust, which is integral to any team. Trust

requires building relationships based on mutual respect and understanding of each individual,

which is often tricky if such behaviors are not part of the organizational culture. Mills and

Marantz (2019) explained that fire service tradition dictates that rank is the dependent factor for

determining the leader of a group. However, rank does not necessarily equate to competence or

trustworthiness. Instead, it is the individual actions and behaviors that award a leader the trust of

their constituents (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Empowering each member of the team to solve

problems will likely prove far more effective than placing the completion of goals and objectives

on a singular person, which makes teamwork a powerful tool for developing leaders.

Empowering everyone encourages effective leadership at every level of the organization.

Fire Service Leadership Must Align with Cultural Values

While defining appropriate leadership behaviors that align with organizational culture is a

must, the U.S. fire service should not necessarily adopt a singular theoretical or style approach

toward leadership. Instead, organizational leaders within each fire department must recognize the

unique underpinnings of its organizational culture and align leadership development with the

desired behaviors of the organization. While many traditions and cultural similarities exist in the

U.S. fire service, types (e.g., volunteer, career, local municipalities, federal), size, and

geographical location of the department will likely yield unique differences in each organization.

It is essential to realize that subcultures can exist within larger cultures, and while subcultures

may share some value of the broader culture, they also have different values and beliefs that

determine acceptable behavior (e.g., the way they speak and act toward one another; Farrell,

2018). The previous assertion provides an example of how diversity within an organization, such

as the fire service can either aid or hinder organizational success. Those entering an organization

must understand and accept the values of the organization. Failing to communicate

organizational cultural values and ensuring that employees understand and support such values

may result in subcultures that refuse to align with organizational values, hindering the goals and

objectives of an organization (Kirby, 2019).

Therefore, developing successful leaders will revolve around the effective

communication of internal cultural values and the willingness of fire department personnel to

embrace and emanate the values of the department. Since there is a plethora of different

leadership theories, training can encompass a wide variety of teaching, providing many different tools for a leader's toolbox. The vast number of theories and ongoing research regarding leadership make leader development a continuous process requiring ongoing training throughout a firefighter's career, regardless of rank or time in service. As discussed earlier, teamwork is the backbone of the fire service. The integral role that teamwork plays in carrying out operational objectives makes it a crucial foundation for leadership development. The importance of teamwork is a main point of discussion later in this literature review. For now, teamwork serves as an example of aligning cultural values with training initiatives that will help ensure the achievement of operational objectives.

Developing a culture of effective decision makers that engage collaboratively to ensure all objectives are met lies within leadership training programs that foundationally build on education, skills, and experiences required for ongoing leadership development. Dwairy (2019) referred to culture as a form of unidentified leadership that directs people to relinquish their self and save the harmony and name of the family, which equates to commitment to the team and the organization. Dwairy (2019) made a strong case for the creation and implementation of training programs that integrate cultural values, instead of a broad idea that sounds good in theory (e.g., forcing a singular leadership style or approach). Unfortunately, Snyder et al. (2018) explicated that there is often a lack of dialogue amongst leaders about what leadership uniquely means in their culture in terms of values and actions. Therefore, implementing leadership training programs that incorporate cultural values will help develop appropriate behavior and actions that enhance collaboration and teamwork resulting in effective leadership across the organization. This study strongly supports a cultural alignment of fire service personnel values with the five practices of exemplary leadership, and leadership styles such as transformational, servant, and

situational leadership. Therefore, fire departments across the United States could benefit by using

the five practices of exemplary leadership and transformational, servant and situational

leadership as the basic foundation for leadership training to develop effective fire service leaders

at every level of the organization. Having a basic framework that aligns with cultural values

make leadership development a less daunting and expensive venture as it provides a platform

that allows for future training to build upon.

Aligning the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership with Fire Service Culture

Organizations of all types and sizes, private to governmental, are in serious need of

effective leaders to guide them through the pitfalls associated with today's increasingly

unpredictable world (Krapfl & Kruja, 2015). Gen (2019) explained that while some public and

private sector enterprises have institutionalized leadership training, many overlook the

importance of creating and maintaining a culture of learning, where professional growth and

excellence are consistently encouraged and rewarded. Therefore, there seems little doubt that a

need exists for training programs that will develop leaders throughout their career. One hundred

percent of the participants in this study shared stories that highlighted how a building block

approach to training enhanced their development. For example, starting with the basics in the fire

academy and then learning by classes required for promotion, learning from on-the-job

experiences, ongoing company level training, and observing and emulating mentors helped them

grow as more competent leaders and decision makers. Therefore, establishing leadership training

that will develop effective leaders should start with understanding what leadership means and

what it means to be an effective leader.

Unfortunately, many organizations fail to understand what effective leadership entails,

and as a result, find it difficult to create training programs that yield better leaders. The U.S. fire

service is an example of such an organization. Buttenschon (2016) asserted that leadership

development in the fire service is grossly understudied, and her research showed a need for

formal training programs within individual departments. For example, the participants of the

study cited that formal leadership training came from sources outside their departments (e.g., The

National Fire Academy [NFA], seminars, or college classes). As stated earlier, the NFA may

offer some leadership training but it is not specifically designed to an organization's unique

culture, nor does it offer a uniformly accepted approach to fire service leadership.

The problem of implementing formalized leadership training starts with the difficulty

associated with defining the term leadership. For example, if one asks five different people to

define the terms leader or leadership, each of the five definitions is likely different. The previous

assertion gleans support by the fact that leadership has many different definitions, and

researchers and scholars have not agreed on any singular term at this point, and most likely never

will (Northouse, 2016). As of the Northouse (2016) writings, there are at least 65 different

classifications or theories used to define the dimensions of leadership. Provitera and Ghasabeh

(2017) explained that prior works on leadership have failed to integrate theories, methods, and

concepts in a way that creates an understanding of the many leadership theories. Krapfl and

Kruja (2015) further explained that many competing theories attempt to define leadership, but

regardless of the many leadership theories, many scholars agree that leadership is a process of

influencing others. This researcher agrees with the previous assertion because it takes all 65

theories to start to define what leadership is. Leadership is a relational process that relies on

understanding why someone is willing to follow and then adapting one's leadership behavior to

the person and situation, which could easily change from individual to individual. The

participants in this study strongly supported the previous assertion as 100% of them made it clear

that leadership requires a functional relationship between a leader and follower.

Current leadership theories suggest that effective leadership requires a commitment to

address problems in a way that helps individuals identify what went wrong and why, so that a

leader can engage in personal growth (Leheney, 2008). However, earlier theories such as the

Great Man theory and trait approach, suggested that leadership centers on specific traits that only

some were born with (Northouse, 2016). Counter to the Great Man Theory and the trait theory,

Kouzes and Posner (2016) asserted that leaders are born, and we are all born, meaning that

everyone has the ability to lead, but effective leadership skills and behaviors require continuous

development. This previous assertion begins to lay the foundation for creating training programs

that result in ongoing development throughout one's career. Since theories are just ideas, best

practices that result in effective leadership may result in the most favorable outcomes for modern

fire departments. This study offers a discussion, framework and implementation strategies for

best practices regarding the creation of effective leadership programs that ensure ongoing

leadership development at every level of the organization. The five practices of exemplary

leadership are battle-tested and proven throughout many organizations of all types and sizes

around the world and offer a great foundation for leadership training not only in the fire service

but any type of organization that wants to achieve successful outcomes (Kouzes & Posner,

2017).

Explaining Leadership Training

Regardless of the type of training, Stabile and Ritchie (2013) define training as

institutional compliance to ensure the review of materials across an organization. However,

leadership development and its associated training requires far more than just a review of

materials to produce effective leaders. Leadership training must consist of a combination of education, skill development, experience, coaching, and mentoring to cultivate an individual into an effective leader. Kouzes and Posner (2017) supported the previous assertion when they explained that leadership consists of observable patterns of practices and definable skills and abilities, making continuous practice feedback, role models and coaching a great way to develop leaders. Therefore, leadership training that embraces education, skill development, experience, coaching, and mentoring will help facilitate a deeper understanding of what effective leadership is and offer valuable feedback required for personal growth. Kouzes and Posner (2016) explicated that becoming a better leader requires honest feedback from others, as feedback, good or bad, promotes learning and growth.

Beer et al. (2016) explained that education with the objective of individual growth is crucial because people are eager to acquire knowledge and skills that will help them grow and develop in a manner that advances their careers. Therefore, leadership training requires a combination of education, skill-building techniques, exercises that help reflect personal experiences and the experiences of others, and coaching and mentoring, put together in a manner that ensures continuing development throughout one's career. Kouzes and Posner (2017) asserted that their research demonstrates that people who participate in leadership development programs learn to become better leaders over time because they are continuously learning to improve their skills and abilities via practice and feedback. Therefore, a developmental approach will help fire service leaders build the essential relationship skills required for effective leadership such as active listening and two-way communication, which is discussed later in this review.

Training Versus Development

Employee growth and development are essential to achieving organizational success as these two constructs permit employees to learn skills and abilities that allow an individual to take on higher-level work and leadership roles (Kokemuller, n.d.). Training and development are two separate constructs, with development being a more cognitively involved construct than training (Stabile & Ritchie, 2013). Development does not focus on a task. Instead, development consist of ongoing learning. Surbhi (2018) explained that development is an ongoing educational process that consists of various training techniques such as training, skill building, role playing, mentoring, coaching, and so on. Ray and Mandal (2019) described training as a means to provide systematic knowledge and skill enhancement that leads to employee development. A training method consists of a combination of various types of instructional techniques designed to achieve the desired learning objectives that result in the development of specific skills needed to carry out organizational objectives efficiently and effectively (Ray & Mandal, 2019). Simply put, ongoing and various training techniques is what leads to development.

Leadership Training Must Yield Ongoing Development

Employee development cultivates future leaders within an organization by increasing employee knowledge of operational objectives and expected leader behaviors, resulting in a more cohesive organizational culture (Kokemuller, n.d.). Therefore, it is paramount that training focuses on the development of the necessary skills required for effective leadership, which means that training opportunities must be ongoing throughout one's career and continuously build on past objectives. For example, starting with a basic foundation of leadership principals at entry-level, and then adding skills required as a firefighter promotes throughout their career.

Building Block Approach

A building block learning approach outlines leadership development as training programs that start with a basic foundation and then systematically builds knowledge and growth by adding new concepts to ensure ongoing improvement in skills and abilities. As previously discussed, the participants showed overwhelming support for a building block approach as it was revered as a key factor in personal growth and development as both a firefighter, officer and a leader. Concepts are the basic building blocks of knowledge defined as symbolic constructs used to classify or categorize reality (Schutte & Steyn, 2015). Schutte and Steyn (2015) explained the great importance of building blocks or concepts when they asserted that terms, words or notions must be available in the subject matter of a given scientific discipline, as they are the primary analytical tools by which individuals come to grips with reality. Effective leadership development requires the learning and growth of skills and behaviors that are built over time due to training and experience. For instance, a structured program that starts with explaining what effective leadership is and the skills and behaviors required to grow as a leader should be the basic foundation of leader development in any organization. As previously discussed, the five practices of exemplary leadership and leadership styles such as servant, transformational and situational leadership provide a great foundation for leadership in the fire service, and arguably any other type or size of organization. Foundational curriculum would also benefit from focusing on subjects such as teamwork and followership. Then, adding more advance skills and behavioral development exercises throughout varying levels of one's career will help effective leadership become a developmental process that helps an individual's leadership abilities to grow as their experience within the organization increases.

Leadership Principles for Effective Fire Service Leadership

Before a leadership development curriculum is built, a framework that ensures effective leadership development throughout one's career must exist. Regardless of the organization, effective leadership must start with three basic concepts; understanding what effective leadership consists of, what it means to follow and how to be part of a team. It is difficult to create an effective leader without first knowing what effective leadership means. The theory of followership is an important element of leader development because it is difficult to lead without understanding what it means to follow. Gao and Wu (2019) explained that understanding the follower perspective helps a leader process information such as the perception of followers so that they can better understand how to lead each individual within a group or team. Kouzes and Posner (2010) supported the notion that teamwork is an essential element of effective leadership when they asserted that a leader does not accomplish anything alone. As stated earlier, teamwork is paramount in the fire service. Without understanding when to lead and when to follow, effective teamwork is jeopardized. One's ability to lead is assessed by not only if they have followers, as rank tends to dictate this in hierarchical organizations, but whether the followers are devoted (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). In other words, an effective leader fosters a relationship built on trust by focusing on the needs of their people. There are several principles, skills and behaviors that can help develop effective fire service leaders over the course of their career, which are discussed in the next several sections.

Build Leaders That Understand the Importance of Following

The followership theory is a simple way to outline that effective leadership is a two-way street, requiring a positive relationship between a leader and follower. Considering that humility is often ranked highly when measuring important leadership traits and behaviors, understanding

that sometimes we lead and other times we must follow, it a great way to build humble and effective leaders in an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The followership theory is strongly supported according to the many works of Kouzes and Posner as they continually refer to leadership as a relationship. For example, Kouzes and Posner (2017) stated that fundamentally speaking, leadership is a relationship between those that aspire to lead and those that choose to follow. Therefore, before one becomes an effective leader, they must first understand why it is necessary to follow at times. Epitropaki et al. (2017) asserted that leadership and followership processes such as relationship building are at the heart of our understanding leadership.

Since humility is often considered an important trait of an effective leader, learning to follow others, even those of lesser rank or experience but perhaps still more knowledgeable on a subject, we can learn how to exercise humility. For example, if a newer person on the job created or has experience with a new tool implemented for use in a department and offers to train personnel on its use, yet he or she is turned down by their officer merely because they are new on the job, then the officer is responsible for several missed opportunities. First, the officer is failing to provide the individual the opportunity to step up and learn to lead others. Second, the officer is overlooking the importance of exercising humility by acknowledging that he or she is not always the most knowledgeable on all topics – that is why teamwork is essential for overall organizational success. Which brings us to a third and final point that letting the best person for the job step up when necessary is what an effective leader does to ensure that they simultaneously grow and develop their people and do what is best for the organization as a whole, this is the epitome of teamwork. These previously mentioned points reaffirm the need for exemplary leadership behaviors that will grow effective fire service leaders such as modeling the way (show others it is okay to follow no matter who you are), inspire a shared vision (allow

others to envision themselves as leaders), challenging the process (generate small wins that result

in learning and experience), enabling others to act (strengthen confidence, competence and

determination), and encouraging the heart (recognize individual excellence and reward values

such as self-improvement; Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Focus on Behaviors that Align with Organizational Values

Leadership theories that align with organization values offer a way to choose certain

traits that organizational managers expect from their leaders. While it could prove

counterproductive to try to implement leadership practices that only focus on a particular theory,

the ideas within certain theories can provide an initial framework for effective leader behaviors

in the fire service. For years, fire officer classes outlined by NFPA 1021 focused on explaining

leadership via autocratic, democratic, and laisses-fair styles. These three concepts offer little

guidance on behaviors or skills that enhance a leader's abilities. Instead, many modern

leadership theories offer behaviors and skills for effective leadership outcomes and are a better

consideration when developing a foundational approach toward effective leadership in the fire

service. However, individual departments must always consider the behaviors and actions that

will best fit their departmental cultures. Transformational, servant and situational leadership

styles are continuously being held as great models for fire service leadership. These three styles

of leadership align well with the five practices of exemplary leadership and are a great

consideration when creating a foundation for leadership development across the many

departments that make up the fire service.

Transformational Leadership Behaviors

Transformational leadership is one of the most current and popular styles of leadership

explored by many different organizations including the fire service (Northouse, 2016). As

discussed earlier, articles about transformational leadership in the fire service are on the rise.

Alyn (2011) asserted that firefighters find transformational leaders inspiring and easy to follow

because of their charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational

motivation. Ward (2018) suggested that transformational leadership in the fire service helps

followers appreciate the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with collaboration and

teamwork required in today's fire service. Northouse (2016) defined transformational leadership

as the ability of a leader to tap the motives of followers to help reach the goals of both the leader

and follower. Transformational leadership aligns with many of the ideas that leadership is a

relationship that exists between a leader and their followers, which falls in line with the concepts

and findings of Kouzes and Posner. For example, transformational leadership focuses on

understanding the motivations of followers by tapping into their emotions, values, ethics, and

goals, which is a crucial element to building effective relationships (Northouse, 2016). While

transformational leadership offers some great guidance on effective leadership, there are other

styles that can help organizations outline crucial leadership actions and behaviors.

Servant Leadership Behaviors

Servant leadership is another popular style of leadership that is on the rise, even in the

military and fire service. Servant leaders are credited for putting the needs of others above their

own. Robert Greenleaf is often thought of as the originator of modern servant leadership and the

founder of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (Greenleaf Center for Servant

Leadership, 2016). A servant leader is servant first and begins with the natural feeling that one

wants to serve others highest priority of needs above their own needs. Greenleaf Center for

Servant Leadership (2016) asserted that a servant leader "shares power, puts the needs of others

first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible" (The Servant as a Leader, para.

4). Greenleaf's definition aligns with the underlying premise of most, if not all fire departments across the United States, to serve and protect society often at our own peril. At first sight the power sharing aspect would likely raise eyebrows of fire service personnel because it goes against the tradition of hierarchy. However, if servant leadership is thought of as a basis for teaching humility by instilling the idea that we operate in a leader-follower continuum, and rank does not equate to knowing everything, this will help build strong teamwork principals required for successful organizational outcomes.

Overall, the basic definition of servant leadership makes it a great style to instill basic leadership behaviors and principles required of fire service personnel. Jester (2018) explained that servant leadership in the fire service helps crews perform at a higher level because they feel their needs are being addressed, which results in increased trust between the crew and the officer. This previous assertion is incredibly important because without trust, relationships cannot and will not exist. Northouse (2016) asserted that servant leadership results in improved outcomes at individual, organizational and societal levels. Servant leadership also aligns well with Kouzes and Posner's (2012, 2017) assertions that leadership is a relationship that requires behaviors that build trust.

Even with a strict hierarchical organization, servant leadership has found its place in the U.S. military. Griffing (2019), a Master Sergeant in the U.S. Army, explicated that servant leadership is thriving in the armed forces because servant leaders set aside their egos and focus on the needs of others first to ensure the completion of the mission and improve the organization. Servant leadership principles result in humble and confident leaders capable of fostering relationships that yield mutual respect and trust (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). When a leader possesses confidence and humility, they do not feel the need to be in control which results in inspiration

and commitment from their followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Servant leaders possess the

ability to articulate a vision for the growth and development of their subordinates, which gains

the leader credibility and trust, resulting in highly engaged followers (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017).

Jester (2018) supported the thoughts of this researcher when he asserted that servant leadership

has great potential to move beyond individual practice to an overall organizational practice of

fire departments across the United States.

Situational Leadership Behaviors

While transformational and servant leadership styles are a great way to learn how to

approach leadership from a follower perspective, a leader must also consider his or her behaviors

when developing their leadership abilities. This previous point is the exact reason organizations

should not fall into the trap of accepting a singular style of leadership. The fact remains that

many theories exists and the more that people learn that there is a plethora of leadership

approaches to consider, the more they can develop and hone their leadership capabilities.

Northouse (2016) explained that the situational approach enhances effective leadership by

providing a framework that helps a leader adapt their style based on the situation, as follower

needs will vary. The basis of the situational approach is that one person may need more direction

or support than another. From the theory perspective, situational leadership can seem complex

because it attempts to break down leadership styles into various categories. For example, the

situational leadership approach created by Ken Blanchard allows a leader to choose one of four

styles based upon the follower's experience and needs, these are delegation, support, coaching

and directing (Northouse, 2016).

From a simple approach, situational leadership reminds a leader that they must constantly

adapt because each follower is an individual and one leadership style or behavior may not work

the same for every person. For instance, a new 18-year-old hire will have a different worldview

than a 50-year-old veteran firefighter with 30 years on the job. This previous example highlights

the need for fire service leaders to be open-minded and adaptable, which will require a plethora

of leadership styles and skills, making a strong case for on-going leadership development

regardless of the size of the department. Simply reinforcing that leadership is a relationship

requiring both leader and follower interactions will help create a strong foundation for building

effective leaders in the fire service or any other organization. However, instilling the idea of

leadership as a relationship will require, at the very least, training that enhances skills and

abilities such as teambuilding and relationship building.

Teamwork

Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained that successful leadership stories about one's

personal best leadership experience was not about the leader's solo performance, but about

teamwork. Successful outcomes require great teamwork, which is a core component required in

all organizations (Ogbonnaya et al., 2018). Ogbonnaya et al. (2018) defined teamwork as the

engagement of two or more individuals working together to coordinate their efforts toward

accomplishing a desired outcome. Salas et al. (2015) suggested that effective teamwork consists

of cooperation, conflict, coordination, communication, coaching, and cognition to ensure team

members are motivated and can engage in behaviors that lead to successful outcomes.

Organizational behaviorist J. Richard Hackman conducted over 40 years of research on the

basics of team effectiveness and found that what matters most to ensure collaboration is not the

personalities, attitudes, or behavioral styles of team members but certain enabling conditions

such as providing a compelling direction, a strong structure, and a supportive context (Haas &

Mortensen, 2016). Haas and Mortensen (2016) asserted that their research showed that a

compelling direction, a strong structure, and a supportive context are particularly critical to ensure that a team is successful. Teamwork requires collaboration and it is a leader's responsibility to help foster a relationship amongst team members that results in banding together to complete tasks efficiently and effectively (Salas et al., 2015). Salas et al. (2015) asserted that a leader must provide the vision (compelling direction), a strong structure (putting the right people in the right place) and provide the necessary support to ensure that objectives are carried out and completed successfully. Haas and Mortensen (2016) explained that a leader can increase cooperation amongst team members by ensuring there is a shared identity and shared understanding, which enhances communication and collaboration necessary for effective teamwork.

Effective Teamwork is Paramount in the Fire Service

While teamwork is crucial in every organization to ensure that goals and objectives are met, it is particularly important in the fire service. As previously discussed, 100% of the participants in this study asserted that teamwork is essential in every aspect of the job, from life in the firehouse, to training and mitigating incidents. Although there are some articles in fire service magazines that discuss the importance of teamwork within fire departments across the United States, the subject does not seem to yield many that are current. Render (2015) may offer some reasoning to the lack of discussion regarding teamwork when he asserted that the cover of many fire service magazines show a single company, meaning a crew on a single engine (carries water and hose), truck (carries ladders and forcible entry tools), ambulance (carries emergency medical equipment) and so on, instead of the 12 or so people needed to get three people (the initial crew advancing the hose line or attack line) to the fire, over shadowing the importance of the amount of teamwork required on emergency incidents. For example, on a fire incident, a fire

engine which advances the first line (a crew of four in some departments) is often assisted by a truck company that assists with advancing a hose line to the fire, forcible entry, placing ladders and search, as well as a back-up crew (two-out) that remains outside in case the initial crew needs help (two – four people depending on the type of apparatus assigned). It is important to note that there are many departments operating with far less people and resources, making teamwork even more crucial to ensure efficient and safe mitigation of emergency incidents such as fires.

From firefighting to emergency medical response, teamwork is essential to effectively mitigate incidents of all types and sizes. Teamwork is also crucial to day-to-day operation within the firehouse from training to completing tasks to ensure operational readiness. As Render (2015) opined, teamwork is an indispensable asset that is crucial for achieving organizational success. The fire service culture thrives on the attributes, experiences, perspectives, and values possessed by each individual, using the strengths and experiences of some to fill the gaps for the weaknesses and inexperience of others (Render, 2015). Effective teamwork is linked to increased organizational outcome, increased organizational dedication, and employee cooperation (Ogbonnaya, 2019). Ogbonnaya (2019) explained that teamwork integrates individual strengths leading to complimentary behaviors and enables a collective responsibility for assigned tasks, leading to a deeper sense of work dedication, making teamwork an essential element of any fire service organization. Although each person on the team must do their part, it is up to the leader to inspire and mobilize his or her people to work together to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Ord Elliot's Fluid Form

One of the newest theories regarding effective teamwork within an organization is Ord Elliot's Fluid Form Theory. Fluid Form is a simple theory that focuses on putting the right people, in the right place and at the right time (Elliot, 2009). According to Elliot (2009), Fluid Form creates cross-functional teams, flattens organizations, gets more accomplished with less people and in less time, and provides more flexibility allowing for objectives to be met in an efficient and effective manner. The previously listed benefits of Fluid Form are accomplished not by where a person falls in the hierarchy but by what they do (e.g., abilities, skills, talents, and knowledge level; Elliot, 2009). Starbird and Cavanagh (2011) explained that Fluid Form is the basis for building what they refer to and Engaged Team Performance (ETP), which combines process improvement methods with strong teamwork practices and performance management techniques.

Fluid Form and ETP are principal associated with a flat organizational structure. Meehan (2019) explained that an organizational structure determines how information such as policies, authority and responsibilities is communicated and how leadership is disseminated throughout an organization. Organizations can have a flat or hierarchical structure. While the fire service is traditionally built on hierarchy and rank, providing education and training on better ways to build teams may prove beneficial to carrying out operational objectives. Even the military is seeing the benefits of a flatter organization for decision making and teambuilding. For example, General Stanley McChrystal developed what he referred to as a *flat and fast* structure to adapt to the non-traditional warfare of Al Qaeda (Schwandt, 2019). Therefore, the fire departments may benefit from a flatter organizational structure regarding teambuilding. A flat structure increases employee responsibility in the organization, removes excess layers of management and improves

the coordination and speed of communication, which is essential to effectively and safely

mitigating emergency incidents, both on and off and of the fireground (Meehan, 2019). Meehan

(2019) asserted that a reduction in bureaucracy results in easier decision-making processes

amongst employees, allows information to flow more freely, and enhances collaboration and

teamwork. However, the ability to inspire and mobilize others requires more than teaching

teamwork theories, it also requires relationship building skills that enhance collaboration such as

two-way communication and active listening.

Other Leadership Development Considerations: Relationship Building Skills

Since effective leadership requires building relationships it is imperative to develop skills

that will help individuals communicate in an effective and positive way. Communication consists

of information transmission and understanding from one person to another using either verbal or

nonverbal symbols (Tampubolon & Harati, 2019). Effective leadership requires interaction and

collaboration, which requires two-way communication skills such a speaking and listening with

understanding. Good inter-personal communication should consist of openness, empathy,

support, positivity and shared values or similarities in values (Tampubolon & Harati, 2019).

These previous listed behaviors translate to building positive relationship amongst individuals,

team members and their leader. Luthra and Dahiya (2015) elucidated that great leaders are great

communicators that promote a clear set of values that they instill on others. Therefore, effective

leadership is linked to one's ability to effectively communicate.

Effective Two-way Communication

Two-way communication is a complete process in which information flows in two-ways

and involves a sender and a receiver (The Business Communication, 2020). Two-way

communication starts when a sender transmits a message to the receiver; the receiver decodes the

message and responds back to the sender with a reaction based upon the receiver's perception

(The Business Communication, 2020). The great thing about two-way communication is that the

sender could clarify the message if the receiver perceived it differently that the message sender

intended. Effective two-way communication is crucial to achieving organizational goals and

identifying and correcting problems (The Business Communication, 2020). Tampubolon and

Harati (2019) explained that good communication results in togetherness, trust, shared values,

accountability, increased employee satisfaction, and an "esprit de corps" (a feeling of pride,

fellowship and loyalty). It is important to note that two-way communication must exist both

vertically and horizontally. Vertical communication exists when information exchanges between

a superior and subordinate, whereas horizontal communications exists when information

exchanges between those holding the same rank (The Business Communication, 2020). Positive

organizational outcomes require effective communication both vertically and horizontally. This

previous assertion means that training programs that promote and instill effective two-way

communications skills are a must at every level of an organization, making it a critical element

of leadership training in the fire service. While effective two-way communication relies on

understanding oral communication, written communication, and body language, it starts with the

ability to listen.

Active Listening

Listening is a crucial part of the communication process and is essential for effective

communication and relationship building (Spataro & Bloch, 2018). If a person is not listening

then they are not able to receive the message that a sender is trying to send, quickly ending any

chance of effectively communicating. Active listening is the ability to listen and respond to

others so that it improves mutual understanding, which results in effective two-way

communication (Kourmousi et al., 2018). Kawamichi et al.'s (2015) study asserted that active

listening is more than just hearing (passive listening) as it establishes a deeper connection

between the speaker and listener by giving the speaker full attention via inquiry, reflection,

respect, and empathy. Inquiry, reflection, respect, and empathy are also great leadership

attributes that help build a relationship between a leader and follower, making active listening a

great tool for reinforcing effective leadership behaviors and attributes. Spataro and Bloch (2018)

explained that active listening improves through education and interactive learning. Since active

listening includes both cognitive and behavioral activity it requires an individual to internalize

the concept by gaining a deeper understanding of what it is, why it is important, and practicing it

themselves (Spataro & Bloch, 2018). Kourmousi et al. (2018) supported the previous assertion

when they explained that active listening is enhanced with education on communication and

active listening skills and specialized training interventions including counseling on ways to

enhance listening skills, which can include mentoring and coaching. Based on the previous

assertions, active listening education and training is a crucial element to ensuring effective

communication in an organization and is an essential part of leadership training in the fire

service.

Mentoring

Mentoring consists of a training program that assigns and experienced individual

(mentor) to act as an advisor or counselor to a junior employee, providing ongoing support and

feedback (Zust, 2020). Mentoring is a holistic approach accomplished over a long-term period,

with less emphasis on specific and measurable results and more of a focus on overall

development of the individual (Zust, 2020). Buttenschon (2016) suggested that mentoring is an

informal process that naturally happens within a fire service organization (e.g., individual

departments). To Buttenschon's (2016) point, 100% of the participants in this study shared stories of how mentoring was crucial to their development, yet they described their experiences as informal, only an abysmal .04% experienced formal mentoring that was sponsored by their department. While mentoring can take place informally, it is far more effective when organizations use it as formal tool to enhance leadership development (Eliades et al., 2017).

The idea of mentoring subordinates is not a new concept, its specific application as a leadership development tool is well established, which is why its use is gaining popularity in many different types and sizes of organizations (Lamm et al., 2017). Dziczkowski (2013) proclaimed that mentoring yields an intense learning potential and as such explains why many of the world's most successful leaders have trusted mentors. Mentoring has a rich history supported by theories and concepts of prominent researchers and philosophers and as a result is rapidly emerging as a means to cultivate the leadership skills of current and future leaders (Dziczkowski, 2013). Leadership mentoring facilitates leadership development by identifying leadership opportunities and providing the appropriate resources, support, and feedback required for personal growth within an organization (Eliades et al., 2017). Corner (2014) added that mentoring offers a uniquely suited approach to leadership development by capitalizing on internal and specific knowledge. Formal mentoring helps develop either a broad or targeted group and also allows for tailoring to meet an organization's unique goals and objectives (Corner, 2014).

Using Mentoring to Enhance Leadership Development in the Fire Service

One cannot learn to be a leader on their own. Instead, effective leaders will seek out advice, counsel, and support of those that they trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2016). Fonseca (2017) discussed his personal experience with mentoring in the fire service,

>They (mentors) taught me that to know how leadership theories and applications work. I
>
>had to attend courses and training modules. They also taught me that knowing how and
>
>when to implement those theories does not come from the course, but from others
>
>showing me the way. (Fonseca, 2017, para. 6)

Fonseca (2017) asserted that both the individual and the organization benefit from mentoring. However, if training courses and modules that reflect departmental leadership values are not available, there is little benefit to setting up a mentoring program. It is up to an organization to clearly communicate values and priorities to its employees early on so individuals can determine if their values align with the organization (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016). Yogamalar and Samuel (2016) explained that a disparity between an individual's values and the work environment can result in negative employee behavior and performance, which will result in a lack of employee motivation, hinder employee performance, and result in employee dissatisfaction, turnover and stress. In contrast, when employees accept organizational values it results in positive work attitudes and organizational outcomes and attracts and retains dedicated and motivated employees that effectively achieve organizational goals and objectives (Yogamalar & Samuel, 2016). This previous assertion is the reason that leadership development programs must take a building block approach that consists of a combination of education, skills, mentoring and coaching that aligns with well-articulated organizational values.

