

THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

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by

John Robert Sparks

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

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Abstract

The field of leadership has evolved quite drastically over the years. Douglas McGregor showed us the evolution from a Theory X style belief that employees are unmotivated and dislike their work to his Theory Y style belief that employees are motivated and receive a sense of enjoyment from their work. Abraham Maslow expanded on this work with his Theory Z belief that optimal employee performance would prevail with the proper leadership approach. For years now, leadership has focused on various approaches or styles that produce the best performance resulting from the relationship between the leader and their follower. Organizations, research, and literature alike have stagnated on this leader-follower relationship, placing the individual leader and their performance on a pedestal. If assigned a letter, this research would be Theory O for an organizational approach to leadership. It recognizes that need for organizations to create a leadership strategy instead views the role of leadership as the function of a collective unit. This research desired to offer a foundation in which leadership may continue to evolve by shifting the focus from understanding leadership as an individual experience to leadership as a collective group. This qualitative case study of 12 individuals from a retail organization's district and store manager levels offered a leadership framework. The utilization of ATLAS.ti for the coding of transcribed interviews revealed a theme that reflected alignment in participants' leadership approach of their organization's leadership framework. The remaining four themes reflected opportunities for improved performance under a leadership framework stemming from its execution. While results were unexpected, a foundation remains for the next evolution in leadership, the shift from the individual to the collective group.

Keywords: Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Strategy, Framework

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Approvals

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Dr. Edwin Quinn, Committee Member	Date
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Dedication

I present and dedicate this work to my leadership mentor of whose body of work I tried to reflect in this research. The preeminent leader, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Acknowledgments

In my memories of this journey, I want to begin with appreciation for my life's obstacles. I would not be where I am today if not for these difficulties. I am thankful for this educational institution providing me the opportunity to seek wisdom and contribute to the body of leadership knowledge. To Jody Maberry whom ignored his reservations and launched a little podcast called the Park Leaders Show. His efforts led to a fruitful partnership with Lee Cockerell and a podcast called Creating Disney Magic. Through this podcast, I met Lee, who inspired the subject of this research.

A doctoral program is the most challenging pursuit I have experienced. I know I would have never made it without my guide, Dr. Scott Maltzie, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude. While we did not speak often, the conversations with Dr. Edwin Quinn were always insightful and impactful. My sister, Charlotte, made sure I had a computer set up that worked well for my research needs. My brother-in-law, her husband, Manuel, was a phenomenal tutor and thought partner. I am grateful to C.K. for supporting my educational journey and making sure I finished strong. Furthermore, my entire work family who supported my balance of being both a full-time employee and a full-time student.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my immediate family. First to my children: Brody, Chayse, and Paizley. I hope that your witnessing of the effort I placed on my development plays an integral part in your journey into and through adulthood. Second, to my wife, Nicole, I hope you see that I have always given more than I have for you and our family. Third, to each of you collectively, I hope that you somehow always experienced a present husband and father through this journey. Finally, I thank God for coordinating and making all of this not just a possibility but a reality.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Cockerell (2018) stated that most organizations chief executive officers, board members, and executives focus solely on creating business strategies around growth or innovation while failing to realize that they need a leadership strategy. Džupina and Džupinová (2019) stated that the vision, mission, and values of an organization are crucial to business strategy as this is what transforms the responsibility into strategy. Kachaner et al. (2016) showed that in creating business strategies, it is leaders and executives who create and use such approaches as questioning and workshops to aid them in the development of short, medium, and long-term strategies for their organization which focus on analysis of the market, competitors, or new business models and entrants to the markets. This supports the observation that leaders and executives are creating strategy for their organizations but are focused on areas other than leadership within their organization. Instead, leadership strategy and theories are practiced at the individual level rather than an organizational level. Allio (2018b) cited individual leaders have driven the global market for leadership education and improvement to over 20 billion dollars in 2017 through various courses, seminars, and degree programs to improve performance for themselves and their organizations. Yet, Allio (2018a) stated despite our best efforts there is a lack of knowledge on how to produce good leaders and a lack of clarity on exactly how leadership works.

Bonsu and Twum-Danso (2018) showed that many businesses fail due to their leadership's failure to understand the relationship between the nature of their business, its leadership styles, and their employees. Henry (2018) showed that management and leadership need to understand the depth, breadth, and inter-connectedness of problems and address them with a more global approach. Moving towards this approach, Latta (2019) referenced distributed

leadership and its three conceptual forms of distribution in leadership which is collaborative, collective, and coordinated. However, Jones et al. (2012) stated that even distributed leadership lacks a leadership framework. In threading the learnings of strategy, distributed leadership, and individual leadership theories, this research attempts to provide a cross-cultural, cross-functional, collaborative, coordinated environment created from the direction of a more universal language or set of guiding principles in how to achieve the vision, mission, and values of the company through an organizational leadership framework.

Background of the Problem

Norenberg (2020) stated that leadership failures are reducing engagement levels creating reduced organizational performance and a failure to meet targets. Amar and Hlupic (2016) showed the theories that have guided management over the last century are not effective for leading with no single approach for leaders to follow that offer success. Furthermore, Allio (2021) reflected that like management theories, the management processes we have so embraced over the last 50 years have lost their utility. Allio (2021) continued that the planning bureaucrats no longer can keep up with the pace of change. Ready (2018) stated that changes in the world means a shift from traditional leadership. Later, Ready (2019) reflected that organizations need to rethink what it means to lead as it is no longer about one person or those who reside at the top but that everyone must adapt a leadership mindset. Kellerman (2016) stated that leadership as an industry needs reconceiving through shedding its obsession with individual leaders and shift to a focus of learning that creates a systemic approach to leadership.

The research area of distributed leadership has yielded some perspective into the shifting focus of individual leadership approaches to a more expansive comprehensive approach, and the need for an organizational leadership framework. Latta (2019) described distributed leadership as

the movement away from the influence of single individuals towards a network of interacting individuals with a variety of expertise and unlimited boundaries distributed across many leaders. Klein et al. (2018) stated that teachers and leadership in an educational setting has a potential for success when it is integrated with the larger vision of the organization and seen as a process or event rather than a role. Klein et al. (2018) continued that in expanding the leadership model and creating more leaders, a lack of transparency and increase in tension arises which need addressed through a framework that considers leadership activities and processes.

A solution that may address the changes and shifting needs of the leadership field is an organizational leadership framework. Within the study of expanding teacher leadership, Klein et al. (2018) stated that using a distributed leadership framework in their educational setting study revealed it is essential to move away from the focus of the individual leader and towards leadership as a series of interacting relationships with linked context. However, Modeste and Kelley (2020) reflected that there is limited implementation information of leadership practices in distributed leadership. In their study on distributed leadership, Liu et al. (2018) showed that further studies of how to enact and foster the shared leadership responsibilities of distributed leadership will continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in the educational industry. While the educational field is progressing in research that expands leadership beyond the traditional setting, a current literature review of leadership in business research revealed the opposite. There remained a primary focus on individual roles of leadership theories such as transformational and servant leadership while overall leadership strategy research reflected a focus on areas of the business such as sustainability, innovation, and development rather than leadership as a functional unit or process.

A leadership strategy, however, is not the complete objective of this research but a leadership framework. Yuan et al. (2018) reflected that strategy in business is a firm's focus, and actions taken to understand and adapt in an industry or segment to realize a high level of performance in that area. Literature on leadership reflected that neither research nor the business world approaches leadership as an industry or segment in which to strategize. This may be due to the lack of a foundation for the collective unit of leadership to reside as suggested in this research through the organizational leadership framework. However, scholarly research does neither address the description of a framework well, nor define an organizational leadership framework. Rather, research focuses on categories of frameworks such as ethics and business development or conceptual and theoretical approaches in research. Moulin-Frier and Oudeyer (2020) stated that the use of a framework offers a shared language in which stakeholders may use to plan, execute, and evaluate efforts. In comparing strategies and frameworks, they are fundamentally different yet complement one another. The objective of this qualitative case study is to thread the learnings of business strategy, leadership theories, and distributed leadership research. The threading of these learnings with the study results attempted to both define and reflect the need for an organizational leadership framework. The organizational leadership framework attempts to offer itself as a resource that focuses on global leadership language that acts as a guiding principle, or a type of constitution for leading within the organization thus improving the effectiveness of leadership, their organizations, and bridging the knowledge gap in research.

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed is the failure of organizations to create a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework, a synthesis of an organization's

strategies, functions, culture, and individual behaviors into universal guiding principles which all facets of business reference to create more intelligent and coordinated magnetic like movements. Examining prior research of distributed leadership lended insight into how not having an organizational leadership framework affects leadership, culture, and results. According to Jakobsen et al. (2021), individual leaders are finding themselves with the need for conjoint action where behavior is coordinated between individuals, groups, units, and levels due to organizational objectives that cannot be achieved by a single person. Lahtero et al. (2019) stated that traditional leadership approaches are leaving individuals feeling demotivated with a decreased sense of well-being and lacking meaningfulness. Leadership is currently approached from a singular perspective with a lack of attention of leadership as a collective group. Bagwell (2019) showed that a focus on formal leadership roles for single individuals can be a daunting task and that there is a need to rethink human capital through a more in-depth examination or analysis of how leaders enact their leadership practice. Anderson and Sun (2017) stated that with the extensive overlaps in leadership styles, there needs to be a shift away from the individual leader and a new focus towards a coordinated full-range integration leadership strategy. Supporting this view, Holloway et al. (2018) showed that individual leaders require support, shared values, and vision that comes through a practical leadership framework.

Arnold et al. (2019) stated that in a retail environment store managers are key to implementing corporate strategy and often find themselves facilitators in bridging various unconnected parties within an organizaion. Arnold et al. (2019) continued that with this being the case there is a need for understanding from top management the boundary-spanning aspect of the store manager role. The retail industry offers a significant portion of leadership field. According to Duffin (2020), the retail industry is the second largest employer in the United States behind

education and health services. In this research, the specific leadership problem addressed was the lack of understanding regarding the scope of organizations and their current individualized approach to leadership without a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework that shifts the understanding of leadership to a collective unit and focused on a retail leadership environment in the United States.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to expand upon the leadership body of knowledge by exploring the lack of an organizational leadership framework in a business environment and its effect on leadership and business results. Current leadership knowledge, learning, and focus are on the individual leader. Lahtero et al. (2019) stated in their study of distributed leadership in the educational industry that traditional leadership approaches are often leaving individuals feeling demotivated with a decreased sense of well-being and lacking meaningfulness. Kellerman (2016) stated that business leadership as an industry needs to shift its learning through the shedding of its obsession with individual leaders and shifting to a focus of creating a systemic approach. This research focused on leadership within the retail industry. Retail is the second-largest employer industry in the United States (Duffin, 2020), and it is also the eighth largest industry representing 5.8% of the Gross Domestic Product (Shriever, 2020). The retail industry's impact on the field of leadership is significant, while the researcher also has a working knowledge and experience in the field. This study sought to explore this significant problem by highlighting the individualized leadership approach within retail store leadership in the United States and reveal the need for a systemic approach to leading within an organization to improve leadership and organizational effectiveness.

Research Paradigms

Monroe et al. (2019) suggested that research students should be familiar with the various research paradigms to be aware of the different perspectives that may form their approach, allowing them to better select, develop, and defend their work. The first approach acknowledged in this research is the positivist paradigm. Turyahikayo (2021) stated that a positivist approach insists that knowledge must be certain and that people's thoughts about reality may not be accurate without a scientific basis. The researcher's thought is that this is not a favored approach as they hold that science is faith, not fact. This approach reflects hypocrisy as science proves facts until more science proves the contrary. The second approach acknowledged in this research is the post-positivist paradigm and more closely aligns with the researcher's thought process. Like the positivist paradigm, Young and Ryan (2020) showed that the post-positivist paradigm maintains that knowledge must be certain with a dependence on observation and measurement but concedes that instead, knowledge is constantly being built upon to improve our understanding. A collective group utilizing a standardized process to repeat the same results comes across to the researcher as a good form of knowledge.

The third approach acknowledged in this research is the pragmatism paradigm. Kaushik and Walsh (2019) reflected that a pragmatism paradigm is a plurality approach based on what works best for the problem investigated. Kaushik and Walsh (2019) continued that in research, multiple versions of reality may exist with choice based on anticipated or desired outcomes in this approach. The researcher understands this style but approaches it with caution. Perspectives play such a vital role in this process. For example, a box may take the form of a table, chair, or stool. It would seem not easy to establish knowledge if one source is discussing apples while the other is discussing oranges. While they both are fruit, each has its unique qualities. The fourth

and final approach acknowledged in this research is the constructivist paradigm. This research reflects a combination of this approach and a desire for a post-positive understanding. Perez (2019) showed that constructivism is knowledge constructed through the interactions of individuals and the world and that it is in the lived experience that stems understanding. This research aims to improve the experience of and the field of leadership itself through studying participants within a leadership framework.

Nature of the Study

The method of this research study is qualitative. The qualitative research method best fits this study according to Creswell and Poth (2018), who described qualitative research as a problem that needs exploring within a group or population in which identifiable variables cannot easily measure and has a strong desire to understand the context of the participants. This study's focus is on organizations' need for a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework and its impact on their leadership. With current literature providing no background or work in organizational leadership frameworks and the study's focus on how this affects leadership performance and business results, the context of the study makes the variables challenging to identify, resulting in constructs, or what Creswell (2014) described as more of an abstract idea than defined term.

The other primary options besides the qualitative research method are quantitative and mixed-method research studies. Creswell (2014) described quantitative research as testing a theory with a narrow hypothesis and either support or refute said hypothesis through data collection. This study has no easily identifiable variables or hypotheses to identify. Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) stated that quantitative research needs both dependent and independent variables to test the null or relationship between the variables. With this study not having these

variables, quantitative methods are eliminated. Creswell (2014) described mixed methods research as a collection of both open-ended qualitative data and closed-ended quantitative data in a study. Turner et al. (2017) described mixed method research as a form of triangulation or using multiple approaches to generate a better understanding of theory. With the elimination of quantitative research due to the lack of easily identifiable data, this also eliminated a mixed-method study.