Coaching

Organizational coaching is also gaining popularity as an approach to leadership development. Coaching is an ongoing constructive process between an individual and their coach that enables employees to develop the skills necessary to improve individual performance (Hayes, 2017). According to the International Coach Federation, coaching partners a coach and

client in a thought-provoking, creative process that inspires the individual to reach their full

potential (Zust, 2020). Counter to mentoring, coaching is short-term, performance driven, more

structured, and the outcome is designed to be specific and measurable (Zust, 2020). Most

organizations expect that coaching will increase organizational effectiveness, enhance individual

leadership growth, and help integrate organizational information in a manner that leads to better

decision-making (Bergquist & Mura, 2011). Although the use of organizational coaching in

leadership development and its respective academic discipline are rather new, many

organizations of varying types and sizes are using it to enhance employee performance,

particularly in areas of leader growth and development (Schutte & Steyn, 2015). However, many

organizations, including the fire service, use coaching in a more informal way and have done so

for years. For example, when a mistake is observed on an emergency incident, a unit officer can

take the opportunity to find out why the mistake happened, identify where the training

deficiencies may lie, and help get the firefighter to the needed skill level to ensure the same

mistake is not repeated. Hayes (2017) explained that missteps are a chance to learn from the

situation and grow as an individual. Coaching offers support and advice in a constructive manner

to continuously improve employee development, resulting in more capable and confident fire

service leaders. Coaching has its place in every level of the fire service, from the new employee

to the most senior and tenured personnel (Hayes, 2017). The previous assertion was supported by

30% of the participants in this study, as they shared stories about how coaching helped their

personal leadership development or how they used it to help others. Therefore, making coaching

part of a leadership development program should be a consideration when implementing

leadership training geared toward ongoing development.

Using Coaching to Enhance Leadership Development in the Fire Service

    Coaching is a great way to develop future fire service leaders. Coaching can start with the officer providing constructive advice on appropriate leadership behaviors. When an officer witnesses an inappropriate behavior, they should immediately stop the behavior, explain why the behavior is wrong, and offer a more appropriate behavior for the situation. Again, this may seem overly simplistic, but immediate corrections and constructive feedback are a great way to establish positive behaviors early on before bad habits form. For example, if a senior firefighter is observed belittling a junior firefighter for a mistake, this behavior requires immediate correction. Instead, those with more experience must understand that correcting mistakes requires explaining why something is wrong and then offering plausible solutions that will lead to a reduction in future mistakes, as well as help individuals make more informed decisions. Therefore, leadership training that explains the importance of coaching and how to effectively coach individuals is an integral component of leadership training as it will help foster effective leadership behaviors at every level of an organization.

    Participant O24 provided a great example of coaching and why it is important to help others grow and learn,

        I think one of the things that I've done that I hope helps is when it's time for a promotional process, I send something out to the captains or lieutenants or whatever tests they are taking. I say, hey, I'm going to have an informal class. Then I give them some stuff that will help them prepare for the promotional exams and things that they need to think about. I want them to be able to feel a little more at ease when they go into the test. I always monitor how they've done, you know, where they scored and all that stuff. And then I ask for the feedback of what can I do to make it better? I've gotten a lot out of the

fire service, you know, I've been doing it since I was a kid and I've gotten a lot of good

stuff. And I think it's my responsibility to pass on that stuff to the next generation or even

the people that are directly behind me that are trying to eventually take my job. I want to

give them the tools that I've gotten along the way and pass that on.

Effectively Implementing Leadership Training

Beer et al. (2016) elucidated that organizations are systems of interacting elements such

roles, responsibilities, and relationships defined by organizational structure, processes, leadership

styles, professional and cultural backgrounds, and human resource (HR) policies and practices

that collectively drive organizational behavior and performance. Individual competencies geared

toward organizational strategy result in training programs that develop such competencies,

believing that organizational change will follow (Beer et al., 2016). It is often difficult for upper

management to acknowledge that a failure to execute strategy and change organizational

behavior is rooted not in individuals' deficiencies but, rather, in the policies and practices created

by top management (Beer et al., 2016). Therefore, carrying out goals and objective geared

toward organizational success requires open-minded leaders that can adapt by identifying and

correcting deficiencies. Producing and executing leadership training that yields ongoing

development is an absolute must for any organization. However, creating and implementing

training plans geared toward developing effective leaders requires a much more rigorous process

than an occasional training seminar. Instead, effective leader development, regardless of the type

of organization, requires on an ongoing process that builds on education, skills, and experiences

throughout an individual's career. There are many learning sources to enhance leader

development. Effective leadership development results from a combination of learning from

successes and failures, formal training and education, and feedback from followers, peers and supervisors (Bergquist & Mura, 2011).

Kouzes and Posner (2012) posited that leadership requires constant reflection, practice, and commitment. Organizations that encourage everyone to act as a leader, regardless of title or position, yield exceptional outcomes; however, such results rely on approaching leadership as a developmental process (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Snyder et al. (2018) asserted that understanding organizational culture and developing training programs that yield participatory and collaborative climates require innovative methods and processes. Tabak and Lebron (2017) asserted that role-plays and simulations can increase cognitive ability because they focus on real-life leadership situations that increase an individual's analytical and decision-making skills. Role-play and simulations can also enhance affective learning by increasing important leadership attributes such as empathy. For example, such exercises can change views and attitudes toward issues or people and increase participation that creates positive leader behaviors as students are motivated by each other's experience and feedback (Tabak & Lebron, 2017). Tabak and Lebron (2017) asserted that there are several studies that show that simulations promote learning retention by encouraging learners to employ multiple senses, take ownership of their role, resulting in a lasting and more easily recalled memories. While the types of training and incremental learning are crucial to effective leadership development, it is also important to employ the right management principles to ensure that leadership development programs are implemented properly. Understanding and applying business process improvement strategies are a great way to successfully implement the right leadership training programs for an organization.

Leadership Development Initiatives Require Effective Management Principles

Writing about implementing effective leadership development programs cannot go without at least some discussion about management as most fire departments around the country struggle to balance funding for operations, which is an integral task associated with effective business management. It is likely that most fire departments forgo leadership training because of a lack of funding. Although, a lack of funding was not a theme that arose in the study, that is likely because the interview questions were not structured in a manner to address this topic. However, Starnes (2017) asserted that budget cuts are affecting fire departments of all sizes resulting in short-staffing and in some cases closures of fire stations. These budget cuts result in retention problems, compliance issues, maintaining equipment, and reduced training that can hinder operations, jeopardizing the safety of both firefighters and the public (Starnes, 2017). Holder (2016) also explained that as the fire service undergoes significant transformation that its scope continues to expand, placing a greater burden on providing services within budget constraints. Therefore, Holder (2016) made a case for the implementation of more innovative management techniques and tools (e.g., strategic planning) to help guide fire service leaders to achieve more plausible outcomes. However, creating a strategic plan is only half the battle. Even the best laid plan is only good if it is implemented effectively and this requires knowledge of varying business management processes and techniques (Arend et al., 2017).

Strategic planning is a complex venture and requires a great deal of knowledge and understanding to ensure it works effectively (Arend et al., 2017). However, many fire department leaders are unaware of effective management techniques that can help trim the fat and perhaps free up some funds for needed programs such as leadership development training. Pinsky (2017) asserted that fire service leaders often lack an understanding of management and while there is a

value in the topic of leadership, leadership alone will not foster a successful organization. This

researcher agrees with the previous assertion based upon John Kotter's theory of leadership

verses management. Kotter (2012) explained that leadership and management are different but

complimentary and of equal importance to ensure successful organizational outcomes.

Another familiar argument is that effective leadership is not measurable, making it

difficult to justify funding for training programs. Business process management (BPM) involves

organizing around outcomes, correcting and improving processes, establishing processes and

assigning ownership, standardizing processes to enhance understanding and management, error

reduction, and risk mitigation (AIIM, 2020). Ultimately, BPM enables continuous change and

improvements over time improving existing processes, rather than building radically new ones,

as such tasks are arduous and often erode any gains (AIIM, 2020). While there are many tools

associated with BPM that can help measure the success of leadership training programs, a

department must first decide what outcomes they wish to achieve and then they can measure

them. Improvement measurement is achieved by listing desired outcomes and creating surveys

that will help measure the effectiveness of desired outcomes. For example, if a department

wishes to increase effective communication, a crucial element of effective leadership, then

surveys focusing on this concept will help measure the results of training programs implemented

to improve effective communication. Although this seems overly simplistic, it is an easy way to

measure the effectiveness of varying leadership training initiatives. Ebrahimi Mehrabani and

Azmi Mohamad (2015) asserted that their study provides support for reliability and validity of

appropriate questionnaires as an acceptable measure of leadership skills development and

effectiveness. Knowledge sharing has benefits for both the employees and the organization. For

example, firefighters will develop their skills and increase their performance and then share their

experiences with management, providing pertinent information so upper management can make a case for increased funding for leadership programs.

Important benefits arise from knowledge management (KM). KM is the process that organizations use to identify, capture, evaluate, retrieve, and share information so that organizational outcomes and performance is enhanced (Santoro et al., 2018). Employee surveys are an effective way to gain such knowledge. Some benefits of KM include increased organizational performance, increased efficiency, increased productivity, increased quality and innovation, better decision making, improving processes, data integration, and broad collaboration (Ebrahimi Mehrabani & Azmi Mohamad, 2015). Knowledge management is enhanced with the use of business process improvement (BPI) techniques and fire service leaders will greatly benefit if they can increase their understanding of various business process management tools. BPI and its associated management tools provide a systematic approach to help organizations optimize their underlying processes and to achieve efficiency, making them an important topic to explore (Ahmed et al., 2019). The Theory of Constraints (TOC) and Kaizen are examples of BPIs that can help fire departments not only implement continuous improvement in programs but measure their results.

Explaining the Theory of Constraints (TOC)

The TOC provides a tool that helps analyze and synthesize situations and scenarios both abstractly and concretely, allowing for new insights and understandings that lead to innovation and change (Snyder et al., 2018). The TOC began in 1979 as an Optimized Production Timetables scheduling software, and later evolved into a suite of integrated management tools encompassing three interrelated areas: logistics/production, performance measurement, and problem-solving/thinking tools (Watson et al., 2007). The TOC is now a popular management

philosophy with a focus on continuous improvement which brings about improved

organizational performance in many areas such as product marketing, project management,

delivery of services, and yes, even leadership training (Pacheco et al., 2019). Antunes (1998),

Cox and Spencer (1997), Simatupang et al. (1997), and Tsou (2013) explained that the TOC

consists of step-by-step processes focused on continuous improvement of logistics and

operations, performance indicators that can identify gains and operating expenses in services and

processes, and a thinking process oriented toward solving problems, making the TOC an

excellent consideration for the implementation of leadership training and development (Pacheco

et al., 2019). The TOC is a potent tool used to identify and address improvement in many

different areas. However, Watson et al. (2007) asserted that many overlook the use of this

powerful tool because of its association with operational strategy, instead of a shift in

organizational philosophy, measurement, and practices that could lead to necessary changes in

process and practices such as leader development. Therefore, it is recommended that fire

department managers educate themselves on how the TOC can help develop and implement

strategic plans that include leadership development initiatives within their departments.

Using TOC to Implement Leadership Development Training in the Fire Service.

Similar to many other organizations, funding for leadership programs is an issue and will

require an innovative approach. An example of using the TOC for the implementation of

leadership training is the consideration of adding elements of leadership development into

existing programs. Using existing programs will help enhance current training programs and

enhance leadership training incrementally and without the cost of new programs and the hiring of

more instructors. For example, implementing specific departmental leadership principles into

programs such as Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II, Fire Officer III, and so on, which are part of the

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1021: Standard for Fire Officer Professional

Qualifications. Existing Fire Officer classes require minimum standards established by the NFPA

1021, but as long as the minimum requirements are met there is nothing stopping a department

from adding specific leadership components to ensure continuity of leader behavior throughout

their organization. While NFPA Fire Officer classes offer a little information on leadership,

expanding on departmental approaches toward effective leadership is a great way to

communicate departmental values and expectations regarding leader behavior. Such an approach

will save time and money when compared to creating sporadic, stand-alone, leadership classes.

This idea addresses the TOC principles by improving the logistics of program delivery,

enhancing operations by increasing firefighter knowledge on leadership, feedback from training

provides measurable performance indicators regarding effective leadership behaviors without

increasing operating expenses, and all is a direct result of a thinking process oriented toward

solving problems. This previous example shows how and why the use of the TOC makes an

excellent consideration for the implementation of leadership training and development. Although

this study considers the benefits of the TOC, other continuous process improvement tools may

also help effectively implement leadership training in an organization.

Explaining Kaizen

Kaizen is a continuous improvement (CI) tool that is used in all aspects of life from

personal, social, and work life (Alvarado-Ramírez et al., 2018). The desired results from using

Kaizen lie within its Japanese roots, "Kai" meaning change and "Zen" meaning for the better;

change for the better (Alvarado-Ramírez et al., 2018). Alvarado-Ramírez et al. (2018) explained

that Kaizen is a process-oriented and human-based CI approach that leads to ongoing

improvement by ensuring the efforts of all people within the organization, resulting in ongoing

improvement that leads to permanent and positive results. Kaizen is a popular tool used by many

different types and sizes of businesses around the world because it helps to improve

accountability and commitment from employees at all levels of an organization (Midiala et al.,

2016). Buick et al. (2018) asserted that when people feel informed and empowered to make

decisions, they are more likely to support change and Kaizen is a great tool for implementing

changed based on continuous improvement practices. Kaizen yields effective teamwork as it aids

with the development of human capital in both a systematic and holistic approach (Marin-Garcia

et al., 2018). For example, Kaizen inspires participation and commitment from top management

down to the lowest-skilled member of an organization, making everyone feel like an essential

part of the team (Marin-Garcia et al., 2018). Kaizen's is an all-inclusive approach that focuses on

developing all individuals making it a great tool for implementing effective leadership

development programs in the fire service.

      Using Kaizen to Implement Leadership Development Training in the Fire Service.

Kaizen is another great BPI tool that fire department managers should educate themselves on

how to use. Although CI tools such as Kaizen have a history of effectiveness, the use of such a

process requires an understanding of its concepts and how to implement it. However, in its

simplest form, Kaizen is about small incremental steps, making it a marathon and not a sprint.

Therefore, setting goals and coming up will small changes offers a way to reach strategic goals

without breaking the budget or meeting resistance that interferes with proper implementation of

new processes. Kaizen requires the commitment of senior management to effectively drive

change (Cheng, 2018). For example, a lack of commitment from senior leadership will likely

influence employees to resists the change. Kaizen itself is a leadership philosophy that inspires

teamwork by offering a way to make each person invested in changes (Emiliani, 2016). From a

leadership training aspect small incremental steps can start with the initial training of recruits and continue throughout a firefighter's career. As previously discussed, certain programs exist to train firefighters as they move through the ranks. Providing leadership training as individuals move through the ranks provides the perfect opportunity to incorporate leadership training within each program. Such an approach provides a developmental process that will build on previous leadership training. In fact, effective leadership should consist in every type and level of training as this will match the Kaizen philosophy of small, incremental changes, which will make effective leadership behaviors an accepted and more natural behavior. Another benefit of Kaizen is it allows senior management to enhance their leadership skills by developing other people. Developing individuals is a critical aspect of effective leadership as it will result in the creation of a team of dedicated and capable people that can help improve the organization by efficiently and effectively carrying out the required goal and objectives (Emiliani, 2016). Kaizen can help not only develop and implement strategic plans but also successfully integrate plans into action by ingraining appropriate actions and behavior into the organizational culture. Therefore, it would help fire service leaders to research business tools that can help improve and measure crucial processes and programs within individual departments.

Potential Themes and Perceptions

This researcher expected to find that little to no leadership training exists within the Metro D.C. area fire departments, which was found to be true. It was also expected that the participants would express the importance of leadership training and specific behaviors associated with effective leadership (e.g., Kouzes and Posner's five practices of an exemplary leader would be identifiable and accepted practices across departments). For example, this researcher believed that there would be an agreement on specific traits, behaviors and skills that

a fire service leader should possess. However, this previous assertion was not correct. Therefore,

no specific traits, skills or behaviors were identified across the participants' responses. Most

participants had difficulty identifying the difference between a trait, behavior and skill. However,

all the participants shared stories involving experiences with one or more of the five practices of

exemplary leadership and 60% believed that the five practices offer a strong foundation for

leadership training in their departments. It was also suspected that if leadership training did exist

within departments, it was more likely sporadic and not structured in a manner that promotes

leadership development throughout one's career, which was a correct assertion. This researcher

also believed that the absence of leadership development training would be because of a lack of

funds, but the subject was barely mentioned. Furthermore, it was expected that senior

management may not understand the importance of leadership development and underestimate

how a lack of leadership can hinder teamwork and have a negative effect on organizational

outcomes such as the successful completion of operational objectives. Although a particular

theme regarding a lack of understanding by senior management did not arise, participants did

share stories regarding destructive leadership actions where senior management were

disconnected with the needs of field personnel and the efficient and effective completion of

operational objectives were hindered by poor or absent leadership.

Summary of the Literature Review

This exhaustive review of current research provided support that the proposed problem

exists, offered some solutions for addressing and correcting leadership development, and made

recommendations about how to successfully implement the right training programs in fire

departments across the United States. Effective leadership is the driver of organizational

performance making leadership development crucial to all types and sizes of organizations,

including the fire service. While there is a vast amount of research on leadership, there are few scholarly studies on effective leadership in the fire service. This study aimed to provide another body of research to not only bring awareness to a crucial issue affecting the fire service but also as a platform to build future studies. This literature review explained leadership by discussing crucial concepts that lead to effective leadership and provided a discussion and recommendations for implementing effective leadership training for leadership development in the fire service. Although this review offered scholarly support of this researcher's assertions, it was equally important to conduct an in-depth study that further supported the results of this literature review. Therefore, the study focused on several departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area which helped gather qualitative data from firefighting personnel that have experienced the research phenomena. The data from the 50 participants, 27 officers and 23 firefighters, supported the assertions of the literature review, the theoretical framework, and the research questions that were designed to prove that the proposed research problem exists and offer solutions to address the problem.

Transition and Summary of Section 1

The foundation of the study explored the following specific problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The foundation of this study was a crucial first step because it arranged the research in a systematic way to ensure an organized and methodical approach toward answering the research questions, which were designed to explore and support the proposed research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The foundation provided the assumptions of this researcher and a conceptual framework that was used to systematically

research the proposed research problem via a series of research questions. The extensive

literature review further supported the assumptions of this researcher and a conceptual

framework. Section 2 used the assumptions and conceptual framework to explore each research

problem. Interview questions were developed to gather and explore leadership training and

development in the U.S. Fire Service based on the real-life experiences of firefighters and

officers of different ranks and experience levels, in four Metro D.C. fire departments. Based

upon participant feedback, this study concluded that leadership training is not consistently

provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire

departments and the lack of such training does hinder leadership development and ultimately

affects teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. Ninety-eight percent of the

participants' experiences explained that no formal leadership training exists within their

departments and only 38% are starting to experience some level of formal leadership training.

Also, 74% of the participants have experienced destructive leadership, which has often hindered

the efficient and effective completion of operation objectives and resulted in negative

implications on teamwork.

Section 2: The Project

The qualitative nature of this study began with the use of a conceptual framework that shows how each research question is addressed. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explained, a qualitative research problem is explored via an emerging inquiry, data collection within the natural setting of the participants, and data analysis that establishes patterns and themes via inductive and deductive reasoning. The study portion of the dissertation focused on gathering qualitative data via interviews to explore the following proposed problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within the Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. Exploring the research problem from the perspective of firefighters and officers at differing levels of their career offered a deeper insight into how different fire service organizations may address leadership training and development in their respective departments. The research problem was intended to identify if leadership training exists and to what extent, determine the importance of effective leadership practices and how these practices affect teamwork, and the overall importance of leadership and teamwork in regard to carrying out operational objectives in the fire service.

Three research questions and several subsequent research questions guided the research. Interview questions were carefully designed to explore each research question and provide data that support and begins to solve the proposed research problem. The findings of the research made a strong case for implementing leadership training programs that foster leadership development throughout a firefighter's career, identified common leadership practices that can translate to departments across the United States, exposed how crucial effective leadership is to accomplish effective teamwork, and provided solid research that supports the importance of

leadership and teamwork for successfully carrying out operational objectives. Although the fire

service does not have a governing entity that sets nationwide standards that all departments must

adhere to, there are many professional standards, practices, and traditions adopted throughout

different departments across the United States. Therefore, this study was designed to identify the

need for more consistent leadership training that focuses on ongoing development, changing the

way the fire service leaders view effective leadership and leadership training within their

departments. Since few studies exist on the importance of effective leadership in the fire service,

the results of this study are a crucial step to move toward future studies that will fill the

tremendous gaps in scholarly research concerning the importance of effective leadership in the

fire service and the need for ongoing training that yields leadership development verses sporadic

or no training at all.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of

firefighters at varying levels of their career to gain a deeper understanding of if there is a lack of

leadership training throughout the career of firefighters within Metro Washington D.C. area fire

departments resulting in poor leader development that hinders effective teamwork required for

carrying out operational objectives. A phenomenological approach exploring the personal

experiences of firefighters and officers at varying ranks and different years of experience

allowed for a deeper understanding of how a lack of leadership training throughout their career

has hindered leadership development, ultimately affecting their ability to either function within,

or lead a team. Since a phenomenological design allows a researcher to describe what the study

participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomena, this design was crucial to

the study because there is little to no scholarly research that supports the proposed research

problem (Van de Ven, 2016). Therefore, this study was intended to explore if a problem exists

so that future research not only supports the proposed problem but also offers solutions to rectify

the problem.

     The proposed problem was thoroughly researched using an exhaustive literature review

of current research and an in-depth study to explore if fire department leadership training

programs exist, and if so, how such programs are implemented, and how a lack of these

programs may affect leader development and effective teamwork that is needed to fulfill

operational objectives successfully. Therefore, this research looked at several of the largest

departments in the Metro Washington D.C. area to gain information that may help identify

specific leadership issues and explain why such issues are occurring. Specifically, this study

explored if leadership training exists at varying levels of a firefighter's career, why and how

firefighters may benefit from leadership training at varying levels of their career, how leadership

development enhances teamwork and influences effective completion of organizational

objectives and explain why poor leadership development may hinder operational objectives,

ultimately reducing organizational success. Identifying a consistent set of issues shared across

multiple departments of similar sizes and demographics could lead to a better understanding of

specific leadership problems that exist and why such problems exist, thereby leading to a

solution or set of solutions that can improve leadership training and development practices.

Providing solutions to enhance leadership and teamwork will result in the development of

effective leaders that will enhance the fire service's ability to effectively and efficiently complete

organizational objectives. These findings will also translate to organizations of all types and

sizes.

The Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research provides an opportunity to develop and exchange insight about a subject where little knowledge exists (Roger et al., 2018). Roger et al. (2018) explained that qualitative research is about learning more via a deep exploration of individual experiences of others. Qualitative research begins with the creation of a proposed research problem. Then the researcher develops research questions designed to answer the research problem. Finally, the researcher archives data by creating interview questions that provides feedback about the experiences of the participants. Since this study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach, the role of this qualitative researcher was to ensure the exploration and analysis of the experiences of participants that share a specific research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the phenomenological approach explores individual experiences, finds what participant have in common and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience based on what and how individuals experienced the research phenomenon.

Since qualitative research is interpretive a researcher can often bring their background and experiences to the investigation, which could result in biases based on personal beliefs, causing improper analysis of data (Roger et al., 2018). Therefore, the choice of phenomenological approach will play a crucial role in reducing the personal biases of this researcher, based upon the experiences with the researched phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) discussed two approaches to phenomenology, hermeneutic and transcendental, also known as empirical or psychological phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive, does not offer a set of rules or methods, and focuses on the researcher's interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants based upon essential

themes that arise out of the individual experiences of interviewees (Creswell & Poth, 2018). On the other hand, transcendental phenomenology offers a systemic approach for data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling textual and structural data, making it the preferred choice for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the transcendental approach focuses less on the researcher's interpretation and more on the description of the participant's experiences, this approach offers a framework that will add to the validity of the research. Reducing bias is always an important role of the researcher. However, Creswell and Poth (2018) also noted that knowledge and experience of the research phenomenon is best as it helps the researcher interpret the data more accurately, making this researcher's experience on the topic an asset. van Manen (2015) asserted that "a real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by 'actively doing it' (as cited in Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). Therefore, Creswell and Poth (2018) explained the use of bracketing as a description of the researcher's experiences with the phenomenon, bracketing out his or her views before proceeding with the experiences of others. For example, bracketing allowed this researcher to set aside personal experiences and get a fresh perspective based on the experience of others yet rely on personal experience that leads to a deeper interpretation and understanding of participant responses. Since it is recommended that social researcher's offer full disclosure of their biases by either neutralizing or bracketing their biases, this researcher used the transcendental approach to make every effort to stick to the analysis of data given by the participants, reducing any personal bias (Roger et al., 2018).

Proper data collection is also crucial to ensure reliability and validity of the data. Transcendental phenomenology allows for systematic steps that start with the research problem, identifies and describes the phenomenon, distinguishes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions (refer to Section 1: Foundation of the study), collects data from individuals that

experienced the phenomenon using in-depth and multiple interviews, generates themes based

upon data, develops textural and structural descriptions, uses a composite description to explain

the essence of the phenomenon, and present the understanding of the essence in written form

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the interviews were paramount to ensure quality data for the

study. Creswell and Poth (2018) elucidated that several types of data collection approaches exist

in qualitative research, these are interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials.

This study used individual interviews as the source of the data. Although it was preferable to

conduct in person interviews, the COVID-19 pandemic forced this researcher to use web-based

platforms to conduct the interviews. It was the responsibility of this researcher to ensure the most

comfortable environment for all participants, therefore, participants were given the choice to

choose between a web-based or in-person interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was also the role

of this researcher to create open ended and general questions that facilitated an understanding of

the investigated phenomenon of the study and confirm that the participants understood the

questions that they were being asked (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Besides data collection and analysis, a primary role of the qualitative researcher is to

gather and analyze research in an honest and ethical manner by safeguarding participants and

their responses used for data (Roger et al., 2018). Therefore, ethical considerations are required

in every aspect of the research such as identifying and contacting participants, conducting

interviews or administering surveys, and analyzing data. All participants were reassured that

their identity was confidential, responses were confidential (no names were used), they were

protected from any repercussions based on their responses, and all responses were accurately

reported in the data. Also, allowing participants to check the accuracy of their responses both

during and after the interview not only ensured honest and ethical reporting of data but also

offered another way to help eliminate researcher biases, as well as checking for accuracy and clarity of responses.

Lastly, qualitative research requires that a researcher is capable of good social interaction and the ability to build relationships, which means a researcher must possess both strong interpersonal skills and the ability to network (Roger et al., 2018). Therefore, good communication, empathy and connecting with others plays a crucial role in qualitative research. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explained, finding individuals that have experienced the research phenomenon can often prove difficult. The ability to network across organizations, in this case fire departments across the Metro D.C. area, allowed this researcher to find participants that identified with the researched phenomenon. Therefore, this researcher contacted various departments to obtain permission from upper-level management to reach out to fire service personnel and request contact via email. The email consisted of an explanation of the research phenomenon, explained the purpose of the research and invited individuals that have experienced the phenomenon to voluntarily participate in interviews, reassuring them that their participation will remain confidential.

Participants

While qualitative studies require a smaller sample size than quantitative studies, the sample must still be large enough to describe the phenomenon and address the research question (Statistic Solutions, n.d.). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative researchers try to develop a holistic account of a complex problem by reporting multiple perspectives, identifying many factors affecting a problem, and sketching out the larger picture that emerges. More specifically, a phenomenological approach is designed to form a deeper understanding of a problem by interviewing participants who have all experienced the research phenomenon and

then use the participant's experiences to foster a deeper understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the researcher selects participants and sites that will lead to purposefully inform the understanding of both the research problem and the central phenomenon of the study. Therefore, a purposeful research sample requires the researcher to decide who or what is sampled, how many people and/or sites need sampled, and align sampling with the chosen qualitative approach, in this case phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The way a researcher conducts purposeful sampling is dependent upon the type of qualitative research approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological approach often has a narrower sampling range because it is essential that all participants experienced the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that phenomenological studies have ranged from 1 to 325 participants. Moser and Korstjens (2018) cautioned that sampling numbers are very tentative and do not always mean small sample figures. The generally small sample size in qualitative research depends on the data, the variety of participants, broadness of the research question and the phenomenon, data collection method (e.g., individual or focus groups) and the type of sampling strategy (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Statistic Solution (n.d.) recommended a sample size that reaches saturation, or the point where adding more participants does not provide any additional information. As Moser and Korstjens (2018) explained, it is crucial to ensure that there are enough in-depth data showing the patterns, categories and variety of the phenomenon under study. This researcher followed the recommendations of Moser and Korstjens (2018) and was willing to carry out more interviews if needed to confirm that data saturation was reached. However, more interviews were not necessary. The number of participants used in this study was representative of the total number

of participants that volunteered to participate in this study. While the goal was to select 56

participants from four different Metro D.C. fire departments, 28 career firefighter and 28 career

officers, there were not enough participants to reach this goal. Instead, a total of 50, 27 officers

and 23 firefighters, participated in this study. This subject will be discussed in detail in the

population and sampling section of this study.

Moser and Korstjens (2018) described sampling as selecting or searching for situations,

context and/or participants who provide rich data of the phenomenon. Qualitative research

requires deliberate sampling versus random sampling. Moser and Korstjens (2018) asserted that

purposive sampling, criterion sampling, theoretical sampling, convenience sampling and

snowball sampling are the most commonly used types of deliberate or purposeful sampling used

in qualitative research. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018), criterion sampling is the best

approach for a phenomenological approach. Criterion sampling requires that participants meet

predefined criteria such as having experience with the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, this

researcher looked for participants who shared the research phenomenon but vary in

characteristics and individual experiences, such as rank and years of experience on the job.

Marshall and Rossman (2014) explained that the decision about who and what to sample should

involve people, actions, events and/or processes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since a qualitative

researcher can sample at the site level, event or process level, and participant level it is

recommended that each level is identified (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants for this study were recruited via email, after departmental approval was

achieved. The email stated the research phenomenon, the purpose of the study and asked any

individuals that had experienced the phenomenon to voluntarily participate in the study, which

included a maximum of two one-on-one interviews. The participants were chosen based on first,

if they had experienced the research phenomenon. Then, participants were equally chosen based on rank and years of experience. Participants were also be chosen by their respective departments so that the sample size was as equal as possible across rank, years of experiences and the departments where the participants experienced the research phenomenon. This proved challenging due to the number and demographics of the participants. Ultimately, the goal of 56 participants was reduced to 50 due limited participant responses, mainly from firefighters in Department C.

Since people's time is precious it was important to conduct interviews within a reasonable timeframe. For example, it was difficult to balance schedules based on the 24 on duty 48 off duty schedules of the participants, as well as the fact that they would be commuting from different jurisdictions around the D.C. area. Participants were also very busy with family obligations, second jobs and other factors that led to a hectic schedule. Most of the participants preferred to participate in web-based meeting instead of making the difficult commute in D.C. area traffic. While there is not a hard-fast rule on the length of time for an interview or focus group, Englander (2012) suggested one to two-hour timeframes for interviews. Ultimately, the participants must be comfortable with the allotted time. Therefore, each interview consisted of approximately one hour so that participant's precious time was valued. Most of the interviews were completed within an hour and those that ran longer were by the participant's choice. Although time was allotted for a second interview if needed, no participant was asked to participate in a second interview as the initial interview allowed ample time to answer all of the interview questions.

Englander (2012) advocated for preliminary meetings with participants to help establish trust by reviewing ethical considerations, to make sure they understand the research phenomenon

by reviewing research questions and completing consent forms, which was considered when

scheduling two interviews if needed. However, the handout of the research questions and an

explanation of the five practices of leadership proved to be beneficial. There was no need for a

pre-interview to explain the questions and participants attended the interview prepared to reflect

on their experience. Also, providing the consent form ahead of the interview not only allowed for

a more informed participant but also saved time as it allowed a full focus on the interview

questions and the participant's responses. Having plenty of time to ensure that each participant

understood the interview questions as they relate to the research phenomenon aided this

researcher in getting a richer description of experiences (Englander, 2012). Although some may

argue that an interviewee could start to self-interpret the interview questions instead of providing

spontaneous and raw answers, Englander (2012) argued that this is not the case as self-

interpretations tend to increase the richness of the data based on trust derived from a deeper

understanding that the pre-interview process provides. Considering phenomenology centers on a

rich description of the research phenomenon from the lens of the participant, self-reflection

sparked from an understanding of the interview questions helped participants provide the best

description of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, providing the research

questions and explanation of the five practices of leadership ahead of the interview proved to be

beneficial.