There were five primary design options available for this study: Phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The selected design for this qualitative research was a case study. Breslin and Buchanan (2008) described the case study as a useful tool for researchers to explore the space between theory and practice. Creswell (2014) stated that case studies can be found in many fields and are used to evaluate programs, events, activities, or processes of one or more participants. Creswell and Poth (2018) showed that while ethnography may be at times a case, the work of a case study involves developing an in-depth understanding of a specific issue or problem rather than the culture sharing of a group. Creswell and Poth (2018) showed that case studies have parameters such as space and time, contain a focus, generates themes from data analysis, and end with assertions. Yin (2014) described a case study as one of the most challenging avenues in social science with the researcher's goal to fairly collect, present, and analyze data. Yin (2014) further described three types of case studies: exploratory (i.e., A study with no propositions), descriptive (i.e., A study that deals with the what), and explanatory (i.e., A study that deals with the why). This study reflected an exploratory case study as it delved into the knowledge gap in the research of the unknown or unfamiliar grounds of organizational leadership frameworks.

Ethnography is a viable design option as research and experience on this topic continues to develop. Creswell (2014) described ethnography as studying areas such as behaviors of a group in a natural setting over a period. Creswell and Poth (2018) described ethnography as developing an elaborate description of an entire culture-sharing group with a focus on discernable working patterns. Stake (2010) provided examples of ethnographic studies as qualitative researchers who feel those who are policy setters and practitioners should be particularly interested in their work as it provides a greater sense of experience from complex situations. Creswell and Poth (2018) showed that this focus is on discernable working patterns that rely on participant views. Ethnography is not applicable as it focuses on the full culture sharing experience of a group while this study focuses on the lack of an organizational leadership framework rather than an entire culture.

The grounded theory option is not an option for this study. Stake (2010) showed that grounded theory is the move away from the individual to collective knowledge. Grounded Theory is described by Creswell (2014), as using abstract theory grounded in participant's view with multiple stages of data collection. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated more specifically that the participant's views come from their experience of the process. Chun Tie et al. (2019) showed grounded theory as derived from data where theory generates from said data analysis. While the study looked to gain collective knowledge from its participants, the participants themselves have not been identified as formal experts of an organizational leadership frameworks with no easily identifiable variables but rather constructs. Grounded Theory is more suitable for future research in this subject area as more organizations take up the practice of an organizational leadership framework.

The final two primary options of narrative and phenomenological designs were also not considered for this study. Creswell (2014) showed that narrative research studies the lives of individuals and often combined the stories of and views of the lives of both the participant and the researcher. Creswell and Poth (2018) showed narrative studies as those who collect stories from the experiences of individuals within specific places or situations that shape into a chronology. Creswell and Poth (2018) described phenomenological studies as the lived experience of a group of people experiencing the phenomenon. Creswell (2014) showed that in phenomenology, studies contain no theoretical orientation and attempt to build from the experience of participants. This study focused on the need of an organizational leadership frameworks, where its participants, leaders, and leadership were in a position where they have not been identified as experts in these frameworks, thus eliminating these options.

Research Questions

This qualitative case study explored the possibilities involved in the implementation of a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework within a business environment. The central research question's goals were to begin shifting the focus away from individual leadership research and towards a more systemic leadership approach. The central research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do leaders approach accomplishing their overall organization's objectives such as those represented in the vision, mission, and values?

RQ2: How does the presence of an organizational leadership framework affect leaderships approach towards accomplishing their overall organization's objectives such as those represented in the vision, mission, and values?

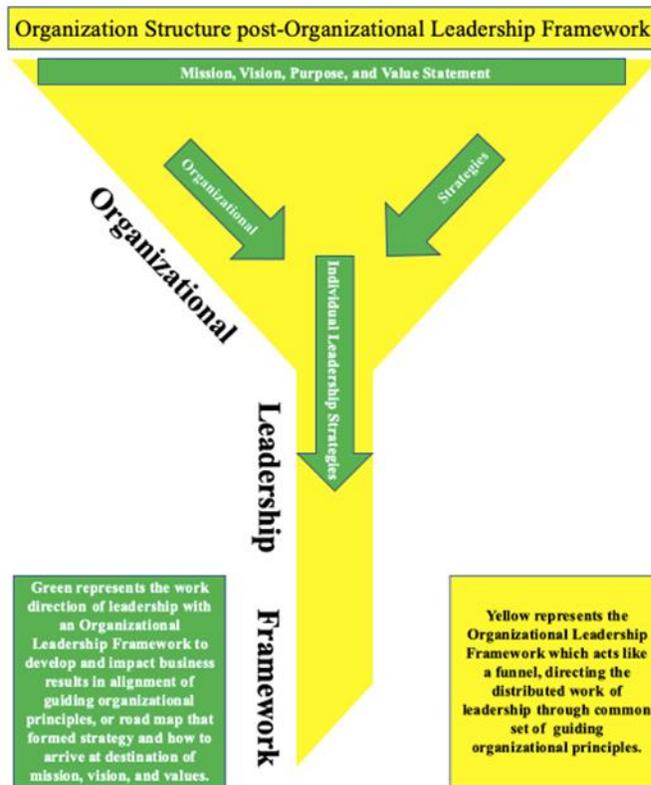
Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Mayer (2015) showed that the conceptual framework is a crucial part of research design in qualitative research as it contains the concepts, assumptions, and theories that support the theory of the research conducted. According to Green (2014), the conceptual framework draws on concepts from a variety of theories to both guide research and ensure that said research is given order and completed in a way that is clear and understandable to its readers. Jabareen (2009) stated that the use of conceptual frameworks in qualitative research serves as a necessary tool for linking different bodies of knowledge that span a variety of disciplines. That is precisely the approach that this research attempted to do in building a foundation that shows the need for a leadership framework.

Figure 1

Visual of the Conceptual Framework





In the current landscape of business, Allio (2018c) referenced data which revealed individuals are investing heavily in the self-development of their leadership capabilities. The research of Kachaner et al. (2016) showed that it is leadership and executives which are using a variety of approaches to understand and develop strategy of their organizations. Džupina and Džupinová (2019) showed that strategy transpires from the vision, mission, and values of an organization. This information revealed that leaders are developing themselves to either execute or create strategy that stems from top statements or principals of an organization regarding its objectives. Free (2014) showed that a mission statement answers why the organization exists or what they do and the vision statement informs and motivates towards the organization's aspirational future. Lahey and Nelson (2020) stated that value statements are a company's core philosophy around what the company stands for ethically. These company statements or principals provide a great deal of information yet lack detail on how a company desires those

within the organization lead or work to achieve the statements objectives. The organizational leadership framework objective is to fill that gap.

The organizational leadership framework originated from the vision, mission, and values of an organization and form within a unified executive leadership team that creates those strategies. The vision, mission, and values of an organization inspired the organizational leadership framework. Acting as a compass, its content funnel or create coordinated movement from strategy to leader in a unified fashion across an organization. The research of Fairholm (2009) showed that strategy and strategic thinking is a competency of leadership that could drive actions which link to the achievement of organizational goals. Though without proper alignment and integration, strategy remains difficult. Rentes et al. (2019) showed that some businesses often use business process management to align the various functions and relationships to the strategies, goals, and policies of an organization for a specific process. A well-formed organizational leadership framework offers guiding principals at a company level rather than ceasing at a specific functions or process.

The organizational leadership framework is grounded in the collaborative, collective, and coordinated spirit of a distributed leadership environment. Latta (2019) described distributed leadership as an expansion from single or few individuals to many with diverse expertise and endless boundaries. The study by Torrance and Humes (2015) showed that while this approach may be more productive, the expansion of leadership to many creates confusion or a lack of clarity that needs addressing through something that articulates their role and its competing accountabilities and boundaries. This reflects that individual leadership along with its styles and theories play a vital role under distributed leadership. Kilicoglu (2018) stated that the core functions of leadership must be present to distribute. Individual leadership learning is the housed

within distributed leadership. Klein et al. (2018) learned in their study on distributed leadership that the use of a framework is needed to see leadership as a series of interacting relationships.

The organizational leadership framework serves as that framework.

Definition of Terms

Distributed leadership: Distributed leadership in an educational setting is described by Bagwell (2019) as moving beyond the traditional view of the principle as the sole practitioner of leadership and towards a leadership model that integrates the coordinated actions and interactions across many leaders in the school's environment. Lahtero et al. (2019) described distributed leadership as having core features and characteristics that emphasize the group or network as the quality of leadership, makes leadership available to various groups, and assumes the traits of knowledge and know-how as qualities of many and not few.

Framework: Khajeheian (2019) defined a framework as something we use to understand boundaries, constructing factors, and basics of how something works when we have no previously proven model or theory in which to stand. Bowie (2019) briefly compared or described a framework, as a constitution, or guide. In the setting of the work by Bowie (2019), the framework, or constitution, acted as a sovereign authority and covenant with God in which provides organization and principles of how its civil government should act.

Organizational Leadership Framework: There is no current research that directly addresses the use or definition of an organizational leadership framework that sets forth principles that create a single unifying leadership approach for leaders to guide them in driving strategy, culture, and business results. The organizational leadership framework is defined here as a synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behavioral efforts into universal guiding principles in which all facets of the business reference and follow to create

more intelligent and coordinated magnetic like movements across the organization. Linenberger and Schmidt (2016) described the need for a framework of collective leadership beliefs that are based on an organizational culture and provides clarity along with well-defined leadership behaviors. Henry (2018) discussed the need for a more inter-connected global approach to business. These statements are supported in the research of Torrance and Humes (2015) who showed the needs of clarification for competing accountabilities across boundaries in expanded leadership environments. This clarification opportunity has the capability of being addressed through the working definition of an organizational leadership framework as it provides the compass needed in a business to fulfill these opportunity gaps while being proactive rather than reactive defining and setting the leadership approach and culture.

Strategy: Adobor (2019) showed strategy to be the creation of plans of actions in a business environment that is currently moving away from its formulation solely by top management teams and towards a more inclusive environment for internal and external stakeholders in creating innovative ideas.

Assumptions

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that our philosophical assumptions, or the abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research when developing a qualitative study, takes place in five different phases of research: The researcher as a multicultural subject, philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks, research strategies and approaches, methods of collection and analysis, and the art, practice, and politics of interpretation and evaluation. When it comes to the researcher as a subject Creswell and Poth (2018) revealed four philosophical assumptions that play a role in research: Ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. The first phase assumptions for this case study are that the academic environment of the researcher is an

effective aid in highlighting and acting as a corrective partner in limiting the conscious and unconscious biases, subjectivity, personal values, and personal experiences that may have affected this qualitative research.

In the second phase of Creswell and Poth's (2018) philosophical assumptions, the researcher uses research to support and show that leadership needs a shift from its focus on the individual leader to that of leadership as a collective unit. Here the researcher's philosophical view is that the organizational leadership framework is the best path forward in providing a tool for this change to take place and uses the research as an attempt to provide a way to build future focus around the subject. Within the third phase of Creswell and Poth's (2018) research strategies and approach, the researcher continues this assumption and use of research along with guidance from the researcher's academic institution in the selection of a case study design. Yin (2014) showed that the use of construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability can all be used within the case study to establish quality of the research.

Yin (2014) stated that a distinct variety of perspectives are captured from the participants and address the fourth phase of Creswell and Poth's (2018) methods of collection and analysis. As there is no current research that directly addresses the use of an organizational leadership framework, the researcher assumed that most organizations do not currently use a leadership framework. With this assumption, the researcher assumed that participants in the study would have a limited knowledge or experience working with or under a leadership framework. Participants selected are also assumed to have a working knowledge of the leadership, culture, business functions and overall objectives of their organization such as vision, mission, or values due to purposeful selection of tenured leadership with knowledge of the overall organizational objectives. Furthermore, within this phase as pointed out by Yin (2014), there is an assumption

of the participants own perspectives which in this case study is assuming limited bias, inaccuracies due to poor recall, and reflexivity, or providing what the researcher desires to hear on the part of the participants during the interview process. Addressing the assumptions of the first four phases provide the foundation of Creswell and Poth's (2018) final phase regarding the rigor of interpretation and evaluation of the study where again it is assumed that the academic environment is a sufficient partnership in a sound outcome.

Limitations

There are limitations to this research. Participants within the study only represented a portion of their organizational leadership team. The study consisted of one organization within the retail industry which only represented a portion of a large industry with a significant leadership presence. The approach to the binding and selection of participants in this case study is key to providing a meaningful theoretical outcome. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that a case is a bounded choice of what is to be studied. Creswell (2014) described purposeful selection as selecting participants that best helped the researcher understand the problem and research questions. Creswell (2014) described random selection as a systematic or probabilistic approach in which everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Participants were purposefully selected and qualified for the case study while randomly selected to represent different geographical regions within the varying roles to provide for the best possible selection process. This case study and its selection of a single case with varying levels and sources of data, according to Yin (2014), provides more depth or understanding of the theory.

According to Yin (2014), the participants themselves may have their own limitations that are not known to the researcher, which include but are not limited to conscious or unconscious biases regarding the company, its leadership, or the area of study as it relates to leadership,

culture, business functions, inaccuracies, and reflexivity. According to Yin (2014), some of this can be overcome through properly worded interview questions with a focus on the organization and multiple sources that avoids the research becoming a survey. Yin (2014) continued that it is important to remember that the participants themselves are not sampling units as they are too small to represent the larger population but rather to think of the case itself as a sample being used to shed empirical light regarding a theoretical concept or principle. This perspective is important as it reflects and reminds the reader this is not a quantitative work founded in numbers but rather a qualitative attempt to build theory.

Delimitations

There were delimitations within this research. While the retail organization of whom the participants are employed may have represented a national retailer, global in scale, selected participant's geographical location did not sufficiently represent the various locations and the differences that each may bring to the table. The focus is on brick-and-mortar leadership, but there are far more aspects to a retail business such as distribution centers, regional offices, and corporate or global headquarters. Similarly, this portion only representation is also the case for both the industry and the field of business and leadership.