Research Method and Design

A research method is a technique, process or strategy that a researcher uses to collect and

analyze data to either uncover new information or create a better understanding about a research

topic (The University of New Castle, 2019). Research methods are either quantitative, qualitative

or mixed methods. The choice of method is dependent upon which technique will yield the best

data needed to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For example, Williams

(2007) explained that the chosen research method centers on the researcher's anticipation of the

type of information that is needed to address the research question. A quantitative method is

appropriate when the researcher wishes to gather numerical data to identify patterns or

relationships, and generalizations, such as how much or how often something occurs, whereas

the qualitative approach seeks to gather information about life experiences, emotions, or

behaviors about complex problems related to social and cultural phenomenon and the meanings

behind them (University of New Castle Library Guides, 2019). The mixed methods combine

both quantitative and qualitative methods; reporting, analyzing, and synthesizing statistical and

textural data (University of New Castle Library Guides, 2019).

Discussion of the Method

As discussed in the both the foundation of the study and the literature review, leadership

and culture are essential topics for any organization as a leader's actions influence culture more

than any other single factor (Krapfl & Kruja, 2015). Leadership often links to social and cultural

behaviors. For example, the Duncan (2018) article explained that changing an outdated or toxic

culture requires new leaders that impart the right values and behaviors needed to make a positive

organizational culture change. A qualitative approach and its associated design are the best

approach when it is necessary to explore or investigate a problem that requires a complex and

detailed understanding of an issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative approach was best for

this study because it allowed this researcher to gather information about life experiences,

emotions, and behaviors of the participants to help solve a complex problem (Duncan, 2018).

Therefore, a qualitative research method aided in uncovering possible cultural leadership issues

that are affecting the fire service by exploring the personal experiences and thoughts of varying experience levels and ranks of fire service personnel throughout different departments.

Gelling (2015) elucidated that a qualitative approach allows for an exploration of human experiences in both personal and social environments, which leads to a greater understanding of the factors that influence individual experiences. Kelly (2017) further explained that qualitative data offers a reliable method that helps solve real-world problems by observing the behaviors of others. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that a qualitative method is driven by a philosophical and interpretive framework that consists of the following five phases: the perspectives and experiences of the researcher, the philosophical assumptions guided by the researcher's beliefs, the researcher's choice of design, methods of collection and analysis, and an explanation of contributing factors that lead to the researcher's rigor, inferences, and use of findings. Qualitative research lends to a holistic account of a problem by reporting multiple perspectives, identification of a multitude of factors affecting the situation, ultimately rendering a big picture approach that best describes the complex factors associated with the stated problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A conceptual framework is an imperative element of a qualitative research because it provides a blueprint of the methodology of a study by outlining a researcher's concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories (Astalin, 2013). Astalin (2013) explained that the conceptual framework is not written in stone and should change as new themes or findings arise. The Jewish Council (n.d.) supported Astalin (2013) when they asserted that a conceptual framework is a partner to the dissertation and a researcher should update it as needed. The conceptual framework of this study was designed to help this researcher both explore and achieve a deeper understanding of whether leadership training exists at varying levels of a

firefighter's career, why and how firefighters may benefit from leadership training at varying

levels of their career, how leadership development enhances teamwork and influences effective

completion of organizational objectives and explain why poor leadership development may

hinder operational objectives, ultimately reducing organizational success.

This exploration was guided by several research questions, as well as subsequent research

questions that guide the literature review. Next, the project portion of this study used interviews

to identify and explain the first concept of the framework, which is the identification of key

concepts and emerging themes. Interview questions helped identify the key concepts and

common themes that arose based on the experiences of the participants. The application of

coding techniques aided in the identification of these themes and was applied to the findings of

the literature review and was used to either support the research problem or adapt the research to

the findings of the data. Concept two of the framework helped identify the presence or absence

of Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership and explore if the five practices of

exemplary leadership exist in the fire service as well as determine if these principals are a solid

foundation for fire service leadership. Collectively, concepts one and two were used to determine

the presence or absence of formal leadership training, whether leadership training is

developmental, sporadic or absent, as well as identify how effective leadership practices such as

Kouzes and Posner's five practices could help develop effective leaders, and how an absence of

developmental leadership training can affect teamwork and hinder operational objectives. The

final concept of the framework looked at the possibility of using servant, transformational and

situational leadership models as a foundation for leadership training that aligns with the cultural

behaviors in the fire service, explore how well these three leadership styles align with Kouzes

and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership, and explain how aligning the right

behaviors, and practices with ongoing training can enhance leader development, improve

teamwork, and ensure that operational objectives are competed efficiently and effectively.

Virginia Tech University Libraries (2018) asserted that while research methods and

designs are different, they are also closely related in that a good design ensures that the data

collected will help answer the research question more effectively. Simply put, a research method

provides a strategy to implement a plan to collect and analyze data and a research design

provides the appropriate framework to answer the research questions (Astalin, 2013). For

example, a qualitative research design describes the purpose of research, the role of the

researcher, the stages of research, and the analysis method (Astalin, 2013). Creswell and Poth

(2018) explained that the five most common designs are narrative, case study, grounded theory,

ethnography, and phenomenology, which were discussed in-depth in the foundation of this study.

Discussion of the Design

A qualitative approach could consist of many different designs and is dependent upon

which approach best suits the researcher's focus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research design of

this study used a phenomenological approach to explore, understand, and discover essential

information about how to enhance leadership development within the fire service. While each

approach has its place in research, a phenomenological design was the choice for this study. The

phenomenological approach helped this researcher explore the research problem and answer the

research questions by interviewing a group of people that have experienced the research

phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that a

phenomenological research design helps a researcher identify and describe a common meaning

based on the experiences shared by individuals that have lived the phenomenon. Therefore, this

study focused on the lived experiences of firefighters and officers in four Metro D.C. area fire

departments that had experience with the following research problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within the Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. This study was designed to capture the lived experiences of firefighters throughout different departments, as well as differing ranks and years of service within each department.

Gelling (2015) elucidated that the development of research questions is one of the most crucial elements in any research design because it narrows the focus of the research, allowing for the starting point of a project. The use of individual interviews helped answer crucial research questions based on the experiences of those living the investigated phenomenon transparently, adding to the authenticity and trustworthiness of this qualitative research approach (Kelly, 2017). For example, exploring the thoughts and experiences of varying individuals within several large departments and at various ranks and levels of their career helped gain a deeper understanding of issues that may be hindering effective leadership within the fire service. Stake (2010) explained that professional knowledge depends on science, but each profession has a unique body of knowledge that separates it from scientific knowledge. After all, to truly understand human behavior, it is necessary to understand the world from the perspective of others (Gelling, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative approach was necessary to gain a deeper understanding of leadership issues within the fire service by allowing the researcher to explore multiple differing views from the newest and most inexperienced firefighters to those that are the most senior and experienced.

A phenomenological design not only allows for a deeper exploration based on experiences from multiple views, but it also allows for the identification of commonalities, which can lead to a deeper understanding of underlying issues associated with the phenomenon

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the main purpose of this research was to determine, based upon the experience of others, if the proposed problem does indeed exist, a phenomenological approach offered an appropriate design for this study. Price et al. (2013) explained that a phenomenon is "a general result that has been observed reliably in systematic empirical research" (Ch. 4, Phenomena, para. 1). A phenomenological design allows the researcher to describe what study participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomena allowing for common themes, or experiences shared by participants to arise (Van de Ven, 2016). Recognizing and identifying common occurrences helps reduce the researcher's bias and allows the information to flow from participant experiences rather than just theories or ideas. Since this study intended to prove that an issue exists so that future research will not only support the proposed problem but also provide solutions to rectify the problem, other designs did not seem appropriate because of limited research on fire service leadership. A phenomenological approach allowed for the exploration of the research problem from the lens of those experiencing it, resulting in the research needed to help make a case for the proposed problem, as well as offer solutions for rectifying the problem and offer a foundation for future research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For example, a phenomenological design was a good choice for this study because it used the experiences of fire service personnel to help explore, understand, and discover essential information about how to enhance leadership development within the fire service. Campbell (2014) explained that a phenomenological design aids in the exploration of a subject by drawing on the experiences of a group of individuals that share common experiences as they relate to a single phenomenon. Although a phenomenological design can prove challenging due to its complex philosophical, human science, and humanities traditions, it can offer deep insight into

everyday life and professional practices based on human experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2017).

Creswell and Poth (2018) cited several challenges associated with this type of design which is that its structure may prove too complicated for novice researchers, philosophical assumptions are often abstract and difficult to communicate into words, and the participants must be carefully chosen to ensure they are experiencing the phenomenon. However, this researcher's in-depth experience in the fire service and the investigated phenomenon helped overcome the previously cited issues. While such experience can also lead to bias, this researcher made every effort to limit such bias, which is addressed in detail later on in this section. Creswell and Poth (2018) further expounded that this type of design uses a thorough exploration into individual experiences to identify and describe what participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomenon. Therefore, gaining insight from the experiences of firefighters at varying level of their careers was integral to effectively answer each research questions and gaining a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by providing both awareness and solutions to the problem. While Astalin (2013) explained that phenomenological research may not always offer definitive explanations, it will at least raise awareness and increase insight about the phenomena, which could lead to many future studies on this crucial topic. None of the other four designs, narrative, case study, grounded theory and ethnography offer an in-depth exploration of proposed problem based on shared experiences of this important phenomenon, making the phenomenological design the best choice for exploring leadership issues in the fire service, which are often closely associated with organizational culture.

Qualitative research provides an opportunity to develop and exchange insight about a subject where little knowledge exists (Roger et al., 2018). Roger et al. (2018) explained that

qualitative research is about learning more via a deep exploration of individual experiences of others. Qualitative research begins with the creation of a proposed research problem. Then the researcher develops research questions designed to answer the research problem. Finally, the researcher archives data by creating interview questions that provides feedback about the experiences of the participants. Since this study uses a qualitative, phenomenological approach, the role of this qualitative researcher required the exploration and analysis of the experiences of participants that share a specific research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the phenomenological approach explores individual experiences, finds what participant have in common and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience based on what and how individuals experienced the research phenomenon.

Since qualitative research is interpretive it allows a researcher to bring their background and experiences to the investigation, which can result in biases based on personal beliefs resulting a skewed analysis of the data (Roger et al., 2018). However, Roger et al. (2018) explained that the choice of phenomenological approach can reduce the personal biases of researcher. A phenomenology design can be hermeneutic or transcendental (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As previously explained hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive but does not offer a systematic method to conduct research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, transcendental phenomenology offers a systemic approach for data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling textual and structural data, making it the best approach for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As Creswell and Poth (2018) explained, a transcendental approach focuses less on a researcher's interpretation and more on the participant's experiences and the common themes that arise from data, offering a fresh perspective on the phenomenon. Transcendental phenomenology starts with making sure the research problem is best addressed

using a phenomenological approach, identifies and describes the phenomenon of interest, distinguishes and specifies the broad philosophical studies, collects data, generate themes via analysis of the data, develops textural and structural descriptions, provides a composite description of the essence, and presents the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary of the Method and Design

A qualitative research method is a strategy used to collect and analyze data based on life experiences, emotions or behaviors concerning complex problems regarding social and cultural phenomena. Since effective leadership is linked to both social and cultural behaviors, a qualitative research method is the best choice to explore the experiences of the participants that share the research phenomena. However, a qualitative method also requires an appropriate design to ensure the proper investigation of the following research problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within the Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The phenomenological approach was the best suited design for this study because it permitted the participants to share their experiences of the research phenomena, allowing for a deep exploration of the research problem. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a phenomenological design is the key to establishing rich data based on real-world experiences of the participants, allowing the researcher to identify commonalities regarding the shared experiences of the phenomenon. Identifying and analyzing the commonalties associated with the participants' results in a deeper understanding of the issues associated with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Taking it a step further, the use of transcendental phenomenology added to the validity of the research because it provides a

systematic approach for data analysis and provides guidelines for assembling both textural and

structural data descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Population and Sampling

The population of the study was comprised of individuals that met the pre-determined

inclusionary criteria and were willing to participate in a research study (Asiamah et al., 2017).

Asiamah et al. (2017) explained that the population of a study starts with a general population

and moves toward a more specific group known as a target population. A sample population

involves an even smaller group and consists of not only those that meet specific criteria and are

willing to participate but are the individuals that are actually chosen to participate in the study

(Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The sample population consist of participants that were selected

based on meeting the inclusionary criteria, which defined the final sample of this study. The

population and sampling of this research is discussed in-depth not only to further explain the

terms but to also explain the criteria for selecting the participants of the study.

Discussion of Population

A general population of a study consists of the broad group of people that share common

characteristics that relate to a study but may not participate in the study (Asiamah et al., 2017).

Asiamah et al. (2017) explained that a general population may contain participants whose

inclusion in the study would violate the research goal, assumptions, and/or context. Therefore,

while they may be part of the general population, they may lack other characteristics that qualify

for them to participate in the study. For example, while the research questions addressed

firefighters in the U.S. fire service that may have experienced the research phenomena, the study

focuses on career firefighters from several departments in the Metro D.C. area that have

experienced the research phenomenon. Therefore, a general population such as *any firefighter*

will not meet the requirements of participants and will not be included in this phenomenological study.

The use of a more specific population known as a target population will assist in establishing selection criteria that eliminates individuals within the general population who cannot provide accurate and/or adequate information regarding the research phenomena (Asiamah et al., 2017). For example, firefighters that have not experienced the phenomenon. Therefore, the target population consisted of participants that met several inclusionary criteria. First, a participant must have experienced the following research phenomena: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within the Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. Second, a participant must be from one of several pre-selected fire departments in the Metro D.C. area. Third, participants must be either a career firefighter or officer with one to thirty plus years of experience within their respective departments. Besides choosing individuals that met the target criteria, participants must also have been willing and able to participate in the study, this group is referred to as the accessible population. Thus, the population of the study consisted of individuals that met the pre-determined selection criteria and were willing and able to participate in this study. The size of the target population was dependent upon the number of individuals that expressed interest in participating in this study, met the criteria, and followed through to participate in the study. Although 190 individuals responded across all four departments, many did not respond to further inquiry, failed to follow through with the interview, or did not meet inclusionary requirements.

Discussion of Sampling

A sample population consists of a smaller group of individuals that are selected based

upon not only specific criteria but also the ability to actively participate in the study (Moser &

Korstjens, 2018). As previously discussed, qualitative research requires deliberate or purposive

sampling of participants that can provide rich data of the phenomenon based on their experiences

(Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For example, criterion sampling focuses on people that hold special

and expert knowledge about the phenomenon and are willing to share their information and

insights. Moser and Korstjens (2018) regarded criterion sampling as the best method for

phenomenological research design, which was used in this study. Therefore, the sample

population consisted of willing participants that had experienced the research phenomenon, are

firefighters and officers of different ranks and experience levels in a Metro D.C. area fire

department that agreed to participate in the study and have one to thirty years of experience as

firefighters and five to thirty years of experiences as officers. The sample population consisted of

50 participants from four different Metro D.C. area fire departments, 23 career firefighters and

27 career officers. This sample was selected from 190 respondents and based upon the

participants willingness to participate, had experienced the research phenomenon, and are

firefighters or officers with varying experience levels and are career personnel in one of the four

Metro D.C. area fire departments selected for this study. The selected departments varied in size

and demographics. The inclusionary criteria were same for all individuals participating in the

interviews and every participant met the inclusionary data. The departments consisted of the

following populations: Department A has a career staff of approximately 1,400, Department B

has a career staff of approximately 400, Department C has a career staff of approximately 780,

and Department D has career staff of approximately 1300. Other demographics such as rank,

gender, and years of experience are represented in tables below.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants from Department A

	Department A		
Participant	Yrs. of Experience	Gender	Rank
F1	4	F	Firefighter
F2	15	M	Firefighter
F3	15	F	Firefighter
F4	17	F	Firefighter
F5	10	M	Firefighter
F6	10	M	Firefighter
F7	7	M	Firefighter
O1	29	M	Officer
O2	26	M	Officer
O3	26	M	Officer
O4	29	M	Officer
O5	20	F	Officer
O6	17	F	Officer
O7	16	M	Officer

Table 3

Demographics of Participants from Department B

	Department B		
Participant	Yrs. of Experience	Gender	Rank
F08	06	M	Firefighter
F09	06	M	Firefighter
F10	12	M	Firefighter
F11	07	M	Firefighter
F12	13	M	Firefighter
F13	04	M	Firefighter
F14	06	M	Firefighter

O08	14	F	Officer
O09	12	M	Officer
O10	13	M	Officer
O11	13	M	Officer
O12	13	M	Officer
O12	45	M	Officer
O14	13	M	Officer

Table 4

Demographics of Participants from Department C

Department C			
Participant	Yrs. of Experience	Gender	Rank
F15	11	M	Firefighter
F16	08	M	Firefighter
O15	10	M	Officer
O16	16	M	Officer
O17	32	M	Officer
O18	20	F	Officer
O19	21	M	Officer
O20	12	M	Officer

Table 5

Demographics of Participants from Department D

Department D			
Participant	Yrs. of Experience	Gender	Rank
F17	07	M	Firefighter
F18	19	F	Firefighter
F19	07	F	Firefighter
F20	04	M	Firefighter
F21	15	M	Firefighter
F22	09	M	Firefighter
F23	07	M	Firefighter
O21	15	M	Officer

O22	21	M	Officer
O23	14	M	Officer
O24	35	M	Officer
O25	09	M	Officer
O26	18	F	Officer
O27	16	M	Officer

Summary of Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of individuals that met the pre-determined selection criteria and were willing and able to participate in this study. The target population consisted of 190 individuals that expressed interest in participating in this study. The sample population was based on selecting individuals that held special and expert knowledge about the phenomenon via their lived experiences and were willing to share their information and insights. Based upon the response of the individual, the inclusionary criteria, and the willingness of the individual to follow through with the interview process, 50 participants, 23 career firefighters and 27 career officers, made up the sample of this study. Since ethics are a continuous consideration at every level of qualitative research this researcher ensured that each participants were well-informed about the purpose of the research and how each participant's identity and the information that they shared was protected and stored.

Data Collection

Data collection in a qualitative study consists of interrelated activities that gather the information necessary to answer the emerging research questions associated with qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Stake (2010) explained that qualitative research involves a comprehensive approach that is detailed, well rounded and contextual in nature. Creswell (2016) supported the Stake (2010) assertion when he elucidated that qualitative research is an inductive process that involves gathering data, grouping it into segments or codes, identifying common

themes, and then presenting the data into rich texts from the view of the participant's experiences

which requires the use of instruments and data collection and organization techniques.

Instruments

Generally speaking, a research instrument is a tool used to collect, measure and analyze

data such as surveys, scales, tests, and so on (Duquesne University, 2020). However, due to its

mostly inductive process the instruments used in qualitative research are a little different

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is important to note that qualitative research can also encompass

deductive reasoning but may be difficult for a reader to discern because of the multiple

perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2016). Therefore, qualitative research is less about

deductive processes that show cause and effect such as in quantitative research and more about a

deep exploration that results in a rich description of complex issues experienced by individuals,

making the researcher the main instrument in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2016). For example,

a qualitative researcher relies on multiple perspectives to address complex issues by analyzing,

synthesizing and explaining the data based upon the point of view of the participants.

Creswell and Poth (2018) further asserted that qualitative research involves more than

data collection and the procedures for data collection. A qualitative researcher must also

anticipate ethical issues associated with gaining permissions, a good sampling strategy, a plan for

recording information, a plan for responding to emerging field issues, and storing data securely,

making ethics a crucial instrument at every level of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, data collection for this study used what Creswell and Poth (2018) referred to as a

circle of interrelated activities to ensure all phases of the qualitative data process are covered.

The circle of interrelated activities will always center on ethical practices at every level of data

collection which consist of locating a site and individuals, gaining access and building a rapport,

use of purposeful sampling, data collection, recording information, exploring field issues, and

safely storing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This data will be gathered using a transcendental

phenomenological approach since is focuses on participants' experiences and less on this

researcher's interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The transcendental approach also

contributes to reliability and validity as it offers a systematic approach to answering the research

questions as previously described in The Role of the Researcher portion of this project (Creswell

& Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a researcher's open-ended questions are

the key instrument in qualitative research, reiterating that the researcher is a crucial instrument in

this study. Therefore, the main instruments of this study consisted of the researcher's analysis

and synthesis of the information collected from the open-ended questions designed to gain

responses from participants that have experienced the research phenomenon.

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that qualitative research faces many ethical concerns,

particularly in the data collection phase. The top three ethical concerns in qualitative research are

respect for individuals, welfare of individuals, and justice (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore,

this researcher considered and addressed all anticipated and emergent ethical issues associated

with this study, particularly in the areas of respecting participants by using privacy and consent

forms, protecting participant's wellbeing by minimizing harm and maintaining integrity, and

justice via equal treatment and inclusiveness for all that wished to participate. Every individual

wishing to participate in the study was provided a privacy and consent form that not only

explained the nature and purpose of the study, but also the explanation of assigning a number for

each participant to ensure their identity was protected. The forms also explained the selection

process to provide transparency on the selection criteria, starting with the top priority that an

individual must be a career firefighter or officer with one to 30 plus years of experience and have

experienced the research phenomenon. Once the participants were chosen, a meeting was offered

to go over the privacy and consent form to ensure that every participant understood each form as

well as ask any questions needed for clarification, before signing the forms. However, no formal

meeting was scheduled as few participants had questions and those that did used email, text or a

phone call to ask questions and set up an interview time.

Another area of ethical importance was obtaining permission from the institutional

review board (IRB; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that an IRB

provides evidence that a study follows the guidelines required for ethical research. The IRB

process requires that a researcher submit a proposal that details how the selection, access, and

permissions for both the individuals and the site are sought out; how selection, sampling, and

collection strategies are implemented, and how recording storage and use of information are

managed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study was approved by Liberty University's IRB before

the study was started.

Data Collection Techniques

Gaining access to research sites and individual participants requires gaining permission

from both the organization and each individual willing to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

There were several steps required to properly gain access. First, approval from Liberty's IRB

was required and gained. Therefore, this study was approved by the Institution Review Board of

Liberty University before any further steps were taken. Next, approval must be granted from

each fire department willing to participate in this study, which was documented with the

appropriate paperwork and signature from each Fire Chief. Finally, individual consent was

obtained from each participant via a signed document. A sample of each consent form was

provided for the approval of the IRB. The consent form included the right to withdraw from the

study at any time, an explanation of the purpose and procedures of the study (this includes a list

of criteria for selection), an explanation of confidentially and how it will be maintained, a list of

known risks associated with participation in the study, and an area for the signed

acknowledgment of each participant. A phenomenological design also requires a separate

consent that grants the researcher permission to study each participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, a consent form granting permission to study each participant was included and each

participant was asked to return the signed form prior to starting the interview, 100% of the

participant complied with this request. Finally, a list of the interview questions was included in

the IRB approval process. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that such elements of a consent

form help build a rapport with participants, which is an important first step to maintaining an

ethical study and building trust with the participants.

Proper procedures for selection of the research site and selection of individuals to

participate in the study is dependent upon the research design. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted

that the most important element for choosing an individual in a phenomenological study is that

every individual selected must have experienced the research phenomenon and be able and

willing to articulate there lived experiences associated with the phenomenon. Therefore, the

number one inclusion criteria must be that the individual has experienced the research

phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) cautioned that the more diverse the characteristics of the

individuals, the more difficult it will be to find common themes. While experience with the

phenomenon is important, it is equally important to consider other experiences of individuals

such as amount of time on the job as time and experience as it may change one's perception of

the phenomenon. Therefore, this researcher chose individuals from different ranks and level of

experience (time on the job) to explore what common themes arose regardless of rank or

experience. The sample population consisted of 50 career individuals, 27 officers and 23 firefighters, from four different Metro D.C. area fire departments. This researcher also selected individuals based on different ranks and time on the job to ensure a diverse representation of the four departments.

Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that field issues could affect data collection and therefore must be anticipated and addressed. Field issues could include inadequate data, leaving the site prematurely, or an unexpected error that results losing information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that researchers anticipate and address issues by thinking ahead about issues regarding gaining access to organizations, procedures for observations, dynamics between interviewer and interviewee, and the availability of documents and audiovisual materials. There were initially two areas of concern for this researcher, time management and working equipment. For example, there must be ample time to answer interview questions without participants feeling rushed but also considering that an individual's time is important. Therefore, the interviews were conducted off duty. Also, there was a consideration for scheduling two interviews with at least a one-week gap between other interviews to serve as a pilot to determine if the time allotted for interviews would be adequate and allowing time to adjust if necessary. However, it was found that this precaution was not necessary. Another that could have arisen was malfunctioning equipment such as the audio recording devices. This issue was addressed by having several devices on hand, extra batteries, and a test was performed on each device prior to the interview. It was intended that any other field issues that arose would be documented, addressed, and corrected immediately to ensure a safe and ethical environment for all participants. However, there were no issues.

Proper data collection procedures are paramount in a phenomenological design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative researchers most often use purposive rather than random, sampling strategies (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Therefore, the data gathered in this study used purposeful sampling which consisted of selecting participants that met certain inclusionary criteria to participate in this study. Devers and Frankel (2000) asserted that a good understanding of purposive sampling plays a crucial role when designing a credible qualitative study. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that purposeful sampling involves deciding which participants to select, the chosen sampling strategy, and the size of the sample being studied. Moser and Korstjens (2018) further explained that besides deliberately choosing a sample strategy and the size of the sample, it is important to note that the sample size will emerge during the study based on further questions raised in the process of data collection and analysis. Also, inclusion and exclusion criteria and sampling sites may also change (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For example, while the initial intent was to use 56 participants from four different departments, inclusionary requirements and the number of participants that followed through changed the sample to 50 participants. Although the intent was to get equal representation of officers and firefighters across all four departments, this researcher was unable to get the desired number of participants from Department C.

A phenomenological design usually has a narrower sampling range since participants must have experience with the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that works best when all participants have experience with the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Criterion sampling requires that participants meet criteria to participate in this study. Since the research questions are the main instrument of data collection, criterion sampling was used for this study to ensure the right

participants (those that have experienced the research phenomenon) were chosen. Creswell and

Poth (2018) explained that choosing the right participants are crucial to ensure that the data

received will appropriately address each research question. Both Devers and Frankel (2000) and

Moser and Korstjens (2018) backed the previous assertion when they explained that the

researcher must understand and consider not only the unique characteristics of each research

subject and the setting where they are located but also their ability to answer the researcher

questions. The interview questions were designed to explore whether an individual has

experienced an absence of leadership training at varying levels of their career, hindering

teamwork and reducing efficient and effect completion of operational objectives.

Data Organization Techniques

Information was recorded via a digital recorder and notes were taken as needed during

each interview and focus group. Web-based platforms of the participants' choice were offered.

However, all participants chose Zoom. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that there is increased

ethical concerns with online data collection such as power differentials, privacy protection,

ownership of data, authenticity, and trust in data collection. When web-based forums are used it

is essential to openly discuss and address their use within the consent forms. Therefore, each

consent form explained issues associated with web-based forums, specific to Zoom.

All information was safely stored within the NVivo 12 program, all emails were

password protected, and all hard copies such as the audio recordings were stored in a locked

cabinet. NVivo 12 is a qualitative software program that allows for data storage, transcribes

interviews, codes for themes, and creates professional level charts and tables to represent the data

(QSR International, 2020). Zamawe (2015) asserted that NVivo works well with most research

designs to effectively and efficiently analyze and store data. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted

that effective data storage and handling principles such as backing up computer files, use of

high-quality audio recording devices, compatibility programs that allow for effective data

transcription, a master list of types of information gathered, creating a master list of participants

while masking their name and data to protect their anonymity, and developing a data collection

matrix as a visual means of locating and identifying information for the study. This researcher

followed the advice of Creswell and Poth (2018) by using NVivo 12 to create and store master

lists of all information gathered and link participants responses to a number to maintain

anonymity and create visual images of the data. Also, each interview was recorded using Zoom

and uploaded to Trint, an online transcription website, to transcribe the interview audio into a

PDF document and then uploaded into NVivo 12 for coding. The full capabilities of NVivo 12

will be discussed in-depth in the next section.

Summary of Data Collection

This study focused on the data collection procedures associated with a phenomenological

study, as each design consists of different data collection activities. Therefore, the data collection

for this study focused on individuals that have experienced the research phenomenon, gaining

access to four fire departments in the Metro D.C. area, gaining permission from multiple

individuals from each department that have experienced the phenomenon, selection of

individuals using criterion sampling, interviewing selected participants, logistics of interviews

and bracketing if needed, transcription using Trint software, uploading data for storage and

visual aid files, and analysis using NVivo12.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis requires systematic and rigorous preparation that is both time

consuming and labor intensive (Zamawe, 2015). Also, analyzing qualitative data can prove

challenging for qualitative researchers especially when deciding how to represent data

narratively, in tables and matrices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) elucidated

that the process of analyzing qualitative data goes beyond merely analyzing text as it involves

organizing data, reading through the stored data, coding and organizing themes, representing the

data and then interpreting all the information. Stake (2010) explained that qualitative research

requires both analysis and synthesis of information. Therefore, qualitative research relies on the

collection and interpretation of other's experiences, requiring a researcher to observe, record,

interpret and report information. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that analysis and

representation of data are interconnected and form a spiral of activities. According to Patton

(2015), the use of computer software is helpful but not necessary as the real analytical work

takes place in the researcher's head (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 181). However,

Zamawe (2015) asserted that researchers can lessen the burden of the time required for

preparation and analysis of qualitative research by using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data

programs such as NVivo 12. Considering the time that was involved for preparation and analysis

due to sample size of this study, this researcher used NVivo 12 software, to store data, code for

themes, and create professional level charts and tables to analyze and represent the data. Storing

data in NVivo 12 also helped ensure that the participants and the data stayed secure. As

previously stated, ethical considerations are an ongoing consideration in qualitative research, and

safety and security of participant's information is paramount. Therefore, NVivo 12 was used to

effectively store data via participant profiles while masking names to protect participants from

harm. Trint, an online audio transcription site, was used to transcribe the interviews that were

recorded on Zoom to PDF. Trint offered the capability to securely store the interviews and then

upload them in a PDF to Nvivo for coding. Creswell and Poth (2018) asserted that such

procedures increase participant collaboration, ensuring that data are interpreted and represented in an honest and ethical manner.

NVivo 12 is a software program that aids in achieving deep levels of data analysis. However, NVivo 12 cannot substitute a researcher's creativity when analyzing the data. As Zamawe (2015) explained NVivo's main function is not necessarily to analyze data, but to aid the researcher in the analysis process by efficiently organizing, storing and retrieving data, and backing up findings with evidence, making it imperative for the researcher to maintain control of the overall analysis. NVivo is basically a data management package, which supports the researcher during the data analysis process (Zamawe, 2015). For example, NVivo 12 also allows a researcher to efficiently organize, store and retrieve data, back up findings with evidence, ultimately saving time (QSR International, 2020). Data can also be imported from virtually any source (e.g., text, audio, video, emails, images, spreadsheets, online surveys, social and web content and more; QSR International, 2020). This researcher used NVivo 12 to code the interview data. All the interviews conducted over Zoom were recorded using its recording option. The in-person interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. All the audio recordings were then transcribed into a PDF document using Trint and uploaded into NVivo12 for identifying and coding common themes that arose from participant data. This researcher also took notes during interviews and used sketches to highlight important themes that related to the research questions. All hard copies were stored in a locked cabinet to ensure that all data remained secure.