Reduction of Gaps

Cockerell (2018) reflected that often an organization's strategies focus solely on functional and technical areas and lack attention in the forming a leadership strategy. The researcher sought to reveal the individualized approach to leadership and in such further highlight the absence of and need for an organizational leadership framework focus. This research reflected a gap in organizational leadership strategy at its highest level and the lack of a unified approach or common language and principles for those who lead said strategy. The

researcher sought to show that an organizational leadership framework could bridge the gap between organizational strategy and its individualized leadership by providing guiding principles or the direction of a constitution that both house and effectively funnel leadership efforts in a more productive working direction.

Implications for Biblical Integration

Keller and Alsdorf (2012) showed that work is part of God's perfect design for human life, bringing dignity as it reflects the image of God as the Creator, allowing us to serve Him through our creativity and service or love of others in our work. Even before the fall of man, God provided His creation, man, with work. "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (Genesis 2:15, NKJV). Work in itself is one part of the broader perspective in which God had for human life. According to Windes et al. (2017), work is just one of the parts of our vocation or many roles that a Christian takes on in his or her life. Mayes (2018) described vocation as a calling, or divine calling, which is from God, filled and defined by the various stations of life.

In our work we often encounter leadership. God exhibited leadership in the Garden of Eden guiding and instructing Adam and Eve. Another example of leadership in the Bible is when God called on Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their task-master, for I know their sorrows." (Exodus 3:7, NKJV) God used Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, saying to him, "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:9, NKJV) One portion of the idea for an organizational leadership framework came from the work of the Ten Commandments. God provided Moses the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17. As Moses lead the people of Israel,

God provided him this guide, saying, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." (Exodus 24:12, NKJV)

In the New Testament, God again referred to the Ten Commandments again through His son, Jesus. This example can be confirmed when Jesus said: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, NKJV). During this conversation, Jesus left instructions for His disciples, saying, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21, NKJV) Jesus even left one extra commandment, a new commandment for His disciples. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35, NKJV)

There is an important distinction which should not be overlooked between the law of God through Moses and the law of God through Jesus in comparison to pre and post organizational leadership framework. In the Old Testament Moses used God's commandments and under advice from Jethro, his father-in-law, in Exodus 18:1-27 taught others to serve as judges teaching people the way to live and duties they should perform. In the New Testament under The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 Jesus gave His disciples authority and commanded them make disciples of all the nations. In the Old Testament leadership is centralized to the few and in the New Testament leadership is outsourced to the many. There is currently a focus on the individualized leadership experience or in biblical examples, the Moses experience. This research desires to shift the focus on leadership to that of a collective unit or in biblical examples, the Disciples experience.

The idea of an organizational leadership framework is in part a reflection of how God used Moses to lead or teach His people of Israel the values of the Ten Commandments in which they could identify as being in covenant with God. The organizational leadership framework is to be guide for all to teach, follow, and learn from its words. The strategy of forming an organizational leadership framework transcends all other strategies and is an all-encompassing guide for leadership to follow. This reflects how God reaffirmed the Ten Commandments through Jesus when he said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17, NKJV). The disciples were not left to interpret how Jesus wanted them to carry out His work.

The organizational leadership framework objective is not to destroy or ignore previous work in business and leadership but rather fill a gap by providing a compass within an organization in which all may follow in how to lead and a platform for future research to continue. The creation of an organizational leadership framework mirrors God's approach of leading His people but in a business environment. Van Duzer (2010) created a framework for doing business according to God's will, which is for businesses to serve their communities and employees in a sustainable way that is collaborative. The organizational leadership framework aims to do the same for leadership and all the various functional areas within a business in how to fulfill that will through leadership.

Relationship to Field of Study

The subject of creating a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework for an entire organization is an important area to study. This topic does not currently have a presence in the research literature, and therefore would add to its body of knowledge by moving away from the traditional individual approach to leadership and towards the study of

leadership as a collective unit. In the current research, Garg (2018) showed that business leaders operate in an increasingly complex, interdependent, and dynamic global business environment where most companies focus on developing around their key strengths while leadership receives credit for the success or failure of the organization. However, Bonsu and Twum-Danso (2018) showed that many businesses fail due to their leadership's failure to understand the relationship between their employees, leadership styles, and nature of the business. An organizational leadership framework holds the solution to these failures in shifting leadership to a collective group which is a process or function owned by the organization. Linenberger and Schmidt (2016) showed that a framework of collective leadership beliefs that focuses on the collective organizational culture supports an environment that provides clear, decisive, well-defined leadership. A focus on organizational leadership frameworks in the business world has the potential to drive all strategy around leadership efforts leading to stronger business results.

The objective of an organizational leadership framework concerning leadership is to create a set of universal principles, standards, values, and language that brings about more coordinated efforts from the collective group of individual leaders. The organizational leadership framework approach attempts to encompass all leadership functions while understanding that each part and person in a business environment is cross-functional, often cross-cultural, spans endless boundaries, and therefore could benefit from a common guide, language, or compass in achieving the organizations over all objectives such as the vision, mission, and values.

As the organizational leadership framework relates to the retail industry, Pradhan et al. (2017) reflected that the store manager role in a retail environment has evolved in complexity as retail is no longer about selling a product or service but rather hopes, aspirations, and experiences. Arnold et al. (2019) showed that there needs to be further comprehension of the

boundary-spanning role of a store manager and how they facilitate all of the interactional components needed to achieve the objectives of an organization. Johnne and Harborne (2003) showed success in the development of new retail services aligned not with a singularly focused leader but rather multiple leaders with a common leadership approach. Identifying the need for an organizational leadership framework in one of countries largest employable industries of retail could provide a significant impact to the field of leadership.

Literature Review

The objective of this literature review is to not argue the value of leadership but to reveal some of the current focus on individual leadership within research and how it needs to change to a more integrated approach. Leadership is inevitable within the world of business. Reis Neto et al. (2019) showed that organizations are in highly competitive environments and seek the influence of leadership as it has more of an impact than payment. Without leadership organizations impact would be reduced. Many different descriptions of leadership can be found in literature. Within this research the best description found is Pittman (2020), who described leadership as not so much a position but behaviors that rely on a committed leader, consensus of followers, and a shared vision for all to aspire to attain. The objective of the organizational leadership framework is to attain these accomplishments through a shared vision which spans all boundaries of the organization rather than each respective function and functional unit that a leader may experience. It is the leaders of organizations who create vision and initiate change. Reis Neto et al. (2019) showed that these leaders of organizations are agents of change, and often there are many different styles and theories represented in the organization, which help facilitate change. Organizations creating a leadership strategy through the organizational leadership

framework would be more proactive in setting the direction of these many different styles rather than reactive to the environment they have created.

Just like leadership is inevitable in the world of business, change is also inevitable. Hughes (2018) stated that leaders and organizational change are intertwined. Organizations use strategy as a way of maneuvering through that change. Vishwakarma et al. (2020) showed that strategy is the goals, objectives, and course of actions that a company takes to make change and gain competitive advantages, build resources, or test opportunities for the future. It is an organizations leadership that is in the end responsible for change and the strategy around change. Globocnik et al. (2020) showed top management in an organization use strategic planning and management to communicate their goal to middle and lower management. Top leadership sets these goals or objectives in which middle and lower management use for interpretation in guiding their functional responsibilities. Globocnik et al. (2020) showed that these leaders use tools such as vision statements, mission statements, setting strategies, and mechanisms to assess internal and external environments in analyze and attempt to control business results.