Coding Process

Data and analysis are emergent. Therefore, the researcher must understand and adapt to changing data analysis and sources of data as more information is uncovered, NVivo12 made the

adaption simple. NVivo 12 allows a researcher to visualize data with word frequency charts, word clouds, comparison diagrams and many more. This researcher used NVivo 12 to look for emerging topics and sentiment using specific queries that helped identify themes and draw conclusions (QSR International, 2020). Feng and Behar-Horenstein (2019) explained their success with using the NVivo Pro 11.4 matrix coding feature to search for patterns and insights amongst different demographic groups. The approach included the following five steps: data cleaning and case coding; data import; word frequency analysis; text coding and reference extracting; matrix coding and follow-up inductive analysis (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019). While these five steps proved helpful for Feng and Behar-Horenstein (2019), the matrix coding options proved to be the best option for this research. QRS International (2020) explained that matrix coding is a good tool to identify intersections in data, compare cases, and explore how terms are used in different contexts, and so on. As Feng and Behar-Horenstein (2019) explained, word and phrase searches may yield data that has nothing to do with different demographics groups in the research, making other coding options or the use of multiple coding tools a better tool for data analysis of this research. This researcher agrees with the previous assertion as the matrix coding tool allowed for the use of classification codes by departments, officers, firefighters years of service, and so on. Classifying each case and comparing the finding across cases and nodes proved to be very helpful for analyzing and representing the data.

Summary of Data Analysis

No matter what coding process is used, NVivo coding tools help generate ideas that aid in identifying patterns and theories via auto coding and query-based coding (QRS International, 2020). Regardless of the data and its sources, NVivo 12 was the software platform used for storing, analyzing and representing data. Common codes that emerged from participant's views

were used to assess the meaning of the data in the form of nodes so that it could be synthesized

into textural and structural descriptions that provided a rich description of the data as it related to

the research phenomenon. A total of 12 themes arose from the data, which is discussed in-depth

in Section 3.

Reliability and Validity

Reliable study findings require a researcher to judge the soundness as it relates to the

application and appropriateness of the research methods and the integrity of the final conclusions

(Noble & Smith, 2015). Reliability describes the consistency of the procedures undertaken when

analyzing the data whereas validity relates to integrity and application of the research methods

and the accuracy in which the findings reflect the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Noble and Smith

(2015) explained that qualitative research is often criticized for lacking scientific rigor citing

poor justification of research methods, lack of transparency in the analytical procedures and the

findings being personal opinions based on a researcher's bias. Creswell and Poth (2018)

supported the previous assertion when they elucidated that qualitative research suffers from

many criticisms in the scientific community because it fails to adhere to the standards of

reliability and validity as it applies to quantitative research. Since the tests and measure used to

establish reliability and validity in quantitative research do not appropriately transfer to

qualitative research there are ongoing debates as to whether validity and reliability are

appropriate terms when evaluating qualitative data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Cypress (2017)

added that the rigor of qualitative research is a vital part of the investigative process and the

quality of the research thus further development of the science is needed. Noble and Smith

(2015), Creswell and Poth (2018), and Cypress (2017) all agreed that it is imperative that

qualitative researchers incorporate strategies that enhances the credibility of a study during

research design and implementation. While the debate surges on over reliability and validity in

qualitative research there is no universally accepted terminology and criteria used to evaluate

qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015). Therefore, this researcher

used a variety of popular reliability and validity procedures.

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is based on both the consistency and care in the

application of research practices (Cypress, 2017). Cypress (2017) explained that consistency and

care are reflected in the visibility of research practices, analysis, and conclusions that offer an

open account that is mindful of the partiality and limits of the research findings. Reliability is

enhanced in qualitative research in the following ways: using good recording devices and field

notes to record data, accurately transcribing the recorded data, and using coding methods that

help analyze the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This researcher used the Zoom platform for web-

based interviews and a high-quality recording device that was compatible with Mac for in-person

interviews to ensure that the recorded data were easily transcribed into both a PDF document and

uploaded into the NVivo 12 program. Notes were also taken to ensure that participant's

responses were fully understood, not from the researcher's perspective, but the perspective of

each participant. Emerging codes were also written down next to each research question that it

represented. Trint online software was used to transcribe audio recordings and NVivo 12 was

used to store, analyze and code the data. Also, the use of NVivo 12 helped analyze the data by

identifying the most prevalent themes, words, phrases and then code and organize the

information into manageable data sets for deep analysis. The use of NVivo 12 increased

reliability because it provided a consistent procedural process that aided in analyzing the data,

which Noble and Smith (2015) asserted is a critical component of achieving reliability. Paulus et

al. (2017) explained that NVivo allows for the classification, sorting and arranging of rich text-based, which can enhance deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data. NVivo 12 allowed this researcher to examine complex relationships in the data; and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching and modeling, without missing important information that could be overlooked by non-computer-based coding processes, further enhancing reliability (Paulus et al., 2017). Lastly, Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that intercoder agreement, which is the use of multiple coders to analyze data, is often a big focus to ensure reliability. Key issues with intercoder agreement include what the coders agree upon, whether they seek agreement on the code name, and whether each passage is coded the same (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the previous concerns were put to rest in this study as it was conducted by a single researcher.

Validity

The idea of validation is to ensure that the research is well grounded and well supported (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcendental phenomenology offers a systemic approach for data analysis that uses procedures and guidelines to assemble textual and structural data which helps increase validity from the start (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, while this form of phenomenology offers more structure than other types, it is not enough alone to achieve the maximum amount of validity. There are many validation strategies to use in qualitative research. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that validation strategies represent three groups, the researcher's perspective, the participant's perspective, and the reader's perspective. This researcher used validation procedures that addresses each perspective. While this researcher sought to focus on the perspectives of the participants, the personal experience of this researcher regarding the topic cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it was necessary to provide a method of validity from the researcher's perspective as well. Also, considering the rich description of

participant's perspective required to ensure good phenomenological research, the reader's

interpretation of the researcher should not be ignored. Therefore, the use of validation strategies

from all three perspectives added to the validity of this research.

The first form of validation for this study was the use of triangulation, which holds the

researcher accountable for the accuracy of the data. Triangulation involves locating evidence to

document a code or theme from several different data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, an identifiable code or theme required that at least 10% of the 50 participants shared

similar insight on the subject. The exact codes and themes were based upon the highest

percentage of shared occurrences amongst all 50 participants. NVivo 12 was used to identify the

themes using the word and phrase search and then codes were stored as nodes and then organized

into 12 central themes that are discussed in Section 3 of this paper.

The next form of validation covered the participant's perspective. Part of the final

interview consisted of participant feedback to confirm the credibility of the information gathered.

Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended allowing participants to review rough drafts of their

work and provide feedback about how well the ongoing data analysis represents their

experiences. Therefore, this researcher ensured that the interpretation of the responses was from

the participant's perspective and not the researcher's interpretation of the participant's

perspective. This validation was accomplished by clarifying answers during the interview and

following up with the participant after the data were transcribed if there were any questions.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that seeking participant feedback as the most critical technique

for establishing credibility in qualitative research (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Another form of validation regarding participant perspective is prolonged engagement

and persistent field observation. This type of validation allows the researcher to make field-based

decisions about what is important and relevant to the study based upon an increased

understanding of culture and context, limiting misinformation from an improper analysis of

experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This researcher's years of experience with fire service

accounts for an in-depth understanding of fire service culture and helped limit the

misinterpretation of responses. However, as previously discussed the personal experiences of this

researcher could lead to biases. Therefore, the use of bracketing of personal experiences helps

the reader understand the researcher's perspective and explain what personal biases may exist

and how they relate to the research data.

The final form of validation for this study addressed the reader's perspective. Generating

a rich and thick description of the data that allows the reader to transfer information to other

settings and determine if they can relate to the shared experiences of the research phenomenon in

their environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this researcher used a great amount of

detail in describing the shared experiences of the participants, including direct quotes from the

participants. The data were looked at closely and contextual descriptions were added early on so

that the data analysis provided abundant and interconnected details that helps the reader feel the

information. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that data that is rich in physical description, and

displays movement and activity helps the reader transfer the data into relatable findings,

increasing the validity in the eyes of the reader.

Summary of Reliability and Validity

While the debate about the best way to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative

research continues, good research requires credibility on many levels. Therefore, it is the belief

of this researcher that is imperative to take every necessary step toward guaranteeing the

maximum amount of reliability and validity for this study. The credibility of this research was

enhanced with transcendental phenomenology and a mix of approaches discussed above that

enhance both the reliability and validity of this research. Cypress (2017) asserted that good

qualitative research relies on a thorough description of the entire research process that allows for

intersubjectivity. Therefore, the use of NVivo 12 to help organize and analyze data as well as

addressing the validity from the researcher's perspective, the participant's perspective, and the

reader's perspective allowed for a thorough description based upon intersubjectivity, further

enhancing the credibility of this study.

Transition and Summary of Section 2

The project portion of this qualitative study was designed to accomplish several things.

First, this section reaffirmed the purpose of this research. Next, Section 2 defined the role of the

researcher and defined and explained important elements of the study such as participant

selection, the research method and design, population and sampling, data collection, data

analysis, and reliability and validity associated with the research. The assumptions and

conceptual framework discussed in Section 1 were used to continually explore the previously

discussed research questions as well as aid in the design of the interview questions for the

individual interviews. The use of the interview questions was used in Section 3 to gather and

explore data regarding leadership training and development in the U.S. Fire Service based on the

real-life experiences of firefighters and officers of different ranks and experience levels, in four

different Metro D.C. fire departments. Participants were asked to participate in a single

interview. The sample population was chosen from four different Metro D.C. fire departments

are as follows: four career firefighters (1-30 years of experience) and three career officers

ranging in experience levels (5-30 years of experience). The sample size was dependent upon the

number of departments willing to participate and data saturation. Therefore, the final sample

consisted of 27 career officers 23 career firefighters. The population used for sampling consisted of individuals that met the pre-determined selection criteria and were willing and able to participate in this study. The sample population was chosen using criterion sampling, which focused on people that hold special and expert knowledge about the phenomenon via their lived experiences and are willing to share their information and insights.

NVivo 12 was the software platform used for storing, analyzing and representing the data. Data collection procedures consisted of recording participant's responses to the interview questions and were transcribed and uploaded to NVivo 12 for data analysis via coding and also to ensure secure storage of information. NVivo coding tools helped generate patterns and themes derived from the participants' interviews (QRS International, 2020). Common codes that emerged from participant's interviews were used to assess the meaning of the data so that it could be synthesized into textural and structural descriptions from the lens of the participant. Matrix coding was used to make comparisons regarding the experiences of participants. Matrix Coding queries allowed this researcher to explore a wide range of questions about patterns or themes, explore the content, and showed patterns within the coded data (QSR International, 2020). Section 3 used the data from the participants' interviews to discuss themes, patterns and relationships arose from the data analysis to present findings and used the results of the research to explain how the findings applied to professional practices, the need for future studies, and the reflections of this researcher. The data were expressed in a manner that showed how it aligned with the theoretical framework, the literature review and the research questions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implication for Change

The applicability of the findings of this study provides pertinent information regarding a better understanding of what constitutes effective leadership in varying types and sizes of organizations. While the findings of this study pay particular attention to the U.S. Fire Service, the information can easily translate to many other organizations from business to the military. Appelbaum et al. (2015) explained that organizations must understand the importance of investing in practices such as ongoing leadership development if employees are expected to fulfill organizational objectives successfully. Organizations continually face complex and ever-changing environments, which demands a need for effective leadership development programs that provide individuals with the tools and knowledge needed to adapt to environmental variations such as social and political climate (Turner et al., 2018). Nevertheless, regardless of type or size, many organizations struggle to provide the skills and abilities that employees need to become effective leaders as they climb the ranks (Holt et al., 2018). This section uses data obtained from the knowledge of individuals that have first-hand experiences concerning leadership training and development in the U.S. Fire Service. Whether positive or negative, the information gleaned from the participants of this study can aid in a more holistic and realistic approach toward developing leaders in all types of organizations.

The qualitative phenomenological design of this study offered far more than an opinion about what traits and behaviors yield the most effective leadership style. Instead, this study relies on the experiences of 50 individuals, 23 career firefighters, and 27 career fire officers from four large Metro D.C. fire departments to explore the research problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required

for carrying out operational objectives. The interview questions were designed to address each

research question. Participants used stories based upon their experiences to answer each

interview question. Then, each interview was transcribed, explored, and coded for themes that

participants shared based on their real-world perspectives regarding leadership development

throughout their careers. These shared experiences also allowed for an in-depth look at how

leadership training and development may be improved from the lens of those experiencing it.

The table below represents participant codes from each department. The codes were used to

compare participant responses to the research question and the associated literature within this

study.

Table 6

Participant Codes

	Officers	Firefighters
	O1	F1
	O2	F2
Department A	O3	F3
	O4	F4
	O5	F5
	O6	F6
	O7	F7
	O8	F8
	O9	F9
	O10	F10
Department B	O11	F11

	O12	F12
	O13	F13
	O14	F14
	O15	F15
	O16	F16
	O17	
Department C	O18	
	O19	
	O20	
	O21	F17
	O22	F18
	O23	F19
Department D	O24	F20
	O25	F21
	O26	F22
	O27	F23

This study was conducted due to the growing need for effective leadership regardless of the type or size of the organization. The general problem is that leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of an employee's career which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. Holt et al. (2018) opined that even though effective leadership is considered a necessity for implementing a successful strategy, varying types and sizes of organizations find it challenging to provide the right skills and abilities needed to develop employees to rise to leadership positions within

organizations, hindering organizational success. Unfortunately, many organizations do not adequately invest in leadership training that develops and empowers their employees, resulting in a reduction or complete failure to accomplish organizational goals and objectives, jeopardizing organizational success (Appelbaum et al., 2015).

While many scholarly articles exist regarding the importance of effective leadership and leadership development in organizations, very few exist regarding the U.S. Fire Service. Cavnor (2018) explained that many fire service periodicals weigh in on deviant practices related to poor leadership attributes. However, few scholarly studies on leadership in the fire service exist, particularly in best practices for structured leadership training that results in ongoing development. Unfortunately, a shared understanding of what constitutes department-wide leadership in the Fire Service appears to be non-existent (Byrd, 2017). Therefore, an exploration of whether formal leadership training programs exist in individual fire departments and whether such programs are successful is essential to acknowledge and correct this problem. Byrd (2017) supported this previous assertion when she elucidated that exploring general leadership practices across different departments is crucial to identify a general link between accepted leadership practices that can translate to departments across the nation. This study was developed not only to address some gaps in previous research but to bring awareness to a crucial problem that is affecting the Fire Service and many other organizations today, as well as provide some possible solutions that will increase the number of effective leaders in any organization, particularly the U.S. Fire Service.

How the Study was Done

This study used a qualitative design to explore and address the following specific problem: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within

Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. A qualitative research method is a strategy used to collect and analyze data based on life experiences, emotions, or behaviors concerning complex problems regarding social and cultural phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since effective leadership is often linked to both social and cultural behaviors, a qualitative research method aids in the exploration of participants' experiences regarding the research phenomena. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a qualitative method also requires an appropriate design to ensure the proper investigation. Therefore, a phenomenological design was the choice for this study because it enabled a deep exploration of the research problem based upon the participants' real life, lived experiences regarding the research phenomena. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a phenomenological design is a key to gathering rich data based on the participants' real-world experiences by allowing the researcher to identify commonalities regarding the shared experiences of the research phenomenon. By identifying and analyzing the commonalities associated with the participants' responses, a deeper understanding of the issues associated with the phenomenon can be reached (Creswell & Poth, 2018). More specifically, this study used transcendental phenomenology because it provides a systematic approach for data analysis and provides guidelines for assembling textural and structural data descriptions, increasing the reliability and validity of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The development of several research questions drove the research and helped reach conclusions based upon participant feedback.

Table 7

Research Question 1

RQ1.
How has a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of an individual's career affected the ability to accomplish organizational objectives?
RQ1.a. What constitutes leadership training?
RQ1.b. What is the difference between leadership training and leader development?
RQ1.c. What actions or behaviors contribute to a failure to implement leadership training?
RQ1.d. What actions or behaviors could contribute to the effective implementation of quality leadership training?
RQ1.e. How does a lack of effective leadership lead to poor morale?
RQ1.f. What are operational objectives, and why are they important?

Table 8

Research Question 2

RQ2.
How can the implementation of leadership programs based on Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership provide effective leadership training throughout an individual's career?
RQ2.a. How can Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership instill effective leadership actions in the fire service?
RQ2.b. What skills and abilities are required for effective leadership?
RQ2.c. What are three leadership theories that would offer a learning platform for effective leadership in the fire service?
RQ2.d. How does leadership training enhance employee development?
RQ2.e. How does offering leadership training at varying levels of an employee's career, enhance leader development?
RQ 2.f. What role does effective leadership have on morale?

Table 9

Research Question 3

RQ3.
How can continuous leadership training throughout one's career develop leaders that foster engaged teams that effectively carry out the operational objectives of their respective organizations?

RQ3.a. What is teamwork?
RQ3.b. Why is teamwork important?
RQ3.c. How does effective teamwork enhance organizational performance?
RQ3.d. What are the ramifications of poor or absent teamwork?
RQ3.e. What impact does ineffective teamwork have on organizational success?
RQ3.f. How does poor leader development hinder teamwork?

The following interview questions are designed to align with the methodology of this study and assist in answering the research questions:

Table 10

Interview Questions

Interview Questions
1. Share a story about a time or two when you felt like your department prepared you to be an effective leader. What happened?
2. Share a story about a time or two when you felt that your department may have failed to provide leadership training at varying levels of your career. What happened?
3. Drawing on your experiences, share a story that explains what you feel constitutes leadership training in your department and how you feel it has led to your ongoing development as an effective leader? What happened?
4. Share a story regarding what actions and/or behaviors of your departmental leaders that you feel has contributed to either the success or failure to implement leadership training within your department? What was the outcome(s)?

5. Share a story about particular leadership traits that you feel translate to becoming an effective fire service leader? What was the outcome(s)?

6. Share a story about particular leadership behaviors that you feel translates to becoming an effective fire service leader? What was the outcome(s)?

7. Share a story about particular leadership skills that you feel play a crucial role in becoming an effective fire service leader? What was the outcome(s)?

8. Following up with your responses to questions 5, 6 and 7 and given an explanation of Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership (refer to the handout), share a story based on your experiences that you feel may relate to how the five practices of exemplary leadership align with the traits, behaviors and skills required for effective fire service leadership. What was the outcome(s).

9. Based on your experiences, share a story regarding specific approaches toward leadership training (either formal or informal training) that you feel may have helped develop effective fire service leaders. What happened?

10. Based on your experiences, share a story or two about a time when you felt that leadership training throughout a firefighter's career could enhance a firefighter's/fire officer's development? What happened?

11. Drawing on your experiences, share a story about when you felt that there is a great importance for teamwork in the fire service? What happened?

11.a. Follow up question: Share a story about a time when you felt that teamwork played a major role in completing operational objectives efficiently and effectively in your department? What was the outcome?

12. Thank you for the valuable information, is there anything else you would like to add?

This study yielded several findings. First, there is little to no formalized leadership training across all four departments. All four departments fail to offer formal leadership training throughout a firefighter's career, and even when they offer a class on leadership, there is a complaint that the training is sporadic, starts too late in people's career, and is nonexistent unless one aspires to be an officer. However, it is essential to note that one of the four departments is starting to provide leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career. Second, many

participants asserted that their success level as a leader depends on informal training and development, which relied upon how engaged and supportive their officer or officers were. Third, nearly every participant asserted that teamwork is crucial and was involved in every aspect of their fire service career, from responding to calls to everyday fire station life. Fourth, many participants found Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership relatable to effective fire service leadership. Fifth, many of the emerging themes were associated with the five practices of exemplary leadership. Sixth, many of the participants discussed the need for a cultural change within the fire service. Lastly, and interestingly enough, some participants discussed the importance of implementing effective business practices into their departments. Based on the analysis of the data retrieved from the participants, the proposed research problem does exist within the four departments: leadership training is not provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The previously discussed summary of the findings is discussed in-depth in this study's presentation of findings section.

Bracketing

Before discussing the presentation of the findings and how they related to the research questions, it was essential to present the experiences of this researcher regarding the proposed research problem. Presenting this researcher's personal views using bracketing was an integral part of this type of research. Bracketing allowed this researcher to remain transparent about personal experiences so that any biases or personal beliefs were eliminated. Bracketing can be as simple as acknowledging personal biases and ensuring that the researcher sets biases aside. Bracketing can also be achieved by providing a description of the researcher's experiences with

the phenomenon, bracketing personal views before proceeding with the experiences of others

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflecting on personal experiences allowed this researcher to explore,

acknowledge, and set aside biases, allowing for a fresh perspective based only on the experience

of the research participant's personal experience, which will yield a more profound interpretation

and understanding of the participants' responses.

However, first-hand experience with the phenomenon is also beneficial. Creswell and

Poth (2018) explained that knowledge and experience of the research phenomenon are best as it

helps the researcher interpret the data more accurately, making this researcher's experience on

the topic an asset. As discussed in Section 2 of this research, van Manen (2015) asserted that "a

real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by 'actively doing it'" (as cited

in Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). However, Roger et al. (2018) recommended that social

researchers fully disclose their biases by either neutralizing or bracketing their biases by adding

the researcher's experience with the phenomenon to the study. Johnston (2017) explained that

including a researcher's experience within the data provides methodological considerations of

usability, credibility, auditability, trustworthiness, and philosophical choices making the

underpinning of the research coherent and explicit. This approach to bracketing ensures rigor in

the research and provides truthful, reliable results regarding the research phenomenon (Johnston,

2017). This researcher answered each interview question, transcribed the experience regarding

the research phenomenon, and uploaded it to NVivo so that this researcher's personal experiences

are displayed in the form of emerging themes just like the participants' data. However, this

researcher's themes were not incorporated into the data for analysis. Dörfler and Stierand's

(2020) research found that philosophically bracketing, as a theoretical construct, is not about

achieving objectivity; but embracing subjectivity by placing it center stage. In this case, this

researcher's experience is summarized and highlighted in emerging themes in the table below.

Table 11

Researcher's Emerging Themes

Certain Business Principles can Enhance the Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership
Fire service and business models
Hiring the right people
No funding for leadership training
Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership
Accountability
Building competence matters
Consistency matters
Credibility matters
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes
Leaders are learners
Trust instills confidence
Competence matters
Confidence matters
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training
Check the box approach
Organizational culture
Destructive leadership
Everyone has something to offer
Failed to create effective leaders
Pursued leadership development on my own
Future Studies
Participant's final thoughts
How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership
Coaching
Communication enhances effective leadership
Effective fire service leadership behaviors

Effective fire service leadership

Effective fire service leadership skills

Effective leaders have buy-in

Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor

Effective leadership requires mutual respect

Explaining why matters

Integrating leadership into fire service culture

Leadership development requires mentoring

Leadership training should be a building block approach

Kouzes And Posner-Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Align with Fire Service Culture

Challenge the process

Enabling others to act

Encourage the heart

Identifies with Kouzes and Posner

Inspire a shared vision

Model the way

Most Departments Offer Little or no Formal Leadership Training

No formal leadership training throughout one's career

Training does not start until LT level

Most Leadership Training is Informal

Officer influence matters

Result of no Leadership Training

Ineffective leadership

Lack of ongoing training for leadership development

Succession planning

Existing programs are not effective

Styles/Theories that Build a Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership

Explained characteristics of servant leadership
Explained characteristics of situational leadership
Explained characteristics of transformational leadership

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness
Teamwork is essential in the fire service

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service
The willingness to follow matters
Accountability
Building confidence in others matter
Credibility matters
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes
Trust instills confidence
Competence matters
Confidence matters

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service
Acknowledge the success of others
Adaptability matters
Important to know your people
Leadership is a relationship
Motivation matters
People learn differently
Putting the right people in the right place
Effective fire service leaders put others first

Anticipated Themes/Perceptions

Several themes were expected to arise in this study. First, there is a lack of formalized leadership training across all four departments. Second, mentorship was expected to be a crucial element to develop effective fire service leaders. Third, was likely to be proven that leadership is a relationship, which requires trust, mutual respect, and good communication at a minimum. Fourth, teamwork is crucial and is involved in every aspect of the fire service, from responding to calls to everyday life in the fire station. Fifth, most if not all of Kouzes and Posner's five

practices of exemplary leadership were relatable practices to firefighters and officers alike. Sixth,

it was expected that there would be many emerging themes associated with the five practices of

exemplary leadership. Lastly, this researcher highly anticipated that some negative aspects of fire

service culture would lead to destructive leadership, resulting in a misunderstanding of what it

means to be an effective leader, which could hinder teamwork required for efficiently and

effectively carrying out organizational objectives.

Presentation of the Findings

The findings of this study resulted from common themes that arose from participants'

experiences with each interview question. The themes were derived from coding participants'

responses, which resulted from transcribing and coding each interview using NVivo 12 software.

NVivo 12 assisted with the exploration and identification of common themes across all the

participant interviews. A total of twelve main themes arose from coding the lived experiences of

each participant. Each theme consists of codes or sub-themes that support the central theme.

The data were then used to provide a detailed description of the shared experiences regarding the

research phenomenon of firefighters and fire officers across four different Metro D.C. fire

departments. Matrix coding was used to make comparisons regarding the experiences of

participants. Matrix Coding queries allow a researcher to explore a wide range of questions about

patterns or themes, explore the content, and show patterns within the coded data (QSR

International, 2020). Based on the data derived from participants' experiences, the proposed

research problem does exist consistently over the four departments outlined in this study. This

study has found that leadership training is not provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career

within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments and could hinder leadership development

and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The responses

from participants are strikingly similar regardless of the department they represent or whether they are a firefighter or officer. The findings are discussed in-depth in the following pages.

Emerging Themes From Interviews

The table below represents the overall themes derived from the coding process. Each theme represents codes or sub-themes that make up each central theme. The first column represents the number of participants that mentioned a theme or code. The second column is the references column which refers to how many times that all participants referenced a particular code. The following themes are arranged in alphabetical order in the chart below:

Table 12

Emerging Themes from Participant's Interviews

Certain Business Principles can Enhance The Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Fire service and business models	7	11
Hiring the right people	19	57
No funding for leadership training	11	15
Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership		
Accountability	36	126
Building competence matters	44	328
Consistency matters	38	269
Credibility matters	13	69
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30	93
Leaders are learners	21	111
Showing trust instills confidence	49	309
Competence matters	49	507
Confidence matters	48	480
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training		
Assigned a preceptor or mentor	2	4
Organizational culture	48	543
Destructive leadership	37	164
Traits, behaviors, and skills	13	16

Everyone has something to offer	42	176
Failed to create effective leaders	48	171
Military para-military comparison	18	30
Prepared me to be an effective leader	15	23
Pursued leadership development on my own	17	29

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership

Coaching	15	70
Communication enhances effective leadership	49	392
Effective fire service leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives	39	253
Effective leaders have buy-in	35	114
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50	395
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	40	290
Explaining why matters	45	255
Integrating leadership into fire service culture	49	357
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Leadership training should be a building block approach	50	269

Kouzes and Posner-Five Practices Align of Exemplary Leadership with Fire Service Culture

Challenge the process	46	161
Enabling others to act	49	395
Encourage the heart	49	308
Experienced an exemplary leader	25	59
Identifies with Kouzes and Posner	30	52
Inspire a shared vision	49	274
Model the way	49	327

Most Departments Offer Little or no Formal Leadership Training

Department is starting to offer leadership training	19	48
No formal leadership training throughout one's career	49	211
Successful leadership training programs	10	21

Training does not start until LT level	29	59

Most Leadership Training is Informal

Assigned a mentor	2	4
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50	395
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Informal leadership training	47	377
Officers influence matters	50	452

Results of no Leadership Training

Ineffective leadership	44	174
Lack of ongoing training for leadership development	49	216
Succession planning	47	285
Existing programs are not effective	50	424

Styles/Theories that Build a Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership

Explained characteristics of servant leadership	50	327
Explained characteristics of situational leadership	50	324
Explained characteristics of transformational leadership	50	323

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service

Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50	171
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50	350

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service

The willingness to follow matters	45	238
Accountability	36	126
Building confidence in others matter	44	328
Consistency matters	38	269
Credibility matters	13	69
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30	93
Trust instills confidence	49	309
Competence matters	49	507

Confidence matters	48	480

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service

Acknowledge the success of others	34	75
Adaptability matters	37	185
Important to know your people	42	251
Leadership is a relationship	50	416
Motivation matters	49	277
People learn differently	22	49
Putting the right people in the right place	22	69
Effective fire service leaders put others first	45	61

Theme 1: Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership

Several emerging themes arose consistently throughout the interview process, which aligned with this researcher's thoughts on anticipated themes. However, a few themes unanticipatedly arose, but are not surprising considering the look into how the five exemplary leadership practices serve as a foundation for leadership development in the fire service. For example, credibility as a foundation for leadership is strongly supported by the Kouzes and Posner studies. While the term credibility was not used as often as this researcher expected, many other terms associated with earning credibility were the subject of a considerable number of experiences. Putting in further context, 13 out of 50 (26%) participants discussed the importance of credibility, referencing the subject 60 times throughout all the interviews. All 13 participants that mentioned credibility specifically were from Department D, with 85% (6 of 7) of officers and 100% (7 of 7) of firefighters mentioning the term credibility. Such a finding lends support to Kouzes and Posner's (2017) assertion that while the content of leadership has not changed, the context has, in this case, the context likely attributed to the organizational culture of Department D. Many of the other participants spoke of other terms associated with credibility as the foundation of leadership which are competence, confidence, and trust (Kouzes & Posner,

2011). Participant's experiences across all four departments, officers and firefighters, related to the importance of trust 49 out of 50 (98%) with 309 overall references, 49 of 50 (98%) with 507 references related to how much competence matters, and 48 of 50 (96%) with 480 references related to how much confidence matters to achieve effective fire service leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2011), competence, confidence, and trust result in credibility, which they refer to as the foundation of leadership because, without it, effective leadership cannot exist. Credibility as a foundation for leadership appears to play an integral role in effective fire service leadership and should be considered when building leadership training programs.

Participant F17 shared a story that highlighted the experiences of the participant's thoughts on credibility when he explained how credibility can be built between a leader and follower. This story reflects the experiences of officers and firefighters across all four departments. This story also shows why participants shared experiences regarding personal accountability, confidence, trust, competence, leaders are learners, and leaders acknowledge their mistakes, and consistency in behaviors matter. This story is a good example regarding what builds credibility of a leader and why it would serve as a good foundation for effective leadership in the fire service. This story also related to the Kouzes and Posner (2017) findings discussed in the literature review portion of this study which explained that leadership is not about who you are, it is about what you do.

F17 stated,

Credibility is built with confidence, I'll use an officer as an example, because that's where I see that oftentimes exemplified as far as a leader. For example, we just had a change of regime at my station. We now have somebody that is confident in themselves and their leadership skills and their role as an officer, and that kind of flows into what

they do and how they act. This officer is seen as a leader because they're confident in

their skills and who they are, they're able to kind of joke around a little bit too and is not

afraid to talk about their shortcomings or their screw ups sometimes. Also, this officer is

not afraid to make fun or poke fun at themselves about stuff, whatever it might be. This

officer has a reputation of being very competent but it's this person's behaviors that have

quickly built trust and confidence with the shift.

Table 13

Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership - Officers and Firefighters

Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Accountability	3	6	5	7	3	5	2	5
Building confidence matters	4	7	6	7	4	7	2	7
Consistency matters	1	7	6	7	1	7	2	7
Credibility matters	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	7
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	1	6	5	6	1	6	1	4
Leaders are learners	0	1	6	6	0	0	1	7
Trust instills confidence	7	7	6	6	7	7	2	7
Competence matters	6	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Confidence matters	6	7	6	7	6	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighter

Table 14

Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
CREDIBILITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP		
Accountability	36	126
Building competence matters	44	328
Consistency matters	38	269
Credibility matters	13	69
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30	93
Leaders are learners	21	111
Trust instills confidence	49	309
Competence matters	49	507
Confidence matters	48	480

Theme 2: Most Departments Offer Little to no Formal Leadership Training

It was found that there was a lack of formalized leadership training across all four departments. As stated earlier, only one out of the four departments, Department A, is starting to provide leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career, yet this program is in its infancy and not fully implemented. One participant (O1), from this department stated that it had taken 16 years to get to this point, and they continue to battle for more support from senior management daily. The data shows that 85% (6 of 7) of officers in Department A, 28% (2 of 7) of officers in Department B, 16% (1 of 6) of officers in Department C, 42% (3 of 7) of officers in Department D, 83% (5 of 7) of firefighters in Department A, 14% (1 of 7) of firefighters in Department B, 50% (1 of 2) of firefighters in Department C, and 0% (7 of 7) of firefighters in Department D have experienced some leadership training throughout their career. Also, of the leadership training programs offered in the participant's departments, 71% of officers and firefighters in Department A acknowledged the success of training programs. None of the remaining departments acknowledged any successful leadership training program.

Although Department A is starting to offer leadership training, participants' experiences showed that 98% of officers and firefighters had not experienced formal leadership training throughout their careers. Therefore, all four departments fail to offer formal leadership training throughout a firefighter's career, and when they do, there is a complaint that the training is sporadic, starts too late in people's careers, and is said to be nonexistent unless one aspires to be an officer. In this study, both firefighters and officers in Department A had more references than any of the other three departments, which showed that their organization is starting to offer leadership training. However, 100% of participants from department A, both officers, and firefighters, suggested that there has not been formal leadership training throughout their careers.

Over half, 58% (29 of 50), of all the participants explained that any discussion about leadership or attempt to develop leaders does not start until one desires to become an officer. For example, 57% (4 of 7) of officers in Department A, 71% (5 of 7) of officers in Department B, 50% (3 of 6) of officers in Department C, 57% (4 of 7) of officers in Department D, 42% (3 of 7) of firefighters in Department A, 57% (4 of 7) of firefighters in Department B, 100% (2 of 2) of firefighters in Department C, and 57% (4 of 7) of firefighters in Department D explained that leadership training does not usually start until one aspires to promote to lieutenant. Even then, it is not guaranteed based on departmental focus and funding.

This story from participant O2 summed up the majority of the responses from the participants. The experience of this officer is shared between officers and firefighters across all four departments. This story shows that although some departments are attempting to offer some leadership training, 98% of participants have not experienced formal leadership training throughout their careers. This story also supported 58% of participants' stories that explained that even if leadership training exists, it does not start until the Lieutenant level. Also, participant

O2's story landed support to the literature review portion of this study with Byrd's (2017) assertion that best practices for structured leadership training does not exist. Byrd (2017) went on to explain that an exploration of whether leadership programs exist and what the programs look like are essential to creating effective leadership programs that yield quality leadership training that can be implemented in fire departments across the United States.

> Participant O2 stated,
>
> Until recently, we've never really had a true leadership development program where we're getting down into the weeds about how to be an officer. So, you take five classes, you take a test, congratulations, you're now a lieutenant, and that's the first time you are told you are a leader. And I think it's important for people to understand that when you take that officer role, you're now not just in charge of that small unit, but you are the leader of that crew. You may not be the shift leader, but you are a leader. So, you have a lot of responsibility and you need to step up to that responsibility. I think the expectations need to be defined by the organization of how you should function and what you should be doing. Where I'm going with response is that we never had that process. Literally, we never had: OK, you're newly promoted so we're going to sit you down and explain what we as an organization expect you to do. Here's what we want you to do and we will show you how to do it. Obviously, you develop your own style, but just setting that bar so that you know the expectations of the organization is important. Instead, you are a firefighter riding the bucket one day and the next day, OK, now you're in the front seat as a newly promoted lieutenant. Good luck. We just never had a formalized process to prepare us to be an officer. I think we are starting to do better but we have missed a lot of people. There was really no preparation for me to be an effective leader. Prior to me getting

promoted it was, you have to meet these standards, you have to have these certifications

and this many years on the job. But beyond that, there was nothing, no kind of formal or

any kind of leadership training at all.

Table 15

Most Departments Offer Little to No Formal Leadership Training – Officers and Firefighters

Most Department offer little Or No Formal Leadership Training	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Department is starting to offer leadership training	6	2	1	3	5	1	1	0
No formal leadership training throughout one's career	7	7	5	7	7	7	2	7
Successful leadership training programs	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
Training does not start until LT level	4	5	3	4	3	4	2	4

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters

Table 16

Most Departments Offer Little to No Formal Leadership Training – All Participants

Common Theme Most Department Offer Little or no Formal Leadership Training	Participant	Reference
Department is starting to offer leadership training	19	48
No formal leadership training throughout one's career	49	211
Successful leadership training programs	10	21
Training does not start until LT level	29	59

Theme 3: Most Leadership Training is Informal

Many participants also asserted that their success level as a leader depends on informal

training and development, which relies upon how engaged and supportive their officers are.

However, only two participants, one officer from Department A and one from Department D,

stated that a mentor was assigned. A lack of formal mentorship is an alarming finding for two reasons. First, all of the participants, regardless of being a firefighter or officer, stated that their ability to become an effective leader relies on having not just any mentor but the right mentor. Second, all participants rely on informal leadership to influence their leadership growth and development since there is little to no formal training in their departments.

Based on the experiences of officers and firefighters in all four departments, 100% relied heavily on the right mentor to help them become effective leaders. All the participant's experiences, 100% of officers and firefighters from all four departments, also pointed to the critical role that mentorship played in their leadership development. However, other than one officer from Department A, 14% (1 of 7) and one officer from Department D, 14% (1 of 7), representing .04% of all participants, was assigned a mentor at one point in their career. Most participants' experience with leadership development has been informal, with 94% of all participants learning from those around them, particularly officers they have worked with over the years. Officer influence, good or bad, was an integral part of every participant's experiences with leadership, as 100% of the participants discussed the importance of officer influence, referencing the subject 452 times, collectively. The only code referenced more, 464 times, under this theme was that leadership development requires mentoring. It is important to reiterate that 96% of all participants referred to mentoring as an informal process that occurs naturally by those viewed as effective fire service leaders.

A story shared by participant O13 outlines what many participants, officers and firefighters alike, considered leadership training in their departments. This story explains why 100% of the participants discussed mentorship and why 94% of the participants' experiences revolved around informal leadership training. The Fonseca (2017) experience was discussed in

the mentoring section of the literature review where he shared his personal experience with

mentoring in the fire service. Fonseca (2017) stated,

> They (mentors) taught me that to know how leadership theories and applications work, I
>
> had to attend courses and training modules. They also taught me that knowing how and
>
> when to implement those theories does not come from the course, but from others
>
> showing me the way.

Participant O13's story and the Fonseca assertion support the literature review where Kouzes and

Posner (2016) cited that an individual cannot learn to be a leader on their own. Instead, effective

leaders will seek out advice, counsel, and support of those that they trust. Buttenschon (2016)

also showed alignment between the literature review and experiences of the participants when he

explained that mentoring is an informal process that naturally happens within a fire service.

> Participant O13 stated,
>
> I was letting some of the firefighters ride the seat for a day. We ride three-person engine
>
> companies, so I typically would have a tiered approach. For a couple of shifts, I would
>
> ride the back step of the engine and let them talk on the radio, look up calls in the map,
>
> spot the hydrant and ensure the proper placement for the engine. Doing this helped them
>
> to start to put some of those officer skill sets together. But then when it went to facing the
>
> problem, I was right next to them. So, they would do the interface and then would look at
>
> me if they weren't sure. Once we got to a comfort level for the next couple of shifts, then
>
> I would drive the engine so that they could make more independent decisions. I would
>
> tell them: I'm not breathing down your neck and I don't want you always looking at me
>
> for the answer. But at the same time, I'm here if you need me. So that was one of the
>
> experiences where I think that style of leadership training really set them up to be a fire

officer, because sometimes they really don't understand all the roles and responsibilities

or the multitasking that is required for the operational element. And I think some of that

preparing them in advance, they pulled different information from their training classes

that they needed for promotion and it helped them to really understand the different facets

that went along with what they learned.

Table 17

Most Leadership Training is Informal – Officers and Firefighters

Most Leadership Training is Informal	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Assigned a mentor	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Leadership development requires mentoring	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Informal leadership training	6	7	5	7	6	7	2	7
Officers influence matters	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters

Table 18

Most Leadership Training is Informal– All Participants

Common Theme Most Leadership Training Is Informal	Participant	Reference
Assigned a mentor	2	4
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50	395
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Informal leadership training	47	377
Officers influence matters	50	452

Theme 4: Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service

All participants asserted that teamwork is crucial and is involved in every aspect of their fire service career, from responding to calls to everyday fire station life. Since 100% of the participant's experience made it clear that teamwork is essential in the fire service and is crucial in ensuring that operational objectives are met efficiently and effectively, the best way to highlight this is by sharing a story of an officer's experience, which aligned with the literature review section of this study. For example, much of the scholarly information in the literature review supported teamwork as an indispensable asset that is crucial for achieving organizational success (Render, 2015). Render (2015) also explained that fire service culture thrives on teamwork because the attributes, experiences, perspectives, and values possessed by each individual uses the strengths and experiences of some to fill the gaps for the weaknesses and inexperience of others. The story from participant O7 not only aligned with the scholarly research contained in the literature review but also summed up the importance of effective teamwork by sharing an experience that shows the ramifications when teamwork was absent.

Participant O7 stated,

Seeing good teamwork displayed on the incident scene is like listening to an effective orchestra. However, seeing the opposite of effective teamwork is the best way to make my point. We were experiencing the opposite of a functional environment, where teamwork does not exist which shows why teamwork is so important in the fire service. The incident happened very early on in my career. It was the first time I wrote a memo because the experience was so bad that I had to document it. The dysfunction of the leader displayed itself with a patient. So, this leader was very dismissive; he did not want to listen to people and knew he was in charge. This officer took being in charge to the

next level, and then he applied it to the patient. The patient was a younger man and very

stout from working out. The patient's wife was a nurse, trying to explain what was going

on, but this officer was incredibly dismissive and rude to the wife. The patient, who was

highly febrile and feeling terrible, got angry about how this officer was treating his wife.

Next thing you know, this guy is out of bed and in a wrestling match with the rude

officer. So, to me, that failed leadership model displayed itself, and then that lack of

teamwork was evident because everybody else, including me, was sitting back, watching.

However, in a more functional environment where crew resource management was in

effect, I would have stepped up, even as the most junior person there, and offered to talk

to the patient in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. Nevertheless, since this officer

squashed the idea of teamwork, crew resource management was not even a thing, and

since there was no training or understanding of what that would look like, it did not

happen. Instead, the officer made it clear that he was the Captain and the person in

charge. So, we felt like because he was the Captain, he got to do whatever he wanted,

which resulted in a disaster.

This story highlights the integral role that teamwork plays in ensuring that operational

objectives are carried out efficiently and effectively. Many of the other participants, whether an

officer or firefighter, discussed teamwork pertaining to life in the firehouse and during incidents.

Whether getting the cleaning done, washing apparatus, training, or responding to and mitigating

an incident, it takes teamwork to accomplish any task efficiently and effectively. While many of

the stories regarding what teamwork looks like in the fire service were similar, participant O10's

experience summed up what effective teamwork looks like across the four departments.

Participant O10 stated,

We had a fatal fire that was three alarms. It was a really cold night; things went downhill quickly. We were behind the eight-ball going into the scene. It wasn't your typical seven o'clock, seven 30 p.m. Box alarm in an elderly neighborhood where someone burned their food but we went in thinking that per usual it will be nothing. And we got there, it was chaos. Everything that could have gone wrong, went wrong. It was the example of, you know, you throw this at somebody in a promotional exam as the what if scenarios that aren't likely to happen. And here it is happening, an occupied elderly apartment building. It is wintertime. It's cold. The hydrant is frozen. They can't get it open. They got people at the windows. They got people jumping. They got people trapped. And it was just chaos. It was every which way. And that was the one that, you know, operationally, it took a minute for everybody to realize we are not working on a positive outcome. We need to stop and refocus everything really quick. Our initial efforts at life safety were affected in some regards, but we're getting ready to lose everything if we don't stop it. We can stop it but we need to reorganize. And it took getting four engine companies, two trucks and a rescue squad in the heat of the moment to stop what they're doing, step back, and reorganize. Without teamwork and communication, the ability to realize, guys, we're not on the same page, we need to refocus, the outcome would have been disastrous. And from that point on the operation was reprioritized and redirected and we were good now. It's not about who's going to get the fire, it's not about who's going to do this or that. It was, we don't want to burn down three apartments and we don't want to lose any more lives, so we need to work as a team. We knew that we had our feet underneath us now, so the goal was to get the job accomplished, and that was the operational tone. I learned that wow, you can take chaos and refocus almost on the drop of a dime. You know, it was

stop, refocus, reorganize, and that really showed a strong command officer being able to read a scene and then to have strong company officers to sit back, follow the orders, understand what the command officer was doing, and then redirect their crews and get things in place. And that operational tone was all about teamwork.

Table 19

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service – Officers and Firefighters

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters

Table 20

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service – All Participants

Common Theme Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service	Participant	Reference
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50	171
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50	350

Theme 5: Kouzes and Posner – Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Align With Fire Service Culture

Many participants found Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership relatable to effective fire service leadership. For example, 98% of all participants shared stories regarding effective fire service leadership related to enabling others to act, encouraging the heart, inspiring a shared vision, and modeling the way, and 92% of all participants related their

effective fire service leadership experiences to challenging the process. It is also notable to add the number of references associated with stories regarding the five practices of exemplary leadership. The references are as follows: Enabling others to act 395, encouraging the heart 308, inspiring a shared vision 274, and modeling the way 327, and challenge the process 161. These references are not just associated with a specific interview question, but the five practices showed throughout the many stories regarding positive fire service leadership experiences from officers and firefighters across all four departments. Even though the number of references seems high, they are not when put in perspective across 50 participants. For example, 49 of the 50 (98% participants referenced enabling others to act 395 times which would average eight references per person, throughout the entire interview.

While half of all participants stated that they had experienced an exemplary leader at some point in their career, their exposure was limited and fleeting, as this was not the norm in any of the four departments. However, it is essential to note that while there did not appear to be many leaders that possessed all five practices of exemplary leadership, most participants were able to share stories about experiences that they had with different individuals throughout their career that possessed at least some of the practices associated with exemplary leadership. Sixty percent (30 of 50) of all participants experiences resulted in the following code, *Identifies with Kouzes and Posner. Identifies with Kouzes and Posner* represents those individuals that expressed, without any prompt, that based on their experiences, the five practices should be the basis of effective fire service leadership. The more specific results are as follows: 28% (2 of 7) officers from Department A, 85% (6 of 7) of officers from department B, 83% (5 of 6) of officers from department C, 71% (5 of 7) of officers from Department D, 57% (5 of 7) firefighters from

Department A, 28% (2 of 7) of firefighters from department B, 50% (1 of 2) of firefighters from

department C, 71% (5 of 7) of firefighters from Department D.

While this qualitative study was about sharing experiences, the participants' positive

thoughts regarding the five practices of exemplary leadership and how it is a good foundation for

leadership in the fire service could not be overlooked. The following comment from participant

O1 highlights a reoccurring opinion from both officers and firefighters across all four

departments.

Participant O1 stated,

The five practices are a template for team building. This is the cool part of looking at the

handout that you gave me. I have never read them before, but they are such a good

template that I added them to our library list. Now, because of this, this will be used as a

template or a roadmap for team building and for understanding the outgrowth of team

dynamics.

Participant O26 shared a story regarding their experience with an exemplary leader,

highlighting the many stories of officers and firefighters across all four departments. The five

practices of exemplary leadership arose in many stories, which is not surprising considering that

60% of participants easily identified with Kouzes and Posner's five practices.

Participant O26 stated,

I had an opportunity to work for two officers that demonstrated aspects of Kouzes and

Posner's practices and created a strong, cohesive shift. We were constantly encouraged to

seek out new opportunities that would help improve ourselves as firefighters and

provided with the chance to take on additional responsibility within the station and shift.

Anything that was asked or required of us on the shift was clearly communicated to us

and was demonstrated by the Captain and Lieutenant. Additionally, I believe that their

leadership traits, behaviors, and skills align with Kouzes and Posner's practices. This was

a positive example to learn from and helped me to develop a stronger sense of leadership.

Table 21

Kouzes and Posner - Five Practices – Officers and Firefighters

Kouzes and Posner-5 Practices of Exemplary Leadership Aligns with Fire Service Culture	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Challenge the process	6	7	6	6	6	7	2	6
Enabling others to act	7	7	6	7	6	7	2	7
Encourage the heart	7	7	6	7	6	7	2	7
Experienced an exemplary leader	4	2	3	2	5	6	1	2
Identifies with Kouzes and Posner	2	6	5	5	4	2	1	5
Inspire a shared vision	7	7	6	7	6	7	2	7
Model the way	7	7	6	7	6	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 22

Kouzes and Posner - Five Practices – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Kouzes and Posner-Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Aligns with Fire Service Culture		
Challenge the process	46	161
Enabling others to act	49	395
Encourage the heart	49	308
Experienced an exemplary leader	25	59
Identifies with Kouzes and Posner	30	52
Inspire a shared vision	49	274
Model the way	49	327

Theme 6: Fire Service Culture Regarding Training

All of the participants (100%) shared stories regarding both positives and negatives associated with the fire service culture and the need for a cultural change within the fire service. The experiences regarding each department's culture are very similar and helped gain a deeper understanding of the positive and negative aspects of fire service culture. The chart below shows that most officers and firefighters, 75% (37 of 50), have experienced destructive leadership throughout their careers. Although this is not a quantitative study, each number represents the number of participants in each department that shared stories about experiencing destructive leadership, resulting in poor or ineffective leadership that affected themselves and others. Putting it more clearly, 71% (5 of 7) of officers in Department A, 85% (6 of 7) of officers in Department B and D, 66% (4 of 6) of officers in Department C, 42% (3 of 7) of firefighters in Department A, 85% (6 of 7) of firefighters in Department B, 100% (2 of 2) of firefighters in Department C, and 71% (5 of 7) of firefighters in Department D experienced destructive leadership in their careers. Collectively, 164 references discussed experiences with destructive leadership.

The importance of teamwork required in the fire service equates to effective leadership from the person in charge and each team member. Most incidents will require a team member to work independently at some point during the incident, highlighting the importance of creating effective leadership at all levels of the organization. An optimistic look at fire service culture is that 84% of all participants believe that everyone has something that they can offer, especially when properly trained and mentored. Breaking it down further, 57% (4 of 7) of officers in Department A, 100% (7 of 7) of officers in Department B (7 of 7) and C (6 of 6), 85% (6 of 7) of officers in Department D, 57% (4 of 7) of firefighters in Department A, 100% (7 of 7) of

firefighters in Department B, 100% (2 of 2) of firefighters in Department C, and 85% (6 of 7) of firefighters in Department D experienced destructive leadership in their careers.

The results also showed areas where departments may be falling short regarding leadership training and development. For example, as discussed earlier, most of the participants discussed the importance of having a mentor in their career, yet even if a mentorship program is in place, it is often sporadic and focused on officers, missing the opportunity to create leaders at all levels of the organization. Mentorship was the topic of many stories as it is an informal part of the fire service culture. Therefore, this code was also added to the fire service culture theme. Designating leadership to only officers and later into one's career (as officers in these departments usually have at least five years on the job before being eligible for promotion) misses the opportunity to build a strong foundation of leadership principles at all levels of the organization and hinders development based upon continued training and experience. Only .04% of all participants were assigned a mentor, even though 100% of the participants shared stories regarding how crucial mentorship is to leadership development for individuals in their department.

Comparing the lack of mentorship to the failure to create effective leaders code provides insight that suggests at least one area where departments fail to produce what participants view as an effective fire service leader. Ninety-six percent of all participants shared stories regarding the failure of their departments to create effective leaders, and only 30% of all participants shared experiences where their department prepared them to be an effective leader. Breaking it down further, 57% (4 of 7) of officers in Department A, 42% (3 of 7) of officers in Department B, 16% (1 of 6) of officers in Department C, 0% of officers in Department D, 42% (3 of 7) of firefighters in Department A, 28% (2 of 7) of firefighters in Department B, 0% of firefighters in

Department C, and 28% (2 of 7) of firefighters in Department D shared stories that related to their departments preparing them, mostly informally, to be effective leaders. Thirty-four percent of all participants shared stories relating to seeking out leadership training opportunities outside of their departments because they were not receiving it within, with 57% (4 of 7) of officers from Department A, 42% (3 of 7) of officers from Department B and D, 33% (2 of 6) of officers from Department C, 28% (2 of 7) of firefighters from Department A, 42% (3 of 7) of firefighters from Department B, and zero percent of firefighters from Departments C and D. These findings show an alarming training gap for leadership development throughout each organization.

Many participants shared stories regarding the fire service as a paramilitary organization. However, with only 36% of all participant's sharing their experiences, there does not appear to be overwhelming support that the fire service should model the military, 42% (4 of 7) of officers from Department A, 14% (1 of 7) of officers from Department B, 66% (4 of 6) of officers from Department C, 71% (5 of 7) of officers from Department D, 14% (1 of 7) of firefighters from Department A, 57% (4 of 7) of firefighters from Department B, and zero percent of firefighters from Departments C and D. This data highlights a difference in perspectives between officers and firefighters. Many factors could influence a participant's perspective, such as military service versus no military service, personal experiences, time on the job, age (cultural shifts in society). While the fire service operates on a hierarchal platform, each organizational culture has its nuisances regarding leadership, which is why consistent leadership training built on core values and the organization's goals should be the basis of leadership development.

When it came to exploring specific traits, behaviors, and skills related to fire service culture, most of the participants' experiences highlighted many different traits, behaviors, and skills. As outlined in the interview questions, determining the difference between these three

terms proved to be difficult for most participants to identify with and, for this reason, is unremarkable except to note that specific traits, behaviors, and skills were shared amongst the participant's experiences were not identified. Therefore, a deeper look into this topic may be an area to consider for future studies.

Participant F8 shared a story that highlights the culture regarding leadership training across all four departments. Much of this participant's experiences highlighted the importance of mentoring and how destructive leadership and a lack of formal leadership training can affect an individual's growth. This story also shows why 100% of participants discussed mentorship's crucial role in leadership development. It also sheds light on why 96% of participants expressed that their departments failed to create effective leaders, and only 30% felt that their department prepared them to be an effective leaders. The importance of mentorship in the fire service was discussed in the literature review where Eliades et al. (2017) made it clear that while mentoring can take place informally, it is far more effective when organizations use it as formal tool to enhance leadership development. This previous assertion coupled with participant F8's story makes a strong case for implementing formal mentoring part of ongoing leadership development.

Participant F8 stated,

I've only prepared for one promotional process. I prepared for our technician process, which was this year in March, and I thought I was going to be eligible. They ended up changing the date at the last minute, so I became ineligible by 20 days. It was cool, but there was no real communication about the process. They're like, OK, you want to be a technician? Well, it's a driving test, a written test, a pumping scenario, and you're going to go through a class. But there was no real consistency. Sometimes you're lucky and you get to be in a station where you have a technician who either recently took the test or

cares enough to help you. At the time, I was at a station where that was not the case. I

didn't really have any help, everyone kind of sat around on their phones. Nobody did real

training, nobody. I asked a couple of times, but we didn't really have anyone to help. So,

when I was preparing, I was doing a lot of it on my own. And it's a lot like a promotional

process. They're looking for very specific things, like, you know, they want you to check

the little gaskets and all this stuff. And these are all things that I kind of had to piece

together on my own. There was no booklet they gave out that explained how to prepare

for the technician test. They're just kind of like; if you're a good driver, you'll do good.

But what driver checks their gaskets before they hook into a coupling on a fire? That's

not normal, but it's the little things like that on the test that can fail you. Things that you

don't really do in real life that you need to do for a test. And I've heard that echoed by

people preparing for the lieutenant's test and captain's test. It's kind of just like if you're a

good leader, you'll know how to do this scenario. Well, maybe, but, you know, there's no

real explanation about how to get there, how to be a good leader. And so, if you're lucky

and you have an officer or people in the station that are willing to work with you, then

you have better guidance. But if you're unlucky and you don't have people willing to

help, you may not do as well. We still have two-person stations out there. If you're at a

station in the middle of nowhere with one other person, then your ability to prepare is a

lot less. I think it can be frustrating. Like, I have no idea what I'm supposed to be doing. I

never even thought about being a leader or what leadership means until I saw your

request for this study.

As highlighted in the literature review, formal mentoring helps develop either a broad or

targeted group and also allows for tailoring to meet an organization's unique goals and objectives

(Corner, 2014). Participant F8's story provided a great example of why formal mentoring is important and showed how such a program could benefit individuals at varying levels of their career. Leadership mentoring also facilitates leadership development by identifying leadership opportunities and providing the appropriate resources, support, and feedback required for personal growth within an organization (Eliades et al., 2017). Corner (2014) added that mentoring offers a uniquely suited approach to leadership development by capitalizing on internal and specific knowledge. Participant F16 shared a story that highlights the culture regarding leadership training and development. Much of this participant's experience showed the culture of leadership training across the four departments regardless of rank.

> Participant F16 stated,
>
> When I was thinking about this when you put the words 'in your department'. That made me focus on actual orders, you know, general orders or a constant message given by the Chief or, you know, somebody at that level, regarding leadership training. And to be honest, is not a constant message about what leadership is or what it means. A lot of how we view leadership comes at the company level; it's informal. So, if you have a good effective leader at the company level, I see that people thrive, and whenever you have ineffective leaders at the company level, everybody sits stagnant and doesn't progress. So, as you know, quote, unquote, your department, how has your department prepared you to be an effective leader? They don't because we do not have a systematic plan for doing that at the ground level for people. Instead, it comes down more to mentorship at an individual level. If anything, the academy was good in the sense that it forced teamwork and shared accountability and working together because they purposely made themselves adversaries, you know, the instructors versus you, any time one of the recruits screws up,

everybody screws up, and everybody gets smoked. So that instilled a good sense of

teamwork, but that was the academy experience. But there's not a sweeping departmental

urgency to achieve effective leadership development.

Table 23

Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training – Officers and Firefighters

Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Assigned a mentor	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Leadership development requires mentoring	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Destructive leadership	5	6	4	6	3	6	2	5
Traits, behaviors, and skills	2	1	2	3	1	3	0	1
Everyone has something to offer	4	7	6	6	4	7	2	6
Failed to create effective leaders	7	6	5	7	7	7	2	7
Military para-military comparison	3	1	4	5	1	4	0	0
Organizational culture	6	7	6	7	6	7	2	7
Prepared me to be an effective leader	4	3	1	0	3	2	0	2
Pursued leadership development on my own	4	3	2	3	2	3	0	0

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 24

Fire Service Culture – Officers and Firefighters – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training		
Assigned mentor	2	4
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Organizational culture	48	543
Destructive leadership	37	164
Traits, behaviors, and skill	13	16
Everyone has something to offer	42	176
Failed to create effective leaders	48	171
Military para-military comparison	18	30
Prepared me to be an effective leader	15	23
Pursued leadership development on my own	17	29

Theme 7: Results of no Leadership Training

Looking at the *fire service culture regarding leadership training* theme helped

understand the ramifications of poor or absent effective leadership, specifically when we can

pinpoint behaviors and actions that represent destructive leadership. Many of the participant's

stories related to their experiences regarding poor leadership and how the absence of leadership

training has affected them and their department. While this theme could also be related to fire

service culture, it is an important subject and deserves a more specific look into the ramifications

involved when leadership training is sparse, inconsistent, does not exist, or is not offered at every

level of the organization. Many participants shared their experiences concerning ineffective

leadership as a result of no leadership training throughout their careers. Even if there was an

attempt to provide leadership training, it was sporadic and inconsistent, with 88% of all

participants sharing experiences about ineffective leadership training and 98% of all participants

sharing their experiences with a lack of ongoing training for leadership development. Looking

more closely at the officer versus firefighter comparison, officers and firefighters had very

similar feelings regarding the lack of ongoing training for leadership development and

ineffective leadership training, suggesting that departments fail to implement quality leadership

training at all levels of the organization.

Interestingly enough, 94% of all participants shared experiences that outlined the

importance of succession planning, which gives credit to the idea that leadership training should

exist at every level of the organization. To consider a firefighter a non-leader because of their

rank can prove a detriment. Many of the participants shared stories about the newest firefighters

being on an ambulance and responding to incidents without an officer on the scene, which

highlights a fundamental reason to ensure that every person has the appropriate level of

leadership training required for decision-making at their level.

The leadership training experiences of the participants aligned with many of the scholarly

assertion made in the literature review portion of this study. However, Byrd (2017) asserted that

the participants' experiences the best when she asserted that department-wide leadership in not a

well understood phenomenon amongst fire rescue and emergency services organizations across

the United States. This previous assertion may provide a reason why 98% of the participants

shared stories about the lack of ongoing training for leadership development and 88%

experienced ineffective leadership in their department. The following story from participant F7

provides a great example that sums up what many officers and firefighters shared regarding their

experiences.

Participant F7 stated,

Most of my leadership training has been with working around different officers and

different people all the way from firefighter up to a fire chief and learning the way of

doing things. Very little of the classes that I've taken for promotion, you know, instructor one, fire officer one, that sort of stuff, provided me with any kind of leadership training. And I think we're doing a better job with some of the new classes that focus on leadership, but I haven't taken those classes. Most of what I learned about leadership has been informal by watching officers that I've worked with, dealing with people, both good and bad.

Another participant, F9, explained their experience as a result of no leadership training. Again, this story expressed a shared sentiment across all four departments, regardless of rank. Participant F9 stated,

There's a lack of leadership training, especially in the previous years, maybe in the past three to five. Our department is starting to discuss leadership. Our current Chief is doing a lot better job than previous Chiefs. He's been able to accomplish some things, and he's good at sharing. However, like I said before, we don't give people the opportunity to take leadership classes until they're making lieutenant. Even then, I am not sure it's truly leadership training. But when I took my college courses and was taking leadership classes or just learning about leadership in other classes with emergency management, my mind was just blown at how much our department doesn't do and the areas where we are lacking. While we may be ahead of some surrounding jurisdictions, we are still not where some of the larger surrounding departments are, or at least that is the perception. So, seeing more opportunities for leadership and training offered would benefit us as a whole as a department. But unfortunately, right now, my department doesn't really offer much for someone like me.

Table 25

Results of No Leadership Training – Officers and Firefighters

Results of No Leadership Training	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Ineffective leadership	7	6	5	4	7	6	2	7
Lack of ongoing training for leadership development	7	7	5	7	7	7	2	7
Succession planning	7	7	6	6	7	7	2	5
Existing programs are not effective	7	5	6	7	7	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters

Table 26

Results of No Leadership Training – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Results of no Leadership Training		
Ineffective leadership	44	174
Lack of ongoing training for leadership development	49	216
Succession planning	47	285

Theme 8: How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership

The *fire service culture regarding leadership training* theme also ties in with the *how to achieve effective fire service leadership* theme. While several codes tied to this theme could easily be used to discuss culture, it is more important to view these codes to help outline how to achieve effective fire service leadership. Participants shared some stories regarding actions and behaviors within their department that affect effective fire service leadership. Understanding these experiences provides some ideas that will help foster and develop effective leaders. While coaching only surfaced in 30% of all participants' stories, it is worth noting. Looking at the data

on coaching, 100% of officers and firefighters in Department D discussed experiences with coaching, which likely attributed to something within the organizational culture. Only one other officer from Department B mentioned coaching. This finding helps support the point that some elements of effective leadership may be specific to an organizational culture, which is why departments should be careful of a one size fits all leadership training approach (e.g., following precisely what the military does or another fire department). Proper organizational design can ensure the alignment of core values with leadership training to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of completing organizational objectives.

Mentoring comes up once again since the data shows how crucial mentoring is to developing effective fire service leadership. As previously shared, 100% of officers and firefighters in all four departments relied heavily on the right mentor to help them become an effective leader. Also, 100% of officers and firefighters (from all four departments) experiences pointed to the critical role that mentorship played in their leadership development.

While participants' experiences did not yield a consistent set of effective leadership traits, behaviors, and skills concerning the specific interview questions, communication was discussed by 49 of the 50 participants, referencing it 392 times throughout the interviews. Participant experiences made it clear that communication enhances effective fire service leadership, as 98% of all participants' experiences demonstrated that communication enhances leadership, making it a crucial skill for effective leadership. Good communication relies on more than just listening but also entails understanding the intent of the communicator's message, which may explain why 100% of participants experiences expressed the importance of explaining why matters. While participants made it clear that asking "why" has a time and place, it is essential for the learning and growth of an individual as it helps create better decision-makers.