While strategy abounds, research has shown no focus in literature regarding organizational leadership strategies. This research provides a platform to do so through an organizational leadership framework that provides a standard of guiding principles, behaviors, or constitution in which those who lead in an organization are desired to execute the overall objectives or strategies of an organization. Ready (2014) showed that companies often create working silos with leadership and the members of the organization left to navigate. In avoiding these working silos, the organizational leadership framework is partially inspired from distributed leadership which Jones and Harvey (2017) showed is an inclusive and adaptive approach that could lead to desired sustainable business results. This adaptive approach must be

cross-functional and span boundaries. Rentes et al. (2019) described business process management as aligning the various functions and relationships to the strategies, goals, and policies of an organization for a specific process. The organizational leadership framework objective is to not stop at a process but expand and align the leadership approach to these various strategies, goals, functions, and relationships to an organizational level.

This literature review attempted to thread the learnings of organizational strategy, distributed leadership, and individual leadership styles or theories along with the opportunities in each to reveal gaps in leadership knowledge. These learnings and gaps in knowledge build the case for and the content of an organizational need to create an overall leadership strategy using an organizational leadership framework. The research portion of this study reveals further the reach and scope of the organizational leadership strategy.

Organizational Leadership Strategy

Current research literature does not reflect organizations having a strategy or framework around leadership and how they desire the leaders and members of their organizations to lead in accomplishing overall objectives such as vision, mission, or values. The objective behind the organizational leadership framework is to lay the groundwork in shifting the focus from leadership as an individual approach to that of a collective unit. Research currently reflects that strategy or frameworks revolve around initiatives such as change management, innovation, and development. For example, with change management Janićijević (2017) stated that organizations, in their desire for stability, often inertly oppose change and therefore need and use change management strategies. Another example aside from change management is innovation. Laeeque and Babar (2017) showed that innovation in organizations is planned or strategic and typically in the four areas of product, process, marketing, and organization. It should be noted

that each of these areas are separate, and no strategy is mentioned in either leadership or how these areas interact with one another or come together.

Finally, in the example area of development, the research by Leonard (2017) revealed a focus around developing leadership's ability to strategize in ways that achieve the desired results of the organization. This reflects that not only do leaders create and develop strategy but also strategize around that strategy. For example, Virzi (2018) showed that in large multinational corporations, there are many strategies for various functions in many different countries in which successful outcomes depend on the leadership capabilities of an organization. These examples are just three of the many areas in which literature reveals as where organizations strategize. Rather than reviewing the areas in which an organization strategizes this literature review focused on understanding the concept of organizational strategy through the lenses of strategic planning and management in order to reflect the current environment and a lack of attention to a synthesized organizational leadership focus.

Strategic Planning. Strategy for an organization is something that needs to be both planned and managed. Siddique (2015) referred to strategic planning as strategic management and described it as a deliberate planning process that takes a detailed approach and analysis of resources and action regarding strategy for an entire organization. Siddique (2015) showed that while some have viewed strategy as something to emerge, the planning of strategy is making a positive contribution to organizational success and is still widely practiced. A strategy is both extensive and far reaching in its impact, transcending many boundaries. In the sense of time, Rentes et al. (2019) showed that strategic planning should focus on the three different considerations or phases of the long-term vision, the medium-term steps to achieve the mission, and the short-term actions to make it happen.

Achieving these long, medium, and short-term strategies can be fraught with difficulty as alignment issues arise. Rentes et al. (2019) showed that because of difficulties arising from the integration of the different functions, companies will often try to use business process management to align the various functions and relationships to the strategies, goals, and policies of an organization for a specific process which has increased performance for companies of all sizes and industries. Couckuyt and Van Looy (2020) showed that business process management is a method that supports all functions of a business process by relying on quality control, business management, and information systems. Elahi and Bilal (2020) showed that the success of a business process management lies in its ability to embrace culture, change, motivation, and communication. Elahi and Bilal (2020) continued that success in business process management also is found in consistent practice, involvement, and empowerment of employees' while being relevant in scope and embodying of the organizational structure. Business process management offers itself as a guide or example to the integration of and business functions. The limitation of business process management compared to that of an organizational leadership framework is that as previously quoted by Rentes et al. (2019), it aligns functions and relationships to strategies, goals, and policies rather than leadership.

The various strategies in which companies formulate have been referred to as falling into the two categories of offensive and defensive strategies. Martín-Herrán and Sigué (2019) showed in marketing that an offensive strategy is going after new consumers while defensive strategy protects existing consumers. This can be used away from a marketing focus to show that any approach where the organization tries to change for the better would be considered an offensive strategy while any approach which tries to protect what the organization already knows or have would be considered a defensive strategy.

One example of an offensive strategy for an organization is sustainability. Centobelli et al. (2020) showed that organizations are evolving, adapting new sustainable technologies and practices that meet the more stringent environmental requirements of climate change agreements. While there are other motivations for a more sustainable business, whatever their reason may be, they are attempting new approaches to change for the better. In a defensive example, risk is a factor that we must acknowledge as part of our decision-making process protect our current business. Holmquist (2019) stated that strategic planning and risk management intertwine with one another and that not to include risk management as part of the strategy process would be both reckless and negligent. Many strategies exist in research literature around risk and how to keep a business safe in its current state.

Strategic planning and management are not just successful in large organizations and corporate enterprises. Fahed-Sreih and El-Kassar (2017) revealed that strategic planning positively affects the performance of family businesses. However, Coffie and Blankson (2018) showed that large businesses far more widely use strategic planning than in small and family-owned businesses. Because of the reduced use of strategic planning and management in smaller companies' larger organizations have been able to show more success in the use of strategic planning. This success and use of strategic planning are not limited to a type of organization or industry. Ferreira and Proença (2015) showed that strategic planning had a positive contribution to the effectiveness of social service organizations. In another sector, Elbanna et al. (2016) showed that strategic planning had a positive contribution to implementation, especially in times of uncertainty, which provided a beneficial impact on public service organizations.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section of the literature review on organizational leadership strategy, these strategies need to be not only planned but lead and managed. Grant and

Baden-Fuller (2018) showed that strategic management is about executing the proper attributes of effective decision making regarding what is to be done now and putting it into action. Notice here that the leading and managing of strategy is not so much about creating new strategy but effectively implementing and executing current strategy. Bindra et al. (2019) showed that in research, the strategy revolves around either how an organization approaches strategy or what prevailing patterns make for grand strategy. Bindra et al. (2019) continued, suggesting that in the future, a combination of using both the how and what for strategy will become necessary due to increasing complexity in the new global corporate environments. This literature is revealing that strategy itself is occurring across many industries to both protect and grow the companies of many shapes and sizes within those industries and all lacking a leadership strategy of an organizational leadership framework that embraces a combination that is multifaceted in its construction and approach.

Planning, leading, and managing these various strategies is no easy task. Djordjevic et al. (2020) stated that to successfully drive improvement for the organization leaders must balance and eliminate conflict between all the competing dimensions in structural and personal areas of the business. It is this statement which reveals that in current business practice, it is the individual leaders who are left to determine how to create balance amongst competing priorities whom as individuals may have their own competing priorities. The not united are trying to unite.