Another area of overwhelming agreement amongst participants' experiences is that effective leadership relies on building relationships with others, as 100% of the participants shared stories about good and bad leadership outcomes based on their relationships with others. The importance of leadership as a relationship was highlighted in several other codes, which could be related to building healthy relationships, communication enhances effective leadership, effective leaders have buy-in (70% of all participants), effective leadership development starts with the right mentor (100% of all participants), effective leadership requires mutual respect (80% of all participants), explaining why matters (90% of all participants), leadership development requires mentoring (100%).

The majority of participants, 78%, shared experiences highlighting the importance of how effective fire service leadership ensures goals and objectives are achieved. One hundred percent of Department A and B officers, 66% (4 of 6) of Department C officers, 28% (2 of 7) of Department D officers, 100% of Department A, B, and C firefighters, and 42% of Department D firefighters expressed the role that effective leadership has on ensuring that goals and objectives are achieved. While Department A, B, and C are in close alignment regarding this topic, Department D is the outlier with 28% of officers and 42% of firefighters sharing experience regarding the vital role that effective leadership plays in achieving goals and objectives, which may be related to the differences in organizational culture. Again, making a case for aligning effective leadership practice with the values and culture of an organization.

Lastly, two codes, *integrating leadership into fire service culture* and *leadership training, should be a building block approach* offer a framework for implementing leadership training that will help achieve effective fire service leadership. Every participant's experience related to how their personal experiences with leadership growth were integrated into the everyday activities

both in the firehouse and incidents. Therefore, as expressed through stories of personal

leadership development and attempting to foster others to lead, 100% of participants experienced

great value in leadership training that offered a building block approach. From the participants'

view, the building block approach was an informal process where growth and development were

achieved through their fire service career. Coupling the informal or natural integration of

leadership development through experiences with consistent programs that build on each other

could significantly enhance effective fire service leadership. However, if consistent leadership

training programs are also added at different points in one's career, this could also greatly

enhance the leadership development of leaders at every level of an organization.

Participant O20 summed up the participants' responses regarding how to achieve

effective fire service leadership. This story shows why 100% of the participants view leadership

as a relationship. The importance of leadership as a relationship was discussed in the literature

review section of this study, which aligns with how the participants viewed leadership. For

example, Kouzes and Posner (2012) explained that leadership is a relationship of mutual respect

and confidence, built on a foundation of trust between those that lead and those that choose to

follow. Employee–organization relationship in workplaces has grown over the years, especially

the interest of employee engagement. This previous assertion is a crucial consideration because it

plays a massive role in the relationship between employees and an organization. Eldor and

Vigoda-Gadot (2017) asserted that regardless of the type of organization, employees today are

looking for a connection to their organizations so they can satisfy their needs for self-

actualization and personal growth, which play an integral role in the employee–organization

relationship. Participant O20's story also shows why participants shared stories regarding how

communication enhances effective leadership, why effective leaders have buy-in, why effective

leadership requires mutual respect, the importance of explaining why, and why mentoring is crucial in developing effective leaders, which all align with relationship building and fostering employee engagement.

Participant O20 stated,

Leadership is not just something that is a culmination of multiple facets of our lifestyle. You have to be a good leader. In my experience, you have to be good at building relationships. You have to understand people. You also have to be one to understand your own weaknesses and your own strengths and learn the strengths and weaknesses of others. And then you have to be able to capitalize on all those at the same time. You have to care. You have to truly care about the men and women that are looking to you for guidance and or support. And in our environment, because it's a team environment, leadership really has to be grown like that, and you have to earn respect. And that doesn't come the minute you're promoted. That comes from hard work every day. I have found that every promise you make every day is how to build the trust and respect of others. You're as good as you are today every day, and you can always be better. You must earn that on a daily basis. That is how I have experienced effective leadership foundationally. As far as formal leadership training in our department, we're failing, and we don't have it. We're failing to develop leadership in our members. Maybe we're taking the easy way out because it is hard for us to develop curriculum and checkboxes to be able to say, well, this person meets these competencies as a leader. For example, integrity is a hard conversation to nail down, but there are ways to do it; it's just hard.

Creating effective leaders takes involved leaders above, leaders below, but mostly above to really, truly understand every facet of our job and be willing to shed some of the pride

that comes with rank and to be able to take a hard look at what our members truly need.

When we allow those we lead to be honest, as leaders, we learn how we can be better.

Also, honesty helps develops relationships with your people. I have found that having

those hard conversations and the good conversations are how we make things better.

Everybody likes to say, Hey, Frank, you did a great job. It's a much harder to say, hey,

Frank, you're messing up, and here's why, and here is how you can get better. What do

we need to do to get there? In my experience, you have to have a relationship with Frank

before you just tell him that sort of thing. The true leaders that I've witnessed were

successful in building those relationships that led to tough conversations. Multiple times

I've been able to have that hard conversation with members and say, hey, you're messing

up, and here's why you're messing up. And they trust me enough to accept that kind of

feedback. They know I'm not just throwing it out there. They know that I am doing my

job as a leader, and I need to guide them to the point where they need to be so that the

team is successful; otherwise, I am not being an effective leader.

Table 27

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership – Officers and Firefighters

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Coaching	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	7
Communication enhances effective leadership	6	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Effective fire service leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives	7	7	4	2	7	7	2	3
Effective leaders have buy-in	0	7	6	7	1	6	2	6

Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	2	7	6	7	4	7	2	5
Explaining why matters	4	7	6	7	5	7	2	7
Integrating leadership into fire service culture	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	6
Leadership development requires mentoring	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Leadership training should be a building block approach	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Leadership is a relationship	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 28

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Coaching	15	70
Communication enhances effective leadership	49	392
Effective fire service leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives	39	253
Effective leaders have buy-in	35	114
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50	395
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	40	290
Explaining why matters	45	255
Integrating leadership into fire service culture	49	357
Leadership development requires mentoring	50	464
Leadership training should be a building block approach	50	269
Leadership is a relationship	50	416

Theme 9: Theories That Build a Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership

This study also looked into specific styles or theories of leadership that align with fire service culture. The participants' ideas on what effective leadership looks like in the fire service reflected three styles of leadership loud and clear, servant, situational and transformational leadership. Many participants shared stories that outlined servant, transformational and situational leadership practices, which could provide a solid foundation to teach and foster effective fire service leadership. However, this is not to say that these should be the only styles to consider, but they are an excellent place to start a foundation because they align more naturally with the fire service culture. Also, teaching differing styles/theories of leadership will add to any leader's toolbox and could be handled via a building block training approach, as discussed in the previous theme, *how to achieve effective fire service leadership*.

This researcher explained in the literature review portion of this study that transformational, servant and situational leadership styles are continuously being held as great models for fire service leadership. For example, Alyn (2011) asserted that firefighters find transformational leaders inspiring and easy to follow because of their charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Also, Ward (2018) suggested that transformational leadership in the fire service helps followers appreciate the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with collaboration and teamwork required in today's fire service. On the subject of servant leadership, Jester (2018) explained that servant leadership in the fire service helps crews perform at a higher level because they feel their needs are being addressed, which results in increased trust between the crew and the officer. The following example was used by this researcher to make a case for situational leadership in the fire service: situational leadership reminds a leader that they must constantly adapt because each follower is an

individual and one leadership style or behavior may not work the same for every person. For instance, a new 18-year-old hire will have a different worldview than a 50-year-old veteran firefighter with 30 years on the job. Northouse (2016) explained that the situational approach enhances effective leadership by providing a framework that helps a leader adapt their style based on the situation, as follower needs will vary.

Participant O7 provided a story that highlights the effective use of servant, situational, and transformational leadership styles. This story highlights servant leadership and the importance of putting others first, transformational leadership, which inspires positive changes in those who follow, and situational leadership that allows a leader to adapt to the follower's needs.

Participant O7 stated,

We have a brand-new Hazmat Tech at my station. He only has four or five years on the job. He is literally a green bean, not a lot of knowledge or experience. He's an older gentleman, early 40s. But prior to the fire department he was a police officer for 15 years. And then he decided that, you know, enough of that I want to be a fireman.

So, he comes in, and he's now riding a rescue company, but he's not really mechanically inclined. He doesn't have that kind of background. He was a finance guy before he became a police officer. So, I asked him to give me a three-eighths ratchet, and he couldn't do it; he doesn't know the difference between the three-eighths or a quarter inch or a half inch; he just doesn't know. But understanding where he's at and working with him, he's been with us for about a year now, he's been doing awesome. I mean, obviously, he doesn't know everything yet, but he's doing better, and he's putting forth a great effort because he wants to learn, he wants to do a good job, so where we're actually assigning him drills now.

Just the other day, he said it had been a while since he operated the chainsaw. It's all stuff

that we covered with them before. But you know what? It's been a while since we've done

it. So, let's go ahead and do it today. And it was kind of impromptu; let's do it this

afternoon. And he did a fantastic job. And I think it's just an example of one of the things

that I guess that kind of summed up all five of those things about exemplary leadership;

you have this brand-new guy, we kind of showed him and laid out our expectations for

him, but also understood, where he was coming from. We got to know where he was

coming from because we took the time to do so. And so, just assuming that he was, this

squad guy that knew what he was doing would have been a bad assumption. I mean,

taking the time to figure out where he was at, what is he capable of, was important. And I

think he appreciated it. So, and I think it's showing positive results when it comes to

effective leadership.

Table 29

Theories that Build the Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership – Officers and

Firefighters

Styles/Theories that Build The Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Explained servant leadership	7	6	7	7	7	7	2	7
Explained situational leadership	7	6	7	7	7	7	2	7
Explained transformational leadership	7	6	7	7	7	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 30

Theories that Build the Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Styles/Theories that Build the Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Explained characteristics of servant leadership	50	327
Explained characteristics of situational leadership	50	324
Explained characteristics of transformational leadership	50	323

Theme 10: What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service

The followership theory suggests that many leadership theories and studies are incomplete because the focus is usually on the leader. Therefore, a big question that should always be asked when attempting to lead effectively is what do I need to do to have this person follow me? Themes regarding followership were not anticipated. However, as the participants shared their stories about why they or others chose to emulate or follow a leader, was a naturally occurring theme that could not be overlooked. Ninety percent of participants' experiences summed up followership in simplest terms: a person's willingness to follow a leader matters. If a leader cannot get others to follow, they are not a leader at all. Therefore, effective leadership requires understanding why someone is willing to follow, which is why leadership as a relational process is a solid approach for fire service and quite frankly, any other organization. Considering that the intent of this study was not only to identify that a specific problem existed but also to provide solutions to address how to develop effective fire service leaders, identifying follower needs is paramount. Aligning these findings with the previous two themes, *how to achieve effective fire service leadership*, and *styles/theories of leadership that build a foundation for effective fire service leadership* are the key to creating quality leadership training that fosters continuous leadership development for firefighters and officers alike.

Kouzes and Posner (2011) asserted that credibility is the foundation of leadership, which is steeped in many years of study and was the first theme discussed in this study. While credibility as the foundation of leadership was the first theme discussed in this study, it also has a place in this theme as it offers the basis for why firefighters are willing to follow a leader. Whether directly mentioned or not, credibility provides a foundation for why firefighters/ fire officers will follow a leader. Twenty-six percent (13 of 50) participants discussed the importance of credibility, referencing the subject a total of 60 times throughout all the interviews. All 13 participants that mentioned credibility specifically were from Department D, with 85% (6 of 7) of officers and 100% (7 of 7) of firefighters mentioning the term credibility. Such a finding lends support to Kouzes and Posner's (2017) assertion that while the content of leadership has not changed, the context has, in this case, the context is likely attributed to the organizational culture of Department D. An essential point regarding effective leadership is that organizations should not rely arbitrarily on what makes people follow. Instead, it is important to look at what makes individuals within an organizational culture want to follow. Understanding why one is willing to follow is an integral part of effective leadership, especially in a service that, whether knowingly or not, views leadership as a relational process. Many of the other participants spoke of other terms associated with credibility as the foundation of leadership: competence, confidence, and trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Participant's experiences across all four departments, officers and firefighters, related to the importance of trust 49 out of 50 (98%) with 309 overall references, 49 of 50 (98%) with 507 references related to how much competence matters, and 48 of 50 (96%) with 480 references related to how much confidence matters to achieve effective fire service leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2011), competence, confidence, and trust result in credibility, which they refer to as the foundation of leadership because effective

leadership cannot exist without it. Therefore, it is less critical that the term credibility was discussed specifically but that most participants' experiences with effective leadership relied on the elements that make up credibility, which are competence, confidence, and trust. Competence, confidence, and trust are why many firefighters and officers will choose to follow a leader.

Participants identified a few other qualities of a leader that promote followership: accountability, the ability to build confidence in others, consistency, and acknowledgment of mistakes. Looking at accountability from a followership perspective is two-fold. First, from a fire service perspective, 72% (36 of 50) of the participants explained accountability regarding a leader holding themselves accountable and holding others accountable. Accountability also aligns with leaders acknowledging their mistakes, of which 60% (30 of 50) of participants discussed how such an action resulted in building trust. *Building confidence in others matters* and *trust instills confidence* was also expressed in many of the participants' stories regarding their experiences with effective leadership; 88% of all participants shared stories about how an effective leader guided them and encouraged them, which increased their confidence in themselves, leaving them to feel like a more competent member of their shift or team. Many participants also shared stories about how effective leadership increased their trust and confidence, not only in themselves but also in boosting their trust and confidence in their leader. Therefore, the majority of participants, 98%, discussed their experiences about how an increase in trust in their leader instilled their confidence, which is why they were willing to follow a leader anywhere. Considering that 90% of all participants shared stories about the importance of understanding why people are willing to follow, educating firefighters about the importance of followership is an area of leadership training should be considered when crafting a fire service leadership program.

The concept of followership was discussed in the literature review and has proved to be an important aspect regarding what effective leadership looks like. Uhl-Biena et al. (2014) echoed the ideas of the current leadership studies of Kouzes and Posner and the point of view of this researcher and the participants, which is that leadership is a process mutually created in social and reactional interactions between people. For example, how do people become the kind of leaders that others want to follow, and how does a leader get other people to follow them, by free will and free choice, to move forward in pursuit of a common vision? This question is why it is crucial to understand the reasons that someone is willing to follow. Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained that effective leadership results from a complete picture that requires understanding what people look for in those that they choose to follow, making understanding followership a crucial element of leadership studies and practices.

Participant F3 summed up what followership looks like in the fire service, which echoed the scholarly research contained in the literature review of this study. This story highlights why 90% of the participants shared stories about why a willingness to follow is imperative. This story also highlights other reasons that fire service personnel are willing to follow, such as accountability, building confidence in others, consistency, trusting others instill confidence in themselves, competence matters, and confidence matters.

Participant F3 stated,

There are 12 people on my shift, and the leadership environment that my Captain and the Lieutenant fostered is very positive. Specifically, there was a guy who is good with a hose and actually taught for the nozzle forward program. So, there were days when we would go out and pull hose lines and flow water for eight hours a day. Not because the Captain said we had to, not because the Lieutenant said we had to, because we wanted to

be good at our jobs. We just wanted to train. Another couple of guys and I were really

good at EMS and medic stuff, and four of us there were medics, not including the

officers. The four of us routinely went up to EMS training and did extra work on our off

time because we were allowed to study and attend training and be the best at what we do.

Again, not because the Captain said to or not because the Lieutenant said to, because we

were all allowed, somewhat expected, but it didn't feel like that. It felt like we were

allowed to be the best that we could be. We were encouraged and supported, and it's a

direct reflection on our officers' leadership.

Participant O23 shared a story that provided an example of why people would be resistant

to follow. Participant O23 stated,

During my time in the department, I worked with an officer that was very knowledgeable

when it came to firefighting, but they would consistently say one thing and do something

else. Over time it became harder and harder to trust that person because they didn't keep

their word and often didn't back up or support their own people. As a result, many

members of the shift became frustrated and angry and left the shift. I think one of the

primary leadership traits that translate to becoming an effective fire service leader is

having and demonstrating a strong sense of integrity. Having a leader with integrity helps

to build trust with others and promotes a strong team environment which is critical for

success in the station and on the fire ground.

Table 31

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service – Officers and Firefighters

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
The willingness to follow matters	5	7	6	7	5	7	2	6
Accountability	3	6	5	7	3	5	2	5
Building confidence in others matters	4	7	6	7	4	7	2	7
Consistency matters	1	7	6	7	1	7	2	7
Credibility matters	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	7
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	1	6	5	6	1	6	1	4
Trust instills confidence	7	7	6	6	7	7	2	7
Competence matters	6	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Confidence matters	6	7	6	7	6	7	2	7

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 32

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service		
The willingness to follow matters	45	238
Accountability	36	126
Building confidence in others matter	44	328
Consistency matters	38	269
Credibility matters	13	69
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30	93
Trust instills confidence	49	309
Competence matters	49	507
Confidence matters	48	480

Theme 11: Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service

Process leadership theories look at leadership through the lens of both the leader and the follower, making effective leadership a mutual responsibility of both the leader and the follower. Northouse (2018) explained that process leadership is an event that depends on the interaction between the leader and the follower, which makes leadership available to everyone. Process leadership theories focus on leadership as a developmental process that can be observed, learned, and trained (Northouse, 2018). Servant and transformational leadership are process theories discussed earlier in this study regarding identified theories that surfaced in the participants' experiences. This theme focuses on codes that further support process leadership theories as a solid foundation to build fire service leadership programs. Since process leadership styles focus on the relationship between a leader and follower, it is essential to note that 100% of all participants discussed effective and ineffective leadership regarding their relationship with their leader.

The codes that supported this theme undoubtedly relate to building functional relationships and putting others first. For example, 68% of all participants discussed how they were inspired by leaders that acknowledged the success of others rather than focusing on their own accomplishments. Instead, an effective leader was viewed as a person that always gave their crew credit for good work. Seventy-four percent of all participants also shared stories about the importance for an effective leader to adapt to the needs of their people, which ties into 84% sharing stories about how knowing your people can help a leader to adapt to the needs of each person, which ultimately builds trust and a good relationship. Taking *Knowing your people* a step further consisted of stories that explained the importance of motivation, not just from the leader but also from the follower. Stories about motivation surfaced in 98% of all participant responses.

Motivation was discussed as influencing how willing someone is to follow, so knowing each person and adapting leadership styles were highlighted as effective leadership experiences. Overall, 90% of all participants explained that effective leaders put others before themselves, which makes a strong case for servant and transformational leadership to serve as a foundation for building effective fire service leaders.

Some participants shared experiences about the importance of focus on others' needs. For example, 44% of the participants expressed the need to understand that people learn differently, which relates to knowing your people and what motivates them. Forty-four percent of all participants also discussed putting the right people in the right place for their skills and abilities, which was seen as a massive benefit to the team's effectiveness. This finding lends support to Ord's Fluid Form, which is a simple theory discussed in the literature review portion. Fluid Form focuses on putting the right people, in the right place and at the right time (Elliot, 2009). According to Elliot (2009), Fluid Form creates cross-functional teams, flattens organizations, gets more accomplished with less people and in less time, and provides more flexibility allowing for objectives to be met in an efficient and effective manner. These codes also make a strong case for teaching situational leadership as a foundation for effective fire service leadership. While some could argue that situational leadership is not a process approach, this researcher would argue it is. When a leader acknowledges that they must adapt their approach to ensure that they are effectively leading everyone, it takes getting to know each individual and doing what a leader needs to do to help each person on their team learn and grow. Based on the data from this research, situational leadership as a process would follow what this researcher refers to as the five constants of effective leadership:

Figure 8

The Five Constants of Leadership
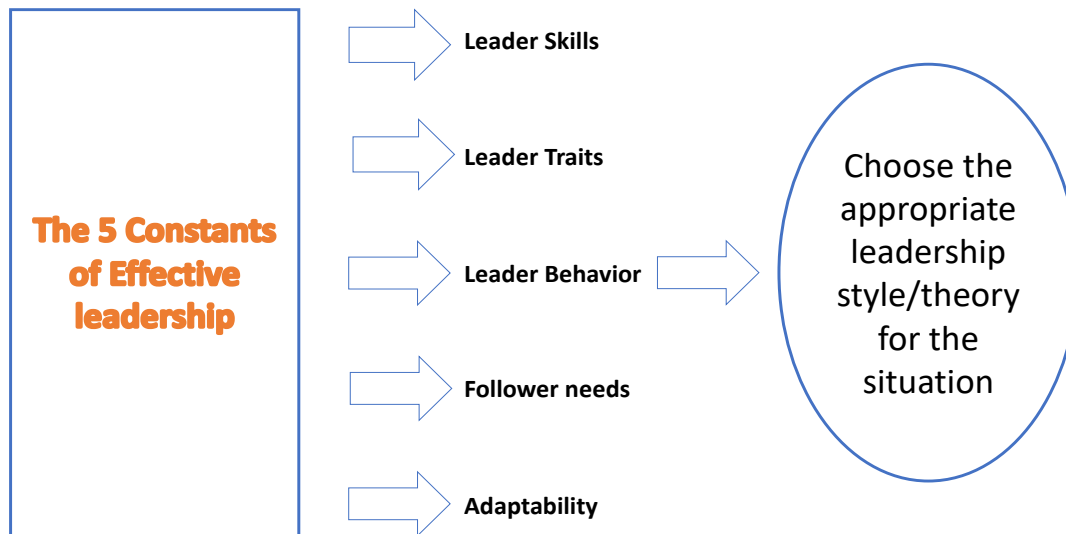
This researcher developed the five constants of leadership as a process style of leadership that allows a leader to consider what leadership style is effective based on the individual and situation at hand, which requires a mutual exchange between a leader and follower. This model allows a leader to determine what skills, traits, and behaviors are necessary to lead by first looking at the follower's needs effectively. Then a leader can adapt their leadership style or styles based on the situation. The findings in this theme help support using process-style leadership theories as a foundation for training and developing effective fire service leaders.

Story after story from all participants made it evident that officers and firefighters view leadership as a relationship. While participants did not use the words leadership is a relationship, their stories regarding their views of effective leadership highlighted actions and behaviors that yield strong relationships. These stories make a case for using process leadership theories such as servant, transformational, and situational leadership styles as a foundation for building effective

fire service leaders, which was discussed earlier. Gen (2019) explained that while some public

and private sector enterprises have institutionalized leadership training, many overlook the

importance of creating and maintaining a culture of learning, where professional growth and

excellence are consistently encouraged and rewarded. Therefore, establishing leadership training

that will develop effective leaders should start with understanding what leadership means and

what it means to be an effective leader with an organization. Unfortunately, many organizations

fail to understand what effective leadership entails, and as a result, find it difficult to create

training programs that yield better leaders. The U.S. fire service is an example of such an

organization. Buttenschon (2016) asserted that leadership development in the fire service is

grossly understudied, and her research shows a need for formal training programs within

individual departments, which this study builds upon.

Participants provided much insight regarding what effective leadership looks like in the

fire service. Since 100% of the participants shared stories that highlighted leadership as a

relationship, all 50 participant's stories could not be shared. Therefore, stories from participants

O17, F21, and O16 were used to represent why process theories such as transformational, servant

and situational styles provide a great foundation for leadership training that yields effective fire

service leadership. Participant F21 shared the following story regarding their experience with

effective leadership:

Participant O17 stated,

Recently, I had an employee that was dealing with respect issues. So, this employee is not

the greatest when it comes to fire ground stuff, kind of one of them really smart people,

very educated, speaks well, but it doesn't really translate to the practical side of things.

So, he's kind of been a project of mine to try and get him up to speed in relation to what

his rank is. And I just happened to stop by the station one day, and everybody is always

making comments about this guy. For example, do you know so-and-so, he's really

crappy, he sucks. And then it wasn't that long ago that I got to thinking about him. I'm

like, this guy reminds me a lot of me when I was younger and he's much older than me.

So, I sat him down one day and started asking him questions like, are you an only child,

and were you picked on a lot in school? He said, Yes. And I said I know exactly how you

feel. And then, he never had an attitude towards me. I think we connected on a different

level because I was able to understand him. I think that respect that I gave him, in turn,

allowed him to see that what I was trying to coach him on wasn't just, hey, this is my

way, and this is the way I want to be done. Instead, he felt like, hey, this guy understands

me, and now I'm able to relate to him on a personal level, which I think helped in the

way that we started to communicate about things.

Participant F21 shared the following story regarding their experience with effective

leadership. Participant F21 stated,

I had a Battalion Chief that if he had an issue with you, he'd pull you off to the side, and

he'd tell you. I respected him enough that he only needed to tell me once. If it truly is

what he wanted, then that's what I was going to do, period. So, it's a done issue. And to

this day, I respect this guy, and I will share a story why. So, he was already retired when I

got promoted to master, and it was right after line up in the morning, that I got a phone

call. This Chief called me just to see how my first day as a master firefighter was going.

This guy was already retired, but he took the time to track me down at the station. I was

like, you don't have to call me. He said, I know I didn't have to call you, but there was no

way I was going to let you have your first day without me calling. That's a good person

right there.

Participant O16 shared the following story regarding their experience with effective

leadership. Participant O16 stated,

There are three guys that I call, maybe not regularly, but when I have something that I'm

scratching my head about. Two of those three have a particular trait. They empower their

people, they let their folks make decisions, be it on the fly, on the rescue scene, on an

EMS call, or around the firehouse. They empower their people, and when they do that,

there is a level of trust that is expected and that trust only grows stronger. Not only do

you want to hang out with each other at work, but you want to hang out with them

outside of work. And that bond just gets better, and better, and stronger and stronger. So,

they really take care of us, and they can recognize that, hey, we need to do what it takes

to take care of this person. We need to show them the way. We need to show everybody

the way. And there are some that you take a greater interest with because of similarities

inside and outside work and others that are just coming to work. But you can't forget

about them either. And they haven't. They always take care of them. They put their faith

into their folks first. They're always putting their people first.

Table 33

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service – Officers and Firefighters

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Acknowledge the success of others	4	7	4	4	2	6	2	5
Adaptability matters	1	7	6	7	1	7	2	6

Important to know your people	2	7	6	7	4	7	2	7
Leadership is a relationship	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
Motivation matters	6	7	6	7	7	7	2	7
People learn differently	0	4	5	3	0	5	2	3
Putting the right people in the right place	0	2	6	6	0	1	2	5
Effective fire service leaders put others first	7	6	6	7	6	5	2	6

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 34

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service		
Acknowledge the success of others	34	75
Adaptability matters	37	185
Important to know your people	42	251
Leadership is a relationship	50	416
Motivation matters	49	277
People learn differently	22	49
Putting the right people in the right place	22	69
Effective fire service leaders put others first	45	61

Theme 12: Certain Business Principles can Enhance Effective Fire Service Leadership

While part of the goal of this study was to align business processes with effective fire service leadership, this researcher was skeptical if there would be any participant experiences on this topic. Interestingly enough, several participants discussed the importance of implementing effective business practices into their departments. While only 14% of all participant's experiences explained how, in their experience, certain business principles could enhance effective fire leadership, it does not mean that this area should be overlooked. In fact, this is an

excellent area for future studies. Five of the seven (71%) participants that discussed how the fire service could use business models were officers. The two firefighters that shared the fire service use of business models were from Department A; no other firefighter from the other three departments discussed business principles at all. Looking closer at the participants, Department A had an equal number of officers compared to firefighters, 2 of 7 (28% of officers and two firefighters), who discussed this topic's experiences. Once again, such findings could point to organizational culture, as well as Department A's willingness to advance formal leadership training for both firefighters and officers alike.

Other codes that surfaced from participants' experiences linked to business principles *were hiring the right people, no funding for leadership, and succession planning*. Thirty-eight percent of all participants shared stories about hiring the right people for such a high-stress and dangerous profession. From the organization design standpoint, a healthy organizational culture can exist when people's values align with the core values of an organization (Dwairy, 2019). Another area of focus regarding organizational design is the sustainability of the organization, which requires succession planning. Good succession planning is paramount to ensure that an organization functions efficiently and effectively (Beer et al., 2016). The majority of participants, 94%, discussed experiences regarding the importance of succession planning in the fire service, which was unexpected but made sense from an organizational standpoint.

One last surprising outcome of the data was that only 22% of participants discussed experiencing a lack of funding for leadership training programs. Many fire departments across the United States consistently feel the spending crunch since funds are derived from taxes, and many politicians control the purse strings. Looking at how funding affects leadership training in the fire service is another area of study that could produce some beneficial results regarding

effectively implementing leadership training programs in the fire departments across the United

States.

Participant O3 shared a perspective regarding how business practices can aid with

leadership development in the fire service. This story makes a case for applying business models

to fire service leadership training. This story also provided further support to Kouzes and

Posner's (2017) assertion that the content of leadership has not changed, merely the context or

organizational culture.

Participant O3 stated,

Now that we're doing our virtual training platform, we're bringing in folks that are not

tied to the fire service. So now we're bringing in an external voice and external opinions

that are not tied to the fire service or public safety. But the message is the same. It's just

coming from a different perspective, a business perspective, a different leadership

perspective, whether it be the private or public entity. To me, I think that's critical. For so

many years, we have relied on fire service people telling the fire service what to do and

how to react and how to cope and how to grow and how to develop and how to lead.

When we look at a singular perspective, we miss the mark. We never hit the private

industry, but businesses have done so well for so long, it's worth listening to that

perspective. Our people are getting a lot out of the different perspectives that we are

sharing in our leadership training. The fire service tends to get behind the eight ball

because we have a tendency to only listen to the same voices with the same message.

Ninety-four percent of participants shared stories regarding a lack of succession planning

concerning leadership training, and many explained that the decision-makers in their respective

departments lack the management skills required for running a fire department. For example,

many of the participants explained that a lack of leadership training has led to ineffective and destructive leadership. They further explained that many ineffective leaders eventually get promoted and move to high levels of management, where they are making decisions for their department, which often has negative results on an entire department. The framework of this study and research question one explored how a building block approach toward leadership training could yield effective leaders via ongoing development. The literature review explained a few key points that support building block training. First this researcher asserted that a building block learning approach outlines leadership development as training programs that start with a basic foundation and then systematically builds knowledge and growth by adding new concepts to ensure ongoing improvement in skills and abilities. Concepts are the basic building blocks of knowledge defined as symbolic constructs used to classify or categorize reality, in the case effective leadership practices are the concepts to build upon (Schutte & Steyn, 2015). Schutte and Steyn (2015) explained that words or notions must be available in the subject matter of a given scientific discipline, as they are the primary analytical tools by which individuals come to grips with reality. Effective leadership development requires the learning and growth of skills and behaviors that are built over time due to training and experience. Therefore, a building block training approach is supported by both the literature review and the experiences shared by many of the participants.

Participant O4 provided a story that explained the use of a building block approach toward leadership development, which could correct destructive leadership tendencies. This story also provided an example of how the wrong people in decision-making positions can affect the implementation of quality leadership training programs. Lastly, this story provided an example

of how the right approach toward leadership training can address succession planning by preparing people to be effective leaders.

Participant O4 stated,

The biggest issue we deal with leadership training is budget and funding for it. In order to have the training, they have to be able to put people in a class and then get the instructors to teach it. And I don't think they find it as an important budget item. Again, they feel that if you've taken lieutenant's exam and you've passed, that you're suitable to be a supervisor and a leader at that point because we have a school for lieutenant. But when you get promoted to captain, there's no new school. It's, you've been a lieutenant so you should know the job of the captain. Where's the growth in that? And it's the same way with battalion chief and assistant chief. There's no development into those programs. We don't take the time to train these people, shadow them, and give them advice. And I think it is the fire service in general. We're better criticizing than we are giving advice. So, we'd rather tell you what you did wrong but not tell you how to improve it or give you a resource that shows you how to improve it. It's just you did this wrong, and you need to correct it. Go figure out how to correct it.

Table 35

Certain Business Principles Can Enhance Effective Fire Service Leadership – Officers and Firefighters

Certain Business Principles can Enhance the Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership	Dept A Officers	Dept B Officers	Dept C Officers	Dept D Officers	Dept A Firefighters	Dept B Firefighters	Dept C Firefighters	Dept D Firefighters
Fire service and business models	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	0

Hiring the right people	2	5	4	0	2	4	1	1
No funding for leadership training	3	4	1	0	0	1	2	0
Succession planning	7	7	6	6	7	7	2	5

Note. Department C is represented by 6 officers and 2 firefighters.

Table 36

Certain Business Principles Can Enhance the Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership – All Participants

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Certain Business Principles can Enhance the Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Fire service and business models	7	11
Hiring the right people	19	57
No funding for leadership training	11	15
Succession planning	47	285

Overall, the data gathered from the participant's experience strongly supports that the research problem exists. Based on the data derived from participants' experiences, the proposed research problem exists consistently over all four departments outlined in this study. This study has found that leadership training is not provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within the four Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments and could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The responses from participants, whether they are a firefighter or officer, are similar and consistent regardless of the department they represent. Also, the data provides information that could easily help fire departments all across the United States create solid leadership training programs that develop strong and confident leaders that foster teamwork and inspire and mentor future fire service leaders. Furthermore, the themes developed by coding participants' experiences did align with

the research questions. The predominant themes are further discussed to show how they support

each research question, which adds to the validity of the outcome of this study.

The Relationship of Each Theme to the Research Questions

The 12 main themes and the associated codes that arose from the data aligned with the

research questions, which enhanced the validity of the findings. The 12 main themes were

supported by specific codes that resulted from the participant's interview transcript. Each

research and subsequent research question were explained by aligning each question with the

associated theme or themes that support it. The codes attached to the central theme were also

used to explain further the association between the meaning of the theme and how it answers all

the research questions. It is important to note that all codes within the main themes did not align

with the research question. Therefore, only the codes that have a relationship to the research

questions were discussed.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 explored how a lack of implementation of leadership training at

varying levels of an individual's career affected their ability to accomplish organizational

objectives. The following five themes supported research question 1, *most departments offer*

little or no formal training, results of no formal leadership training, fire service culture,

teamwork is necessary for the fire service and *how to achieve effective fire service leadership.*

These five themes and their associated codes showed the alignment of research question 1 and

the emerging themes based on participants' experiences.

Table 37

Research Question 1

Research Question 1	Theme(s)
RQ1. How has a lack of implementation of leadership training at varying levels of an individual's career affected the ability to accomplish organizational objectives.	✓ Most departments offer little or no formal leadership training ✓ Results of no formal leadership training ✓ Fire service culture regarding leadership training ✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service ✓ How to achieve effective fire service leadership

The theme, *most departments offer little or no formal training, shown* in Table 38 below, shows that overall, there is a lack of leadership training at varying levels of an individual's fire service career within the four departments studied. Perhaps the most telling and supportive data for research question 1 is that 98% of all participants did not experience any formal leadership training throughout their careers. For example, only 38% of all participants shared stories regarding some type of leadership training, 58% of all participants explained that even when leadership training was offered in their department, it was only for those aspiring to be an officer and only 20% of all participants shared stories regarding successful leadership training programs.

Table 38

Most Departments Offer Little to No Formal Leadership Training Aligns with RQ 1

Common Theme	Participant
Most Department Offer Little or no Formal Leadership Training	
Department is starting to offer leadership training	19
No formal leadership training throughout one's career	49
Successful leadership training programs	10
Training does not start until LT level	29

The theme, *results of no formal training* shown in Table 39 below, is important to discuss because it supports the proposed research problem and provides solid evidence that the four departments are lacking formal leadership training overall. The theme, *results of no formal leadership training* supported research question 1 with two codes: ineffective leadership and lack of ongoing leadership (see table below). First, 88% (44 of 50) of all participants' responses pointed to ineffective leadership due to a lack of formal leadership training. Next, 98% (49 of 50) of all participant responses suggested that there is no ongoing leadership training to enhance an individual's leadership growth, which supports the idea that the four departments in this study have little to no leadership training.

Table 39

Results of No Leadership Training Aligns with RQ 1

Common Theme	Participant
Results of no Leadership Training	
Ineffective leadership	44
Lack of ongoing training for leadership development	49

The theme, *fire service culture regarding leadership training* shown in Table 40 below, also relates to research question 1, with three specific codes, destructive leadership, failed to

create effective leaders, and prepared me to be an effective leader. This theme and associated codes were a product of stories regarding experiences of poor leadership that resulted in poor or ineffective outcomes in fostering effective leadership and carrying out operational objectives efficiently and effectively. Although many of the stories still resulted in mitigating the situation or incident, participants shared stories about how effective leadership could have contributed not only to more efficient outcomes but also the empowerment and improvement of everyone on the team, with 96% (48 of 50) of all participants sharing experiences about the failure of their department to produce effective leaders. Only 30% (15 of 50) of all participant's experiences had anything to do with their department preparing them to be effective leaders, which may shed light on why 74% (37 of 50) of all participants shared stories about destructive leadership and how it hindered the growth and development of others, as well as affected how well the team operated within the firehouse and when on incidents.

Table 40

Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training Aligns with RQ 1

Common themes	Participant
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training	
Destructive leadership	37
Failed to create effective leaders	48
Prepared me to be an effective leader	15

Another theme that supports research question 1 is, *teamwork is necessary in the fire service.* The stories regarding experiences that highlighted why teamwork is necessary in the fire service yielded an outstanding result where 100% of all participants explaining that teamwork is essential in every aspect of the fire service from building relationships, training, living together in the firehouse, and responding to and mitigating incidents. One hundred percent of all participants shared stories that outlined that effective teamwork enhances the efficiency and

effectiveness of completing operational objectives. Therefore, if a leader cannot build an effective team, working together to accomplish objectives could be significantly hindered. Participants shared stories about positive and negative outcomes regarding teamwork. Participants referred not only to the ability of the leader of the team to keep everyone working together but also outlined the importance of the relationships that were formed amongst all team members during training, everyday firehouse activities, and past incidents that the team learned from.

Table 41

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 1

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service		
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50	171
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50	350

The final theme that supports research question 1 is *how to achieve effective fire service leadership*. One particular code under this theme that is critical to mention is shown below in Table 42; effective fire service leadership is essential to achieve goals and objectives. This code shows that 78% of all participants' stories highlighted the critical influence of effective leadership on achieving goals and objectives. Much like the previously discussed theme, *teamwork is necessary in the fire service*. Participants shared stories about positive and negative outcomes regarding the achievement of operational goals and objectives based on a leader's ability to keep everyone working together, also outlining the importance of the relationships that were formed amongst all team members before the incident, such as training, everyday firehouse activities, and past incidents that the team learned from.

Table 42

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership Aligns with RQ 1

Common Theme	Participant	Reference
How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership		
Effective fire service leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives	39	253

Subsequent Research Questions for RQ 1

Subsequent questions were used to help understand the full meaning of each research question. Not all of the subsequent research questions were answered by the interview questions. Therefore, only the questions that were answered by the emerging themes are discussed in this section. The inability to answer the subsequent questions had no bearing on the main research question. Instead, these secondary questions were meant to look deeply into and support the main research question.

Table 43

Subsequent Research Questions for RQ 1

Subsequent Research Question 1	Theme
RQ1.a. What constitutes leadership training?	✓ Most leadership training is informal
RQ1.b. What is the difference between leadership training and leader development?	No theme arose
RQ1.c. What actions or behaviors contribute to a failure to implement leadership training?	No theme arose
RQ1.d. What actions or behaviors could contribute to the effective implementation of quality leadership training?	✓ Certain business principles can enhance the implementation effective fire service leadership

RQ1.e. How does a lack of effective leadership lead to poor morale?	✓ Fire service culture regarding leadership training ✓ What followership looks like in the fire service
RQ1.f. What are operational objectives, and why are they important?	No theme arose

Subsequent research question 1a explored, What constitutes leadership training? This question attempted to define what leadership training looked like in each department, which related to the theme, *most leadership training is informal*. Ninety-four percent (47 of 50) of all participants explained that their leadership training experiences were mostly informal. More specifically, 100% of all participants attributed their leadership development not necessarily linked to training but learning from others' leadership experiences, which they considered mentorship. Regarding mentorship, every participant highlighted how informal mentoring helped them to become better leaders. A particular example of informal mentorship that all 50 participants referenced was their officer's crucial role in influencing how they wanted to lead others. The examples of officer influence on effective leadership consisted of positive and negative experience, learning what to do from positive outcomes and what not to do from the negative outcomes.

Table 44

Most Leadership Training is Informal Aligns with RQ 1a

Common Theme	Participant
Most Leadership Training is Informal	
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50
Leadership development requires mentoring	50
Informal leadership training	47
Officers influence matters	50

Subsequent question 1b explored the difference between leadership training and development. This study was a qualitative phenomenological design that relied on participants' experiences, and since this question was not addressed using a specific interview question, there were no identifiable themes that arose to address question 1b. However, this may be an excellent area for future studies and will be discussed further in the future studies portion of this paper.

Subsequent question 1c explored what actions or behaviors could contribute to the effective implementation of quality leadership training. Once again, as outlined in subsequent question 1b, his study was qualitative and relied on participants' experiences, and since this question was not addressed using a specific interview question, no identifiable themes arose. This question poses another excellent platform for future studies and will also be discussed later in this paper.

Subsequent research question 1d explored, What actions or behaviors could contribute to the effective implementation of quality leadership training? This question refers more to how to effectively implement quality leadership training and less to the content of such training. Therefore, the theme that relates most to this question is, c*ertain business principles can enhance effective fire service leadership*, see Table 45 below. Looking at particular business process

improvement models such as Kaizen and the theory of constraints (TOC) was discussed in the

literature portion of this study. While only 14% of all participants shared stories regarding

aligning the fire service with business processes that can improve the organization as a whole, it

is not a subject that should be overlooked. For example, 94% of all participants expressed the

need for the fire service to embrace succession planning, while 38% referred to stories regarding

how crucial it is that the fire service hires the right people. From a business perspective, several

business process designs could help departments implement leadership training with minimal

cost while enhancing sustainability by producing a solid organizational culture of effective

leaders.

Table 45

Certain Business Principles Can Enhance Effective Fire Service Leadership Aligns with RQ 1d

Common Theme	Participant
Certain Business Principles can Enhance the Implementation of Effective Fire Service Leadership	
Fire service and business models	7
Hiring the right people	19
No funding for leadership training	11
Succession planning	47

Finally, subsequent research question 1e explored how a lack of effective leadership

leads to poor morale? The theme, *fire service culture regarding leadership training*, see Table 46

below, related to this question as 96% of all participants shared stories about how their

departments failed to create effective leaders. The participants, 74% in all, spoke of many

experiences of a destructive leader, whether it was something that personally happened to them

or something they witnessed happens to others. These stories often discussed how negative

behaviors of an officer or someone in charge resulted in negative outcomes, whether in the

firehouse or on an incident. These negative outcomes were expressed as morale destroying

incidents that affected people in the long term, as individuals often felt shut down or dejected, so they stopped trying.

Table 46

Fire Service Culture Aligns with RQ 1e

Common Theme	Participant
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training	
Destructive leadership	37
Failed to create effective leaders	48

Subsequent research question 1e can also align with *what followership looks like in the fire service* theme. This theme produced codes that highlighted why people in the fire service choose to follow a leader. Therefore, looking at the opposite of these codes allows for a deeper look at morale-producing actions or behaviors. For example, looking at Table 47, 88% (44 of 50) of all participants' experiences resulted in stories regarding the importance of developing confidence in others to be an effective member of the team. Participants' experiences also highlighted stories about how crucial it is to be consistent in actions and practices as a leader, with 76% (38 of 50) of participants discussing this topic. Next, the ability for a leader to not only be confident in themselves but for followers to be confident in a leader was a resounding sentiment of 96% of all participants' stories. Ninety-eight percent of all participants discussed trust as a two-way street and how it builds confidence in both a leader and a follower, which creates a healthy relationship built on mutual respect. Lastly, 98% of all participants talked about the importance of competence and how competent leaders instill trust in others. While understanding followership is crucial to recognize what makes someone an effective leader, it is equally important to understand how it influences others, which will help keep morale positive.

Table 47

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 1e

Common Theme	Participant
What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service	
Building confidence in others matter	44
Consistency matters	38
Trust instills confidence	49
Competence matters	49
Confidence matters	48

Subsequent question 1f explored defining operational objectives and why they are essential. Since this study was qualitative in nature and relied on participants' experiences, this question was not addressed using a specific interview question, resulting in no identifiable themes that addressed question 1f. However, interview question 11a asked participants to share a story about a time when they felt that teamwork played a significant role in efficiently and effectively completing operational objectives in their department. Participants shared stories of emergency incidents, training, and day-to-day activities around the firehouse. These activities are what participants identified as operational objectives.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 explored how implementing leadership programs based on Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership could provide effective leadership training throughout an individual's career. Research question 2 supported the following two themes: *Kouzes and Posner – five practices align with fire service culture,* and *credibility is the foundation of leadership*. These two themes and their associated codes showed the alignment of research question 2 and the emerging themes based on participants' experiences.

Table 48

Research Question 2

Research Question 2	Theme
RQ2. How can the implementation of leadership programs based on Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership provide effective leadership training throughout an individual's career?	✓ Kouzes and Posner-five practices align with fire service culture ✓ Credibility is the foundation of leadership

Kouzes and Posner created the five practices of exemplary leadership model after researching people's personal leadership experiences of all different types and sizes of organizations around the world. The finding of Kouzes and Posner are based on over 30 years of research regarding personal best leadership behaviors (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Table 49

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Summary

	Key Behaviors	Explanation
Model the Way	Set the example by behaving in ways that reflect the shared values. "walk the walk" Achieve small wins that build confidence, commitment, and consistent progress.	The leader sets an example, defines the shared behavioral standards or shared values of the organization, and then exemplifies them (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 47). Create unity by involving people in achieving objectives by involving them in processes and making their feedback important (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 64). Therefore, Kouzes and Posner (2017) also believe it is essential to achieve some small wins to build momentum which is accomplished by forging unity (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).
Inspire a Shared Vision	Envision an uplifting, exciting, meaningful future. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams.	Leaders should begin work on their vision before enlisting others to refine it and make it theirs. Emphasis on visualization and the use of powerful evocative language to capture the vision to inspire others (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Challenge the Process	Search out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate and improve. Experiment, take risks and learn from any mistakes.	The leader is an agent for change - questioning, challenging and seeking new ideas. Taking risks, experimenting, learning from and allowing for mistakes. Importantly, encouraging new ideas to flourish (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).
Enable Others To Act	Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust. Strengthen people's ability by delegating power, developing their competence and offering visible support.	Building a spirit of trust and collaboration. Encouraging people to share information. Kouzes and Posner believe that leaders must disclose what they believe and care about and, when necessary, show some vulnerability. This also entails delegating power, believing in others, and investing in followers' training and education (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).
Encourage the Heart	Recognize individual contributions to the success of the project Celebrate team accomplishments regularly.	Praise and celebrate the contributions and success of each individual, as well as team accomplishments (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Research question 2 regarding how the implementation of leadership programs based on Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership provide effective leadership training throughout an individual's career produced a common theme amongst participants. The theme, *Kouzes and Posner-Five practices align with fire service culture* made it is clear that the five practices of exemplary leadership resonate with most of the participants; see Table 50 below. It is important to reiterate that the participants were provided a handout that outlined the five practices of exemplary leadership to help effectively answer one of the interview questions, which 60% of participants (30 of 50) stated that they identified with the five practices of leadership, regarding it as an effective leadership platform for their department, without any prompt. Also, based on the handout explanation, participants provided many personal examples that showcased how and why the five practices of exemplary leadership are a strong foundation for leadership development in the fire service. Only 50% of participants experienced an exemplary leader. However, the participants provided specific examples of the five practices,

with 98% sharing effective leadership practices regarding enabling others to act, encouraging the heart, inspiring a shared vision, and modeling the way, while 92% shared encouraging stories about challenging the process. The relationship between this theme and research question 2 is crucial because the findings show an alignment between the five practices of exemplary leadership and organizational culture, which is imperative for the successful implementation of any program.

Table 50

Kouzes and Posner – Five Practices Align with Fire Service Culture Theme Aligns with RQ2

Common Theme	Participant
Kouzes and Posner-Five Practices Align with Fire Service Culture	
Challenge the process	46
Enabling others to act	49
Encourage the heart	49
Experienced an exemplary leader	25
Identifies with Kouzes and Posner	30
Inspire a shared vision	49
Model the way	49

Research question 2 also aligns with the theme, *credibility is the foundation of leadership.* Kouzes and Posner's research also focused on how credibility is the foundation of leadership. While only 26% of participants mentioned credibility, many individuals shared experiences with an effective leader's abilities that align with achieving credibility: competence, confidence, and trust. The importance of competence and trust to instill confidence was expressed in 98% (49 of 50) of participants' stories, while 96% (48 of 50) spoke directly regarding the positive leadership outcomes produced by having confidence in a leader and a team member. Eighty-eight percent (44 of 50) of participants also shared stories about the integral role

that a leader plays in building the competence of individuals to ensure that the team is strong and effective. Accountability and consistency, accountability 72% (36 of 50), and consistency 76% of participants are two other attributes that participants shared as positive influences of effective leadership behaviors and actions which align with modeling the way. Finally, the codes *leaders acknowledge their mistakes*, and *leaders are learners* were two other codes in this theme that supports how Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership provide effective leadership training throughout an individual's career. One way to develop effective leadership is to learn from one's mistakes, so having programs in place to continuously develop fire service leaders is a good idea. For example, 60% of participants shared stories acknowledging that leaders learn from their mistakes, while only 42% view leaders as a learner. However, if leadership is a developmental process that can be learned if one is willing, ongoing leadership programs designed for development throughout an individual's career will be beneficial (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Table 51

Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership Aligns with RQ2

Common Theme	Participant
Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership	
Accountability	36
Building competence matters	44
Consistency matters	38
Credibility matters	13
Leaders acknowledge their mistakes	30
Leaders are learners	21
Trust instills confidence	49
Competence matters	49
Confidence matters	48

Subsequent Research Questions for RQ2

As stated earlier, the subsequent questions were used to help understand the full meaning of each research question. Not all of the subsequent research questions were answered by the interview questions. Therefore, only the questions that were answered by the emerging themes are discussed in this section. The inability to answer the subsequent questions had no bearing on the main research question. Instead, these secondary questions were meant to look deeply into and support the main research question.

Table 52

Research Question 2 – Subsequent Research Questions for RQ 2

Research Question 2	Theme
RQ2.a. How can Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership instill effective leadership actions in the fire service?	✓ How to achieve effective fire service leadership
RQ2.b. What skills and abilities are required for effective leadership?	✓ Credibility is the foundation of leadership
RQ2.c. What are three leadership theories that would offer a learning platform for effective leadership in the fire service?	✓ Styles/theories that build a foundation for effective fire service leadership ✓ Why process leadership theories are effective in the fire service
RQ2.d. How does leadership training enhance employee development?	✓ How to achieve effective fire service leadership ✓ Results of no formal leadership training

RQ2.e. How does offering leadership training at varying levels of an employee's career, enhance leader development?	No theme arose
RQ2.f What role does effective leadership have on morale?	✓ What followership looks like in the fire service
	✓ Fire service culture

Subsequent question RQ 2a was supported by the following theme *how to achieve effective fire service leadership*, and its codes are shown below in Table 53. Looking at many of the codes that make up the theme of how to achieve *effective fire service leadership,* participants discussed stories that explained how they and others achieved what they believe helped themselves and others achieve effective fire service leadership. The codes align with Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership and the idea that leadership is not only a mutual process between a leader and follower but that it can be learned if a person is open to it (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The following two codes explained the importance of mentoring in the fire service; Effective *leadership development starts with the right mentor,* and *leadership development requires mentoring.* One hundred percent of all participants shared stories that explained that effective leadership requires development via mentoring, which requires a mentor. Kouzes and Posner explained the importance of modeling the way which aligns with mentoring future leaders.

From the relational view of leadership, the codes were as follows; communication enhances effective leadership, effective leaders have buy-in, effective leadership requires mutual respect, and explaining why matters. Ninety-eight percent (49 of 50) of all participants shared stories that explained how communication enhances effective leadership by building a relationship, with 90% (45 of 50) explaining that stronger relationships and confidence amongst

the team is enhanced when leaders explain why they are doing something or discuss why

outcomes were either good or bad. Another experience that 70% (35 of 50) of participants

discussed was the importance of achieving buy-in, which aligns with one of the five practices,

inspire a shared vision. Also, 80% (40 of 50) of all participants expressed that effective

leadership relies on mutual trust, which aligns with encouraging the heart, inspiring a shared

vision, and enabling others to act.

Finally, from an implementation point of view, the codes integrating leadership into fire

service culture and leadership training should be a building block approach. Looking first at

integrating leadership into fire service culture, Table 53 showed that 98% (49 of 50) of all

participants shared experiences that explained that the right leadership practices must be

integrated into fire service culture, which aligns, once again, with the practice of inspiring a

shared vision. Lastly, 100% of all participants expressed positive outcomes when building block

processes are in place, which provides a strong foundation of concepts to build from.

Implementing leadership programs based on practices that align with core values and

organizational culture via a building block approach (throughout one's career) will help provide

a solid foundation to develop effective fire service leaders.

Table 53

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership Aligns with RQ 2a

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership	
Coaching	15
Communication enhances effective leadership	49
Effective leaders have buy-in	35
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	40
Explaining why matters	45

Integrating leadership into fire service culture	49
Leadership development requires mentoring	50
Leadership training should be a building block approach	50

Subsequent research question 2b, what skills and abilities are required for effective leadership, appears to align with the theme, c*redibility is the Foundation of Leadership*. Although participants did not produce a list of agreed-upon skills, traits, and behaviors regarding interview questions five, six, and seven, other behaviors and actions were repeatedly mentioned and could be considered as appropriate actions or behaviors. Part of the issue with looking at particular traits, skills, and behaviors of effective leadership is likely because, as Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained, the context of leadership changes, in this case, the organizational culture of the four different departments. Therefore, future studies may be an avenue to discuss this area further. However, looking at aligning the practices and behaviors in Table 54 below is worth mentioning as a possible alignment of skills and abilities required for effective leadership. Only participant responses above 70% were highlighted here as they show what participants overwhelming agreed upon regarding effective fire service leadership behaviors that result in credibility, as defined by Kouzes and Posner (2017). Ninety-eight percent (49 of 50) of participants related effective leadership to trust instills confidence and competence matters, 96% (48 of 50) expressed that confidence matters, 76% (38 of 50) explained that consistent leader behaviors or actions matter, and 72% (36 of 50) referred to the importance of accountability.

Table 54

Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership Aligns with RQ 2b

Common Theme	Participant
Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership	
Accountability	36
Consistency matters	38
Trust instills confidence	49
Competence matters	49
Confidence matters	48

Subsequent research question 2c explored three leadership theories that offer a learning platform for effective leadership in the fire service. Two themes aligned with this question, *styles/theories that build a foundation for effective fire service leadership* and *why process leadership theories are effective in the fire service*. Servant, transformational and situational leadership theories were chosen as platforms to explore relevant leadership styles to build a foundation for effective fire service leadership, which appeared to be very relevant styles according to the participant's experiences. One hundred percent of participants discussed how effective leadership relies on relationship building and the importance of putting the needs of others first, which aligns with servant leadership principles. One hundred percent of participants also discussed effective leadership in terms of situational leadership. Participants discussed that effective leaders often adapted to a particular situation and shared stories regarding how effective leaders could adapt their behaviors as needed. In contrast, non-leaders, or those identified as destructive leaders, were not able to do so. Finally, 100% of participants explained effective leader behaviors that align with the characteristics of transformational leadership. The transformational style was outlined mainly by sharing stories regarding the importance of understanding what motivates others and inspiring people to accomplish goals that will also benefit the team. The *styles/theories that build a foundation for effective fire service leadership*

collectively relate to *why process leadership theories are effective in the fire service*, which also

aligned with research question 2c.

Table 55

Styles/theories that Builds a Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership Aligns with RQ 2c

Styles/Theories that Build a Foundation for Effective Fire Service Leadership	
Explained characteristics of servant leadership	50
Explained characteristics of situational leadership	50
Explained characteristics of transformational leadership	50

The theme, *why process leadership theories are effective in the fire service,* highlights

why process leadership styles such as servant, transformational, and situational leadership

theories could prove to be a strong foundation for building and developing leadership programs

that yield effective fire service leaders at all levels of the organization. Specific codes

highlighted in Table 56 below, supported why process leadership theories provide a foundation

for effective fire service leadership. For example, 100% of participants shared experiences

regarding leadership as a relationship between the leader and follower, 90% (45 of 50) of

participants explained that in their experiences effective leaders put others first and 84% (42 of

50) of participants experiences highlighted that effective leaders know their people, which are

qualities of servant leadership. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of participants acknowledged stories

about effective leaders understanding that motivation matters. Therefore, leaders must consider

leadership styles that can adapt to the follower's needs, with 74% (37 of 50) of participants

acknowledging that adaptability matters if one wishes to be an effective leader and 44%

identified experiences with effective leaders (22 of 50) putting the right people in the right place,

qualities of situational leadership. Lastly, 68% of participants also shared experiences regarding

how effective leaders acknowledge the success of others. Coupling acknowledging the success of

others with understanding what motivates individual members of a team highlights qualities of

transformational leadership theories. Collectively, *styles/theories that build a foundation for*

effective fire service leadership and *why process leadership theories are effective in the fire*

service, aligns with research question 2c.

Table 56

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 2c

Why Process Leadership Theories are Effective in the Fire Service	
Acknowledge the success of others	34
Adaptability matters	37
Important to know your people	42
Leadership is a relationship	50
Motivation matters	49
Putting the right people in the right place	22
Effective fire service leaders put others first	45

Subsequent research question 2d explored how leadership training could enhance

employee development. This subsequent question was supported by the following theme *how to*

achieve effective fire service leadership, and its codes are shown below in Table 57. Looking at

the codes that make up the theme of *how to achieve effective fire service leadership,* participants

discussed stories that explained how they and others achieved what they believe helped

themselves and others become effective fire service leaders. Therefore, the codes in this theme

offer a blueprint for training that will enhance leadership development in the fire service. The

following two codes explained the importance of mentoring in the fire service; effective

leadership development starts with the right mentor and *leadership development requires*

mentoring. One hundred percent of all participants shared stories that explained that effective

leadership requires development via mentoring. These codes offer support to building formal

leadership training programs that offer mentorship, which would enhance leadership development.

The codes, communication enhances effective leadership; effective leaders have buy-in, effective leadership requires mutual respect and explaining why it matters. Ninety-eight percent (49 of 50) of all participants shared stories that explained how communication enhances effective leadership by building a relationship, with 90% (45 of 50) explaining that stronger relationships and confidence amongst the team is enhanced when leaders explain why they are doing something or discuss why outcomes were either good or bad, and 80% (40 of 50) of all participants expressed that effective leadership relies on mutual trust. Therefore, adding leadership training that enhances two-way communication, active listening, and relationship building is another way to develop effective leaders. Since 70% (35 of 50) of participants discussed the importance of achieving buy-in, quality leadership programs could ensure organizational buy-in that enhances effective leadership.

Table 57

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership Aligns with RQ 2d

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership	
Communication enhances effective leadership	49
Effective leaders have buy-in	35
Effective leadership development starts with the right mentor	50
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	40
Explaining why matters	45
Leadership development requires mentoring	50

Subsequent question 2d was also supported by the results *of no leadership training* theme. Looking at the negative ramifications associated with no leadership or ineffective leadership training makes a stronger case for the need for quality leadership training that

enhances the development of members at all levels of the organization. For example, 100% of

participants shared stories about inadequate leadership training, 98% experienced a lack of

ongoing training for leadership development, explaining that such training is either sporadic,

non-existent or for officers only. Overall, a lack of leadership training resulted in 88% (44 of 50)

of the participants sharing stories of ineffective leadership within their departments. Therefore,

leadership training throughout one's career could significantly enhance an individual's

development of leadership abilities.

Table 58

Results of No Leadership Training Aligns with RQ 2d

Results of no Leadership Training	
Ineffective leadership	44
Lack of ongoing training for leadership development	49
Succession planning	47
Existing programs are not effective	50

Subsequent question 2e explored how offering leadership training at varying levels of an

employee's career could enhance leader development. Since none of the four departments offer

leadership training throughout one's career, no identifiable themes offered experiences about

how leadership training at varying levels of one's career enhanced leadership development.

Therefore, this is an area that could benefit from future studies.

Subsequent research question 2f aligned with *what followership looks like in the fire*

service theme. This theme shows codes that highlight why people in the fire service choose to

follow a leader. Therefore, looking at the opposite of these codes allows for a deeper look at

morale-producing actions or behaviors. For example, looking at Table 59, 88% (44 of 50) of all

participants' experiences resulted in stories regarding the importance of developing confidence in

others to be an effective member of the team. Also, the ability for a leader to be confident in

themselves and followers to be confident in a leader was a resounding sentiment of 96% of all

participant's stories. Ninety-eight percent of all participants discussed trust as a two-way street

and how it builds confidence in both a leader and a follower, which creates a healthy relationship

built on mutual respect. Lastly, 98% of all participants shared stories about the importance of

competence and how competent leaders instill trust in others. Therefore, understanding why

someone is willing to follow helps pinpoint effective fire service leadership qualities that will

positively influence others, which will aid with achieving and maintaining positive morale.

Table 59

What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 2f

Common Theme	Participant
What Followership Looks Like in the Fire Service	
Building confidence in others matter	44
Trust instills confidence	49
Competence matters	49
Confidence matters	48

The theme, *fire service culture regarding leadership training*, shown in Table 60 below,

also related to subsequent research question 2f, via the following three codes, destructive

leadership, failed to create effective leaders, and prepared me to be an effective leader. This

theme and associated codes were a product of stories regarding experiences of poor leadership

that resulted in poor or ineffective outcomes, not only in a failure to foster effective leadership

but also failing to carry out operational objectives efficiently and effectively. Although many of

the stories still resulted in mitigating the situation or incident, participants shared stories about

how effective leadership could have contributed to more efficient outcomes and the

empowerment, improvement, and confidence of everyone on the team, which often had a

positive effect on morale. Next, 96% (48 of 50) of all participants shared experiences about the

failure of their department to produce effective leaders, which also highlighted the negative

effects on the overall morale of an organization. Only 30% (15 of 50) of all participant's

experiences had anything to do with their department preparing them to be effective leaders,

which may shed light on why 74% (37 of 50) of all participants shared stories about destructive

leadership and how it hindered the growth and development of others, as well as affected how

well the team operated within the firehouse and on incidents. Identifying, acknowledging, and

correcting negative actions that hinder effective leadership and destroy morale is crucial to

leadership development. Often, knowing what not to do can be as important as knowing what to

do.

Table 60

Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training Aligns with RQ 2f

Common themes	Participant
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training	
Destructive leadership	37
Failed to create effective leaders	48
Prepared me to be an effective leader	15

Research Question 3

Research question 3 explored how continuous leadership training throughout one's career

could develop leaders that foster engaged teams that effectively carry out the operational

objectives of their respective organizations. Research question 3 was supported by the following

two themes: *how to achieve effective fire service leadership* and *teamwork is necessary in the*

fire service. The two themes and their associated codes showed a relationship between research

question 3 and the emerging themes based on participants' experiences.

Table 61

Research Question 3 and Related Themes

Research Question 3	Theme(s)
RQ3. How can continuous leadership training throughout one's career develop leaders that foster engaged teams that effectively carry out the operational objectives of their respective organizations?	✓ How to achieve effective fire service leadership ✓ What followership looks like in the fire service ✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service

Starting with the theme, *how to achieve effective fire service leadership*, participants discussed stories that explained how they achieved and helped others to achieve effective fire service leadership, which not only makes a case for providing ongoing leadership to enhance leadership development but also provides a foundation for leadership training that can be implemented at varying levels of one's career, which will result in the creation of more effective fire service leaders throughout an organization.

Participants' experiences produced codes that were the product of effective leadership with their respective departments. The following codes are an example of what participants identified as determinants of effective leadership: communication enhances effective leadership, effective leaders have buy-in, effective leadership requires mutual respect, and explaining why matters. Ninety-eight percent (49 of 50) of all participants shared stories that explained how communication enhances effective leadership by building a relationship, with 90% (45 of 50) explaining that stronger relationships and confidence amongst the team is enhanced when leaders explain why they are doing something or discuss why outcomes were either good or bad. Also, 80% (40 of 50) of all participants expressed that effective leadership relies on mutual trust. Therefore, leadership training that focuses on relationship-building skills is integral to develop effective leaders. Such skills can be honed by continuous training and development. Lastly, 70%

(35 of 50) of participants discussed the importance of achieving buy-in, which is crucial for any training program to be successful.