To this point in the literature review it has attempted to provide an overview of how organizations plan, lead, and manage strategy in such a way that would reveal both their strengths and opportunity gaps. These strengths organizations have in strategy may be used in the shift towards the opportunity gaps of no organizational leadership strategy focus found in research. Next, a portion of the literature review needed to be dedicated to where strategy

currently stems from within an organization. Spear (2017) showed that vision, mission, and value statements help build corporate identity while defining and guiding the purpose and direction of an organization. Elias and Philippi (2015) referred to these as corporate strategic statements and revealed how they can reflect the principals that forge organizational strategy and change.

Vision Statements. A strategy needs an end goal. Kirkpatrick (2017) described the vision statement as providing meaning and context for the vision or desired long-term future state of an organization. Allison (2017) showed that the vision statement is a relevant and essential component of strategic management. Allison (2017) also showed that for the vision statement to be relevant, it must communicate strategically and purposefully, which creates clarity and detail for the internal stakeholder to reduce the risk of declining company morale and long-term effectiveness. It should be recognized that as previously mentioned in this literature review, that strategy originates from the purpose, direction, and clarity of a mission statement while the vision statement provides the long-term guide, or compass, for where all functions of an organization are headed.

A strongly formed vision statement can be very impactful for an organization. Perkins et al. (2017) showed that the best vision statements are those that are robust, goal-oriented, and containing enough substance to followers and leaders that they, in effect, have a guiding force for day-to-day behavior. Supporting this statement, Gulati et al. (2016) showed that leaders who communicate the vision of an organization effectively outperformed their counterparts who struggle in this area. This information shows just how valuable it can be for an organization to not only form a compelling vision but properly implement and communicate that vision. This short literature review on vision statements reflects that the vision statement focuses on setting a destination for the future of an organization.

Mission Statements. Mission statements play an important part in the guiding of an organization. Leggat and Holmes (2015) showed that a mission statement provides direction, purpose, clarity, and behavioral standards for an organization. Purpose is important to the success of an organization. Desmidt (2016) showed that both uncertainty and ambiguity can be crippling to an organization, can harm leadership effectiveness, and create dysfunction amongst employees resulting in reduced organizational performance. To prevent these issues from occurring Desmidt (2016) reflected that organizations use the guidance of a mission statement.

Mission statements provide guidance for organizations in many areas. Alegre et al. (2019) described a mission statement as specifics around products, services, markets, customers, and philosophies that reveal what an organization wants to be and whom it wants to serve. Lopez and Martin (2018) pointed out that the mission statement not only provides the direction and purpose needed to guide internal decision making, but they also provide an organization with an externally publicized image and identity.

This guidance of purpose found in the mission statement helps to reveal where strategy originates. Specifically, King et al. (2019) pointed in their work to the fact that a company's strategy and objectives should stem directly from the mission statement and that just like in strategy, the mission statement needed to evolve and change over time to remain relevant and practical. Mas-Machuca et al. (2017) showed that studies often revealed mixed results in connecting performance results to the mission statement while some point to organizational commitment as the reason behind those results which were successful. This short literature review on mission statements reflected that the mission statement focuses on what the company does to reach the vision, or future of an organization.

Value Statements. With vision statements focusing on what an organization desires to be and the mission statement is focusing on how they are going to be it, the value statement is more about where the organization stands philosophically. Lahey and Nelson (2020) stated that a value statement serves as a company's core philosophy around what the company stands for ethically. Vantrappen and de Jong (2018) stated that the values created in these statements center around shaping the tone of how individuals work with and interact with one another. Vantrappen and de Jong (2018) continued that influential value statement creations should be measurable, with authentic action on what it takes to succeed at the organization and formed from a few executive leaders rather than a collective approach.

Once formed, Anderson and Jamison (2015) showed that these values relate to the culture of the organization strengthening internally the employee's sense of belonging and externally the company's image. It should be noted that a value statement is not something simply for leadership but all members of the organization. MacLeod (2016) stated that values will emerge no matter if you do, or do not, create a shared culture around a strong value statement. MacLeod (2016) showed that creating value statements around deep convictions and guiding principles will create the desired culture, avoid an undesirable implicit culture, and provide a set of values that could help resolve conflict when it arises. This short literature review on value statements reflected that the value statement focuses on the behavior the company desires in carrying out the mission to reach the vision, or future of an organization.

The vision, mission, and value statements of an organization have shown in research to have a positive impact on business when done properly. Yet there are opportunities present with these three approaches. With all this direction provided from organizations through their vision, mission, and values their objectives within each are often not fulfilled. In their work on the

perception of change failure Thomas et al. (2016) pointed to the fact that there are underlying values in the culture shaped by individuals which frame results. The lack of action to objectives in these statements by organizations leave interpretation to the perceptions of the individual leader. One cause may be found through what MacLeod (2016) pointed to as a complete disconnect from the strategy and forming of the vision, mission, and values to the actual implementation. The forming of a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework addresses such action.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership offers an expanded leadership and strategy example for organizations. Bagwell (2019) stated that distributed leadership offers a way to rethink human capital through a new leadership perspective of multiple individuals at varying levels. Most of the work in research literature for distributed leadership takes place in an educational setting. Grigoropoulos and Gialamas (2018) showed that educators are being challenged to evolve and now more than ever need to become educator-leaders empowered to take on new leadership roles while opening new knowledge paths and opportunities.

Distributed leadership is creating a change in education as more teachers are taking on the role of leadership. Jones and Harvey (2017) showed that as educational institutions experience a change in their industry, they have found a need for a focus on the work of leadership, which crosses boundaries, shares knowledge, and recognizes the needs for shared responsibility and collaboration. The understanding that a distributed leadership leader's actions and behaviors have implications and impact beyond their role and relationships is important to setting the foundation for showing the need of an organizational leadership framework. Jones and Harvey (2017) showed that a distributed leadership approach is inclusive and adaptive,

which would lead to the desired sustainable business results. This same inclusive and adaptive approach offered in the organizational leadership framework may also lead to desired sustainable business results.

Distributed leadership is another example of change that is occurring with leadership and is where in research the inspiration is found for the foundation of organizational leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework. Lahtero et al. (2019) mentioned that classic leadership theories themselves emphasize a top-down approach with a focus on leaders to subordinate communication. Most of the leadership research reflects this approach through its focus on leadership styles, theories, along with their strengths and opportunities in leading others. Distributed leadership does not mean however that individual leadership is not essential or does not need to be a focus. Kilicoglu (2018) stated that the core functions of leadership must be present to distribute. Therefore, the study of individual leadership and pursuit of improved individual leadership performance should not go away. Instead, this research challenges that the perception of the leadership field so it is viewed both as evolving and ever-changing behaviors that is just one portion of a much broader global perspective representing leadership and leaders as a collective unit and encapsulated in an organizational leadership framework.