Implementing leadership training into both new and existing programs and throughout one's career makes effective leadership practices part of the culture and receives more buy-in throughout the organization. This previous assertion is supported by 98% (49 of 50) of all participants shared experiences that showed that the right leadership practices must be integrated into fire service culture. Therefore, building effective fire service leadership programs requires more than content for training. Proper alignment and implementation of such programs are also paramount. Ensuring ongoing development throughout one's career will require a building block approach. For example, 100% of all participants expressed positive outcomes when building block processes were in place, providing a strong foundation of concepts. Implementing leadership programs based on practices that align with core values and organizational culture will help provide a solid foundation to develop effective fire service leaders. Considering that 78% (39 of 50) of participants' stories supported that effective fire service leadership is essential to achieve goals and objectives, makes a strong case for considering ongoing development throughout one's career. A building block training approach allows for a strong foundation and ongoing leadership growth, resulting in more effective leadership throughout the organization.

Table 62

How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership Aligns with RQ 3

Common Theme	Participant
How to Achieve Effective Fire Service Leadership	
Communication enhances effective leadership	49
Effective fire service leadership is important to achieve goals and objectives	39
Effective leaders have buy-in	35
Effective leadership requires mutual respect	40
Explaining why matters	45
Integrating leadership into fire service culture	49
Leadership development requires mentoring	50
Leadership training should be a building block approach	50

The theme*, teamwork is necessary in the fire service*, also related to research question 3. The experiences highlighted why teamwork is necessary to ensure operational objectives are achieved efficiently and effectively, making teamwork paramount in the fire service. This assertion was supported by 100% of all participants explaining that teamwork is essential in every aspect of the fire service, from building relationships, training, living together in the firehouse, and responding to and mitigating incidents. One hundred percent of all participants shared stories that outlined that effective teamwork enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of completing operational objectives. As previously mentioned, if a leader cannot build an effective team, working together to accomplish objectives could be significantly hindered. Participants shared stories about positive and negative outcomes regarding teamwork. They referred not only to the ability of the leader of the team to keep everyone working together but also outlined the importance of the relationships that were formed amongst all team members during training, everyday firehouse activities, and past incidents that the team learned from. Therefore, continuous leadership training throughout one's career can develop leaders that foster engaged

teams, which will help ensure that operational objectives are carried out efficiently and

effectively.

Table 63

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 3

Common Theme	Participant
Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service	
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50

Subsequent Research Questions for RQ3

Table 64

Subsequent RQ 3 and Related Themes

Research Question 3	Theme(s)
RQ3.a. What is teamwork?	✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
RQ3.b. Why is teamwork important?	✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
RQ3.c. How does effective teamwork enhance organizational performance?	✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
RQ3.d. What are the ramifications of poor or absent teamwork?	✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
RQ3.e. What impact does ineffective teamwork have on organizational success?	✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
RQ3.f. How does poor leadership development hinder teamwork?	✓ Fire service culture regarding leadership training
	✓ Teamwork is necessary in the fire service
	✓ Results of no formal leadership training

As stated earlier, the subsequent questions were used to help understand the full meaning

of each research question. Not all of the subsequent research questions were answered by the

interview questions. Therefore, only the questions that were answered by the emerging themes are discussed in this section. The inability to answer the subsequent questions had no bearing on the main research question. Instead, these secondary questions were meant to look deeply into and support the main research question.

Subsequent research questions 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d were supported by the theme; teamwork *is necessary in the fire service*. Subsequent question 3a explored what participants defined as teamwork. All the participants shared stories regarding teamwork as daily duties in the firehouse from cleaning to washing apparatus, training, and every incident they respond to. Story after story made it clear that teamwork is essential in every aspect of the fire service (see Table 67).

Questions 3b, 3c, 3d and 3e are interrelated. Question 3b explored why teamwork is important; question 3c explored how effective teamwork enhances organizational performance; question 3d explored the ramifications of poor or absent teamwork, and question 3e explored ineffective teamwork's impact on organizational success. These four questions were answered unmistakably through the stories of participants' experiences. Table 65 shows that 100% of the participants shared stories that clarified that teamwork is important because it is necessary to carry out operational objectives efficiently and effectively. Since organizational success depends on completing goals and objectives that support the overall mission, effective teamwork will lead to enhanced organizational performance.

Question 3d explored the ramifications of poor or absent teamwork, while question 3e explored ineffective teamwork's impact on organizational success. Simply put, the absence of teamwork results in reduced organizational success. Although the theme, *teamwork is necessary in the fire service,* has been discussed repeatedly as it relates to several of the research questions, its relation to question 3d and 3e outlined what could happen in the absence of teamwork. One

hundred percent of participants' experiences made it clear that teamwork is essential in the fire

service, and it enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of completing operational objectives.

Therefore, the absence of teamwork could hinder completing operational objectives efficiently

and effectively, reducing positive organizational outcomes

Table 65

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 3a, b, c, d, and e

Common Theme	Participant
Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service	
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50

Subsequent research question 3f explored how poor leadership development hinders

teamwork. Two themes supported this research question: *fire service culture regarding*

leadership training and *teamwork is necessary in the fire service.* Two codes from the theme,

Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training, helped explain how poor leadership could

hinder teamwork, destructive leadership, and failed to create effective leaders. Destructive

leadership practices consisted of stories regarding experiences with poor leadership, with 74% of

participants sharing stories regarding destructive behaviors. Many participants told stories of

officers that could not make decisions, refused to listen to anyone, failed to empower their

people, were incompetent, and other issues. Participants explained that these behaviors affected

people negatively and affected teamwork both in the firehouse and during incidents. Considering

that all four departments experienced a lack of leadership training throughout their career, many

never learned how to lead effectively. Ninety-six percent of participants told stories about how

their departments failed to create effective leaders. Therefore, a failure to develop effective

leaders could ultimately result in the inability to build effective teams, hindering effective teamwork.

Table 66

Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training Aligns with RQ 3f

Common Theme	Participant
Fire Service Culture Regarding Leadership Training	
Destructive leadership	37
Failed to create effective leaders	48

The theme, *teamwork is necessary in the fire service*, related to research question 3f. As previously explained, the absence of teamwork results in reduced organizational success. One hundred percent of participants' experiences made it clear that teamwork is essential in the fire service, and it enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of completing operational objectives. Therefore, poor leadership development could result in ineffective leadership throughout the organization. Without effective leaders to build and motivate each team member, effective teamwork will be less likely.

Table 67

Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service Aligns with RQ 3f

Common Theme	Participant
Teamwork is Necessary in the Fire Service	
Teamwork enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness	50
Teamwork is essential in the fire service	50

Summary of the Findings

This study yielded several findings. First, there is little to no formalized leadership training across all four departments. All four departments failed to offer formal leadership training throughout a firefighter's career, and even when they offer a class on leadership, there

was complaints that the training is sporadic, starts too late in people's career, and is nonexistent

unless one aspires to be an officer. However, it is essential to note that one of the four

departments is starting to provide leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career.

Whether or not Department A will continue building their program is unknown but seems to be

moving in a positive direction.

Second, many participants asserted that their success level as a leader depends on

informal training/development, which relies upon how engaged and supportive their officer or

officers are. Third, nearly every participant asserted that teamwork is crucial and is involved in

every aspect of their fire service career, from responding to calls to everyday fire station life.

Therefore, effective teamwork is essential to ensure operational objectives are carried out

efficiently and effectively. Participants highlighted the critical relationship between effective

teamwork and the completion of operational objectives with positive stories and shared

experiences about how ineffective teamwork hindered the efficient and effective completion of

operational objectives. Fourth, many participants found Kouzes and Posner's five practices of

exemplary leadership relatable to effective fire service leadership. Many of the participant's

experiences also pointed to Kouzes and Posner's research findings that credibility is the

foundation of leadership. Fifth, many of the emerging themes were associated with the five

practices of exemplary leadership. Sixth, many of the participants also discussed the need for a

cultural change within the fire service. Lastly, and interestingly enough, several participants

discussed the importance of implementing effective business practices into their departments.

Based on the analysis of the data retrieved from the participants, the proposed research problem

does exist within the four departments: leadership training is not provided at varying levels of a

firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder

leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of Metro Washington D.C. firefighters at varying experience levels and ranks to determine if there is leadership training throughout a firefighter's career that enhances leader development, improving teamwork needed to achieve operational objectives. This study used 50 participants, 27 career officers and 23 career firefighters, from four departments in the Metro D.C. area. Since there are very few studies on fire service leadership, it was imperative to investigate if the following proposed research problem exists: leadership training may not be provided at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives.

This study used a phenomenological approach because it allowed for an exploration of the problem using stories about the personal experiences of firefighters and officers at varying ranks and experience levels. A phenomenological design allows the researcher to describe what the study participants have in common regarding the investigated phenomena, allowing for naturally occurring themes based on participants' experiences and not the researcher's beliefs or preconceived ideas (Van de Ven, 2016). The experiences of the 27 career officers and 23 career firefighters allowed for a deeper understanding of if leadership training exists, how effective leadership has influenced their individual development throughout their career, and how it ultimately affected their ability to either function within or lead a team toward achieving operational objectives. The phenomenological design facilitated the identification of similar

themes that arose from participants' stories, which allowed this researcher to describe what the study participants had in common regarding the investigated phenomena. Based on the participants' experiences, this study found that there is a lack of leadership training at varying levels of a firefighter's career within Metro Washington D.C. area fire departments which could hinder leadership development and ultimately affect teamwork required for carrying out operational objectives. The findings of this study offer insight into improving the fire service and general business practices. There are also potential applications strategies that can be used in all types and sizes of organizations regarding the development of effective leaders.

Applications to Professional Practice

Although this study focuses on fire service leadership, it is a deep look into organizational culture, organizational design, how leadership practices must align with organizational culture and core values, and the integral role that effective leadership plays in all levels of any organization. From a broad business sense, this study looks at organizational issues regarding the alignment of values with achieving goals and objectives efficiently and effectively, which is required for successful organizational outcomes. The participants in this study made it clear that people matter, which supported the Singh and Vanka (2019) assertion that successful organizations acknowledge employee needs to connect with their employees and make a commitment to leadership development. Regardless of the type or size of an organization, effective leadership is the key to success as it plays an integral role in organizational performance and sustainability (Kollenscher et al., 2018). Applying effective leadership with sound business management practices will help any organization align leadership with organizational culture.

Improving General Business Practice

The most important recommendation for improving general business practice is to consider leadership development as a broad organizational approach via building block training that continuously develops leaders at every level of an organization. All organizations, regardless of type or size, must focus on the ongoing development of their leaders. Understanding that effective leadership requires practice, reflection, humility, and a commitment to making a difference is the first step any business can take to ensure effective leadership throughout their organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). The focus on leadership development should start by building a solid foundation of leadership that encompasses core values that align with the organizational culture. Once a strong foundation is built, ongoing leadership development will require a building block training approach that ensures that every individual within the organization identifies themselves as a leader and has the opportunity to develop their leadership abilities continuously. Implementing ongoing leadership based on an organization's core values is crucial if an organization wishes to create a culture of effective leaders.

No organization can thrive without an effective strategy that ensures the successful completion of the goals and objectives required to complete the mission. Therefore, a good strategy starts with recognizing the challenges that a business or any other type of organization will face (Rumlet, 2011). Identifying potential shortfalls will aid in building a strategy that addresses issues that can affect the stability and sustainability of the organization. Rumlet (2011) explained in his book Good Strategy/Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why it Matters that a leader sets strategic objectives as a means to an end, and when such objectives are bad, they will fail to address critical issues. The previous assertion is highlighted in a story shared by participant F4. Participant F4 stated,

It would be great if people could have leadership training, formal leadership training prior to becoming an officer. So maybe if you're even thinking of this path, there's some kind of class that says these are the kinds of things you can expect, and that might be enough to say, wow, that is not for me. When I came into the department, my goal was to be deputy chief of EMS. That's all I wanted to do. And I was going to start working my way up, and in 10 years, I would be ready to go. I was working on my master's degree at the time, and I was fortunate enough to meet with a whole bunch of people and senior staff and then talk to the Fire Chief at the time. And by the time I met with the Fire Chief, my head was spinning, and I was like, you have asked five different people the same questions and have gotten five different answers. So, he asked me, how do you make this work? I said, well, the best you can do is take the black and take the white and hope everyone can see gray. So, I thought, gosh, it's not for me, that's not anything I would ever want to do.

Effective leadership is a critical issue that every organization faces. Therefore, it would be in an organization's best interest to invest in leadership training that ensures the continuous development of their people. Ninety-four percent of the participants in this study addressed the importance of succession planning to ensure that their department can create effective leaders throughout their organization. The previous sentiment is paramount for any organization, especially those that promote from within. Eventually, upper management will leave, and someone will take their place, which makes a good case for ensuring that the right people are ready to take over and lead the organization effectively. Therefore, organizational buy-in is of the utmost importance. Reinventing the wheel every time a new person takes over can be not only disruptive but also destructive. Change is difficult and worth it if needed, but it should not

be implemented just because new management disagreed with old management. Effective

leadership can increase buy-in at every level and ensure that the next generation of leaders steps

into upper management roles with a clear understanding of where the organization is going,

where it needs to make decisions for the greater good of the organization and its people and not

for personal gain or status. Kouzes and Posner (2017) asserted that the best organizations

encourage everyone to act like an effective leader regardless of rank or title. While this

researcher agrees with this previous assertion, it is essential to add that it is the responsibility of

an organization to show their people "what acting like a leader" means and how to do it. Suppose

someone has made it to a high-level "leadership" position only through a hierarchal framework

and was never afforded any ongoing leadership training to understand what it means to be an

effective leader in their organization. In that case, the inability to lead effectively could result in

making decisions that negatively affect an entire organization.

Potential Application Strategies

It is imperative that leadership training is offered at every level of the organization, from

the newest to the most senior person. It ensures leadership development at every level of an

organization results in an organizational culture that lives and breathes effective leadership.

Since opinions on what leadership means result from cultural differences based on interpretations

of authority, compliance, and relations between individuals and social groups, it is imperative to

communicate the core tenets of being an effective leader within an organization (Kostova et al.,

2018). Organizational culture and its effects on relationships are powerful because it influences

effective leadership behaviors and practices. Cultural values could predict certain organizational

and employee outcomes even more than individual personality traits (Taras et al., 2010). This

previous assertion may shed light on why the participants in this study could not identify a

consistent portrayal of an effective leader's traits, skills, and behaviors, making the alignment of

organizational culture and communication of expected leadership behaviors absolutely crucial

for any organization. The findings of this study support the earlier discussion within the literature

review that understanding organizational culture directly links to building healthy relationships,

which is an absolute must for effective leadership. Also, effective leadership development will

require an organization to accept and define what they consider essential leadership behaviors

and actions. Furthermore, the values of effective leadership must be part of the organizational

culture, continually communicated and executed in every aspect of the organization, which can

be accomplished with ongoing leadership training.

Leadership training should start with a foundation regarding what effective leadership

looks like in an organization. Effective leadership starts with communicating core values and

specific approaches (e.g., servant, transformational, situational, or other styles of leadership that

align with the organizational culture). Developing good programs is the first step toward

developing effective leaders, but no good program is worth anything if it is not implemented

effectively. Many business management tools help with creating and implementing business

strategies. Therefore, using such tools to align effective leadership principles with the

organizational culture is key to building successful leadership training within an organization.

Any organization that wishes to ensure effective leadership development must start with

developing and sharing core values that outline what effective leadership looks like in their

organization. Core values must be more than words on a paper; they must be consistently

communicated and practiced, translating to actions that become part of the organizational

culture. As Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained, successful organizations create effective

leaders that do more than believe they can make a difference; they take actions to grow and develop people's talents and leadership abilities.

The recommendations for implementing leadership programs in the fire service are not much different from any other organization. Although the fire service culture tends to have a reputation for being more resistant to change than other organizations, they are not alone when it comes to a failure to implement leadership training throughout one's career. Even though effective leadership is considered a necessity for implementing successful business strategies, varying types and sizes of organizations find it challenging to provide the right skills and abilities needed to develop employees to rise to positions of leadership within organizations, which can negatively affect the organizational success (Holt et al., 2018). Many organizations fail to adequately invest in practices such as leadership training to help develop and empower their employees, which fails to create effective leaders, ultimately hindering efficient and effective completion of operational objectives (Appelbaum et al., 2015). Therefore, any organization can benefit from implementing leadership training throughout one's career and by adopting business process management practices that help with organizational alignment and practices that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of implementing leadership training for ongoing development.

The use of Kaizen for implementing leadership training was discussed in the literature review portion of this study. Kaizen is a simple approach that has been proven effective in many different types and sizes of organizations worldwide. The idea of small incremental steps is a great way to affect change with less resistance. Kaizen also engages each member at every level of the organization, which also helps quell resistance to change. Kaizen is a business process improvement (BPI) tool that has a history of effectiveness. Using Kaizen to set goals and

produce small incremental changes offers a way to reach strategic goals without breaking the budget or meeting resistance that interferes with implementing new processes or programs such as leadership training. However, Kaizen's ability to help drive change can only be successful if it is supported by senior management (Cheng, 2018). Emiliani (2016) described Kaizen as its own leadership philosophy that inspires teamwork by offering a way to make each person invested in changes. The previous assertion represents an alignment with Kouzes and Posner's five leadership practices as Kaizen can be used to implement effective leadership within an organizational culture. Kaizen can empower people at every level when it is used to provide training that focuses on communicating a shared vision regarding core values and behaviors that model the way to be an effective leader, encouraging the heart by developing leadership skills that enable everyone to act in the best interest of others, and to challenge the process regarding new ways to improve one's self, others, and the organization. From a leadership training aspect, small incremental steps can start with the initial training of new hires and continue throughout one's career. Creating leadership training based on core values that establishes acceptable leadership behavior in an organization provides a foundation from which future training can build. Approaching leadership training in a building block manner throughout one's career provides a developmental process for everyone. In fact, a discussion of effective leadership practices and behaviors should exist in every type and level of training. This will match the Kaizen philosophy of small, incremental changes, making effective leadership behaviors an accepted and more natural behavior.

Developing individuals is a critical aspect of effective leadership as it will result in the creation of a team of dedicated and capable people that can help improve the organization by efficiently and effectively carrying out the required goal and objectives (Emiliani, 2016). This

study highlighted the importance of teamwork in the fire service, with 100% of the participants

sharing stories that made it clear that teamwork is necessary in every aspect of the fire service.

However, teamwork is not just integral in the fire service but any organization. As previously

discussed in the literature section of this paper, teamwork is an indispensable asset that is crucial

for achieving organizational success (Render, 2015). Teamwork integrates individual strengths

leading to complementary behaviors and enables a collective responsibility for assigned tasks,

leading to a more profound sense of work dedication, making teamwork an essential element of

any organization (Ogbonnaya, 2019). Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained that while it is up to

individuals on the team to do their part, it is up to the leader of the team to inspire and mobilize

their people to work together to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. The

previous assertion makes yet another strong case for ensuring leadership development at every

level of an organization.

Although this study did not focus on how funding could affect the implementation of

leadership development training, several participants discussed the subject. Starnes (2017)

supported the participant's experiences when he explained that departmental budget cuts result in

retention problems, compliances issues, and reduced training. Holder (2016) asserted that

dwindling fire department budgets are a concern as the scope of the modern-day fire department

continues to expand. Funding leadership training is another issue that affects the fire service and

organizations of all types and sizes. Therefore, there is a strong case for engaging in innovative

management techniques and tools to help guide the creation and implementation of ongoing

leadership in a cost-effective manner. For example, leadership training can be added to existing

training programs and provided at varying levels of employee advancement so that it is not only

a building block approach that ensures continuous development but also absorbs cost in smaller

and more tangible increments. Once again, Kaizen is an excellent tool for implementing

strategies necessary for successful organizational outcomes. It is important to note that Kaizen is

not the only tool to help create and implement leadership training. For example, the literature

review portion of this study also discussed the theory of constraints (TOC). Instead, Kaizen is

used as one illustration of a tried-and-true business improvement process that has a history

associated with the successful implementation of processes and strategies. A tool such as Kaizen

can help develop and implement strategic plans and processes such as leadership training, but it

can also help successfully integrate plans into action by ingraining appropriate actions and

behavior into the organizational culture (Emiliani, 2016).

Summary

Effective leadership is required in every aspect of life. As Kouzes and Posner (2017)

explained, the content of leadership stays the same; it is the context changes. This translates to

the organizational culture of an organization. While this study focused on effective leadership

development in the fire service, its finding also easily translates to organizations of all types and

sizes. From a broad business sense, this study looks at organizational issues regarding the

alignment of values with achieving goals and objectives efficiently and effectively, which is

required for successful organizational outcomes. Successful organizational outcomes are

enhanced with effective leadership. Organizations must understand how crucial it is to ensure

ongoing leadership development for all employees. The organization's responsibility is to define

its core values and consistently communicate them via effective leadership practices. When an

organization defines what leadership looks like in their organizational culture, they win half the

battle. The other half of the battle is ensuring leadership development through ongoing

leadership training that yields effective leaders that inspire and empower those they lead to carry

out the organization's goals and objectives efficiently and effectively. Although building the proper training is essential, its success can be fleeting if not implemented correctly. Therefore, using tried and true business process tools can ensure that quality programs are implemented efficiently and effectively. Such processes can also help manage the cost-effectiveness of these crucial leadership development programs.

Recommendations for Further Study

A follow-up question was developed to determine if the participants had specific thoughts regarding future fire service studies. Very few participants had specific recommendations about where the study of fire service leadership should go. However, 100% of the participants made it abundantly clear that the fire service needs more focus on leadership because it is grossly overlooked and badly needed. The recommendations for future studies could go in many directions considering that there are so few scholarly studies that address effective fire service leadership. However, a few specific areas stand out based upon the finding of this study. The suggestions for future studies will also benefit all types and sizes of organizations.

Since funding for training can affect the creation and implementation of leadership training, a deeper look into the impact of funding on implementing leadership training would be a good area for further studies. Such a study could uncover at least one reason that affects the implementation of leadership training in the fire service. While only 22% of participants discussed experiencing a lack of funding for leadership training programs. Many fire departments across the United States consistently feel the spending crunch since funds are derived from taxes, and politicians control the purse strings. Looking at how funding affects leadership training in fire departments across the United States could produce beneficial results regarding issues that may hinder leadership training. Identifying issues that affect the

implementation of ongoing leadership training in different departments is the first step to

correcting the problem. Such a study could easily translate to all types and sizes of organizations,

as budgeting and funding are crucial in any organization.

Another area of study to explore regarding funding is effectively implementing

leadership training into existing classes required for promotion. This study discussed how a

building block approach could ensure ongoing leadership development throughout one's career.

Applying leadership training in incremental approaches could help balance costs associated with

costly training that is implemented in a reactive and sporadic approach that targets an entire

organization at one time. The findings of this study support this area for future studies. For

example, 100% of participants experienced great value in leadership training that offered a

building block approach. From the participants' view, the building block approach was an

informal process where growth and development were achieved throughout their fire service

careers. However, coupling the informal or natural integration of leadership development

through experiences with consistent programs that build on each other could significantly

enhance effective fire service leadership. Therefore, future studies could add further support for

the implementation of consistent leadership training programs at strategic points in one's career,

which could enhance the leadership development of individuals at every level of an organization.

Another area that could branch off the previous concept is a study highlighting the difference

between training and development. For example, a study exploring how ongoing training

enhances leadership development via a building block training approach and how it may lead to

better leadership development could help organizations understand how to build and implement

leadership training that leads to ongoing development that will increase effective leadership in

every level of an organization. Such a study would help clarify the need to support leadership

development throughout one's career and clear up the difference between training and development.

Another area for future studies regarding the implementation of leadership training could focus on how specific business process tools such as Kaizen could help implement quality leadership training at all levels of the organization. Participant O3 shared a perspective that supports business practices that can aid with leadership development in the fire service. This story makes a case for further studies regarding how the application of business process tools can aid in implementing leadership training in organizations. Furthermore, this participant's story explains how organizations, regardless of type or size, can learn from other the success of organizations. Participant O3 stated,

> Now that we're doing our virtual training platform, we're bringing in folks that are not
>
> tied to the fire service. So now we're bringing in an external voice and external opinions
>
> that are not tied to the fire service or public safety. But the message is the same. It's just
>
> coming from a different perspective, a business perspective, a different leadership
>
> perspective, whether it be the private or public entity. To me, I think that's critical. For so
>
> many years, we have relied on fire service people telling the fire service what to do and
>
> how to react and how to cope and how to grow and how to develop and how to lead.
>
> When we look at a singular perspective, we miss the mark. We never hit the private
>
> industry, but businesses have done so well for so long, it's worth listening to that
>
> perspective. Our people are getting a lot out of the different perspectives that we are
>
> sharing in our leadership training. The fire service tends to get behind the eight ball
>
> because we have a tendency to only listen to the same voices with the same message.

Therefore, organizations could benefit from studies showing how leadership development can be

enhanced and cost-effective via leadership training provided at varying levels of one's career.

Reflections

As I researched leadership, it became clear to me that there is no singular approach to

leadership because it is multifaceted. It takes all the current leadership theories to begin to define

what effective leadership really means. Leaders do not exist if they do not have people that are

willing to follow, which is why it always takes at least two to make leadership work. Looking at

leadership as a relationship that requires a mutual partnership will help put effective leadership

into perspective. Furthermore, looking at leadership as a practice rather than a specific approach

is a great way to ensure your ongoing development as a leader. The term practicing medicine is

often used in the medical world because while three different people may have the same disease

process, their genetic make, personal health, attitude, and other traits will make their treatment

process different. Leadership is very much like medicine; we practice it because each person we

attempt to lead is different, with different values, experiences, attitudes, beliefs, etc. What works

with one individual may not work with the next. Therefore, effective leaders learn what works

and what does not, then they adapt their behaviors and actions to match the individual's situation.

Personal and Professional Growth

I went into this study with the desire to help move the fire service in a more positive

direction regarding its most important asset, the people. As I grew and developed both personally

and professionally, I realized, sadly, that I could not attribute much of my success to a really

great fire service mentor or leader. In fact, I felt let down by the service that I have loved and

devoted many years of my time and energy. My passion for a deeper dive into what effective

leadership really means and how to place it into a context that everyone understands continues to

grow. Listening to the perspectives and experiences of the participants solidified not only my personal feelings regarding effective leadership but also what it means to be an effective fire service leader. Put simply; leadership is a relationship built on mutual respect and trust.

The ability to learn and adapt to others requires introspection and retrospection. Introspection allowed me to look at myself to see how I could do better when dealing with others around me. Ongoing self-assessment has been integral in not only my personal but also my professional growth. I found that it is essential to look deeply into who I am as a person and how my behaviors affect others. However, practicing effective leadership is much more than soul searching; it also requires making necessary changes in one's self, which is often tricky. For example, I found that actively listening to others is very difficult. Therefore, I fight the urge to develop my point before letting the other person finish their thoughts. Although I struggle to listen actively, I have improved my ability to do so. As effective leaders, we must fight the urge to provide an instant answer. Instead, as a leader, I found that it is more important to hear someone out because they may have a better idea or solution, which is why teamwork is crucial to ensuring organizational objectives are carried out efficiently and effectively.

Retrospection also led to my personal and professional growth. Retrospection helped me understand my shortcomings as a person and as a leader. I realized that while I thought certain actions and behaviors were appropriate, those I was dealing with did not. Perception is very important. While I may perceive something one way, someone else may see it differently, which is integral to understanding if one wishes to lead effectively. Effective leadership requires ongoing introspection and retrospection so as a leader, we can learn how to adapt our behaviors to situations and the individuals that we are attempting to lead. The ability to understand and adapt builds strong relationships, which is paramount to achieving effective leadership.

As I continue to learn and grow, my desire to promote effective leadership in a tangible and common-sense approach has moved beyond just the betterment of the US Fire Service. Although effective leadership can seem exhausting and overwhelming, it is necessary because the world needs effective leaders. The world needs strong and confident leaders that place the greater good of the many above personal gain. When we think of leadership as a relationship and focus on what that means personally, spiritually, and organizationally, and how our actions affect others, we can foster strong, healthy relationships built on mutual trust and respect that will ultimately lead to more effective leadership. Therefore, my passion for a deeper dive into what effective leadership really means and how to place it into a context that everyone understands is and will remain to be one of my passions in life.

Biblical Perspective

A worldview shapes how people think and behave based on cultural beliefs shaped by upbringing, life experiences, and personal values and beliefs (Chen et al., 2017). A Christian worldview is rooted in Scripture from the Bible, which is the foundation for moral standards that help Christians make decisions about what is right and wrong in the eyes of God (Kim et al., 2009). The Christian worldview fits into all aspects of life, including business. For example, a view based upon Christian principles will lead to excellent and ethical practices that serve the greater good of others. As discussed earlier in this study, the Bible serves as a guide to ensure we understand and carry out God's will. God is a part of everything we do, and when we honor Him, we ensure that we are following His plan for us. The idea of leadership is represented throughout the Bible, starting with the Book of Genesis, which means that part of God's plan for us is to lead others as He would. Effective leadership is a necessary function of any business or organization.

Effective leadership is not only paramount to achieving organizational success, but it also ensures that Christians lead according to God's plan for us. Every organization can honor God's plan through effective leadership based on the five practices of exemplary leadership. The five practices of exemplary leadership personify servant leadership and are simple practices that result in effective leadership. Perhaps the most outstanding leader of all time is Jesus. Regardless of religious belief, we know that Jesus existed, and because of his extraordinary actions of selflessness, we are still talking about him over 2000 years later. Jesus exemplifies servant leadership through the practices of exemplary leadership. John 13:13-17 is a perfect example of how an effective leader models the way, inspires a shared vision, encourages the heart, enables others to act, and challenges processes by serving others first. John 13:13-17

> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (ESV)

The Bible is filled with Scripture regarding leadership and shows what it means to be an effective leader. Titus 1:7-14 aligns with the five practices of exemplary leadership and shows servant leadership as the platform for leading as God intended. Titus 1:7-14

> For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers

and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. (ESV)

Ongoing leadership training is the key to developing humble leaders and serving the greater good by putting others needs above their own, making it imperative for the continuous growth and development of individuals in any organization. Organizations of all types and sizes will have increased success when they invest in ongoing leadership training that supports core values that represent mutual respect, trust, relationship building and servant behaviors that focus on putting others first. Kouzes and Posner's five practices of exemplary leadership serves as a great foundation to train and develop effective leaders in any organization. The five practices are more than idea, they are proven best practices that are supported by more than 30 years of research. The five practices are a result the experiences of effective leaders from successful organizations all around the world. This study showed that 98% of the participants shared stories of effective leadership that were based on the five practices of exemplary leadership. Sixty percent of all participants, without prompt, explained that they identified with the five practices of exemplary leadership and believe it should be the basis for effective fire service leadership. Matching this study with the years of research by Kouzes and Posner, leads to the assertion that the five practices of exemplary leadership are a great foundation for developing leaders in any organization. An organizational culture built on good and ethical core values that show their people what effective leadership looks like ensures that values are personified in the actions and behaviors of every individual within the organization.

Summary

Effective leadership is required in every aspect of life. However, there is no singular approach to leadership because it is multifaceted and dynamic. Effective leadership centers on knowing and understanding people. Effective leadership also requires adapting to different personalities and situations, making leadership a relationship between a leader and a follower. Therefore, understanding what it means to be an effective leader is simplified when one understands that leadership is a relationship that requires a mutual partnership based upon trust and respect. Therefore, looking at leadership as a practice rather than a specific approach is a great way to ensure your ongoing development as a leader. Effective leadership is enhanced by learning what behaviors and actions work, or do not work on different individuals and situations. This previous assertion is why it can be argued that leadership can be learned, it just takes and open mind, an open heart and a willingness to put preconceived thoughts and beliefs aside. While it helps to understand leadership theories and appropriate behaviors and actions that can aid in effective leadership, no singular theory or idea can define effective leadership. Effective leadership relies on knowing and adapting to an individual and situation, so building relationships with those we lead is paramount. Being an effective leader is a lifelong journey that requires personal growth based on constant introspection and retrospection of one's behaviors. Kouzes and Posner (2017) explained that effective leaders are born, but we are all born, which means we can lead if we are open to learning how. Therefore, it is the responsibility of an organization to define what leadership means and provide ongoing leadership training that develops effective leaders at every level of their organization. An organizational culture of effective leaders will ensure the sustainability and success of any organization.

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