In reviewing the research for distributed leadership, Canterino et al. (2020) referred to it as plural leadership and referenced that while it has gained some attention in the field of management, most of the studies focus on it in an educational setting. Rao-Nicholson et al. (2020) described distributed leadership as a shared-goal and collaborative driven method that allows for the sharing of leadership across groups and organizations towards achievement of common objectives. This shared leadership vision applies to the organizational leadership framework as it should reveal direction applicable to all parts of the organization. Latta (2019)

pointed to the three originating characteristics of distributed leadership as a group or network of individuals demonstrating open boundaries while distributing expertise across many rather than few. Latta (2019) also described this in the shorter words of collaborative, collective, and coordinated environments, which all have the commonality of interdependence and coordination. As successful distributed leadership frameworks are collaborative, collective, and coordinated with interdependence, so must be the framework of an organizational leadership framework.

The words used to describe a distributed leadership environment all point to sources outside of the individual leaders and their ability. Kim et al. (2017) used words such as collective, distributed, integrative, and interdependent, to describe collaborative leadership while pointing to these words as needs in a distributed leadership environment. Kim et al. (2017) showed that these skills are needed because distributed leadership offers the ability for cross-boundary change and coalitions, which require a different skill set compared to that of traditional organizational leadership in a single system environment. This cross-boundary approach shows that often leaders in the distributed leadership environment are thinking beyond their own experience to understand how their role, behaviors, and actions affect others and other parts of the organization.

Distributed leadership is about far more than the individual leader. Chitpin (2020) described the essence of distributed leadership as separating practicing of leadership from the position of leadership or focusing on the how of leadership and not the what of leadership. In supporting this statement, Shava and Tlou (2018) provided a different way to think about distributed leadership when they referenced to it being a way to think about leadership rather than a technique of leadership. Shava and Tlou (2018) stated that distributed leadership more accurately reflects divisions of labor and interdependence, highlighting how an individual's

behavior can affect the organization. This highlighting of how individual behaviors affect each other, and the organization is important and mirrors the call in this research to also highlight how both individual leadership, leadership as a group, and the various strategies of an organization affect one another. This does not eliminate the need for leadership or its understanding of an individualized approach but reflects the need for the unification of leaders which is learned in part through distributed leadership and offered through the formation of an organizational leadership strategy found in the organizational leadership framework.

Research showed that for distributed leadership to be effective, there must be a delicate balance made in the formation and implementation. Mifsud (2017) showed that not enough structure could lead to struggles and tensions between various co-leaders and those of different tiers. Furthermore, Chitpin (2020) stated that if left alone, distributed leadership runs the risk involved with traditional leadership of becoming autocratic and chaotic, and therefore needs to be well structured. When it comes to distributed leadership, leaders must align with one another. Canterino et al. (2020) showed that within distributed leadership, coordination between leaders is relevant in building shared direction and a thriving environment. Zheng et al. (2019) stated that successful distributed leadership also requires collaboration at levels. The revelation in research that shows the distributed leadership environment must be coordinated, collaborative, and cross-functional is more learning that must thread through an organizational leadership framework.

Latta (2019) showed that interpersonal interaction might not be the defining dimension of distributed leadership but integration. However, too much structure could result in reduced results in a distributed leadership environment. Mifsud (2017) showed that if there is too much structure within distributed leadership, it will turn into a complex system of delegation which leads to no growth or development of individual leadership and no distributed leadership.

Furthermore, Lahtero et al. (2017) stated that when distributed leadership experiences the perception of a system of task delegation, interaction performance in leader-follower relationships decreases.

As previously mentioned, the learnings and research of distributed leadership often takes place in an educational setting. In this setting, educational institutions move away from traditional leadership and towards distributed leadership. Bagwell (2019) stated that distributed leadership moves beyond the narrow view of classic leadership theories with one person, a principle, responsible for all the leadership, and towards a setting where educational institutions have many leaders engaging and influencing the teaching and learning process. Canterino et al. (2020) described distributed leadership in an educational setting as the movement away from leadership efforts focused from a singular individual to leadership efforts spread across members at all levels of the educational institution.

Particular attention is paid to what has been learned from this expansion of leadership in an educational setting. Klein et al. (2018) on the development of teacher followers as teacher leaders, revealed competing views and varying alignments about the roles of teacher leaders, which seemed to evolve from different experiences in complex interactions, perceptions, and beliefs. In this setting there is no leadership framework in place that both parties aligned to prior to the start of development. Klein et al. (2018) used a distributed leadership framework to guide them in their study to the conclusion that the focus needs shifted from individual teacher leaders to the context of the teacher leaders' work in their research. Research on distributed leadership is not the only thing lacking a leadership framework as Jones et al. (2012) stated there is a lack of a framework for effective leadership in higher education. This work reveals that as leadership

expands from the single leader in an educational setting to many, a leadership framework is highly recommended.

Research did reveal four ways in which educational institutions could find improvement through the building of a distributed leadership environment. The first suggestion by Pingping and Huang (2019) is to establish a vision that aligns with school characteristics while attracting teachers that will jointly contribute to the development. Supporting this statement, Canterino et al. (2020) showed that when it comes to change, individual leaders need complementing views of multiple leaders, which comes from distributed leadership as it helps build a shared vision and change orientation. The second suggestion by Pingping and Huang (2019) is to standardize leadership through alignment of responsibility and role clarity. Alignment and clarity are essential in distributed leadership. When done well, Rao-Nicholson et al. (2020) shared that distributed leadership offers an organization to be more ambidextrous and better handle the challenge of aligning strategy resources and capabilities by focusing on shared goals and responsibilities in cross-functional environments.

The third suggestion that Pingping and Huang (2019) offered is to value and trust the performance and opinions of the organization's members to cultivate positive interactions amongst principals and teachers. Their research showed that the more frequently college presidents demonstrated distributed leadership behaviors, the more likely teachers would be committed to their organization and desire to help it achieve its goals. The fourth suggestion that Pingping and Huang (2019) offered is to assume joint leadership and establish rotational systems for various duties. To this effect, Bouwmans et al. (2019) stated distributed leadership could not co-exist with formal leadership as the formal leader would influence the scope of distributed leadership. An approach such as this, or one similar, could allow for each institution to create its

leadership framework that is most effective for their organizational setting rather than conforming to one that is an industry-standard and may not comply with their specific needs.

While it is complex to implement distributed leadership, it offers many benefits. Alenezi (2019) revealed that distributed leadership, when expertly planned out, had high levels of impact on teachers. One reason for this may be what Rao-Nicholson et al. (2020) showed in that distributed leadership advances the welfare of employees and allows them to partake in the decision-making process which enhances engagement and productivity. This increase in employee welfare could stem from what Daniëls et al. (2019) showed in that with distributed leadership focus on interactions over actions, it highlights collaboration, shared purpose, and shared ownership. This reflects a benefit beyond leadership and strategy.

There is benefit under distributed leadership for the organization and its leaders. Canterino et al. (2020) showed that distributed leadership helps individual leaders focus on the direction for change and avoid the focus of existing structures and status quo. Along the same lines, Jones et al. (2012) showed that distributed leadership promoted both engagement and ongoing cross-functional multi-level leadership teams. Yager et al. (2010) stated that distributed leadership has the potential to serve educational institutions well through creating collaborative learning, professional development, and a common culture built on the same language, beliefs, and values that would benefit the school, professionals, and students alike. These benefits are striking and something that could be achieved in the business world when applied through the similar workings of an organizational leadership strategy formed in an organizational leadership framework.

Individual Leadership Styles and Theories

The individual leader is an important part of an organizational leadership framework as they are the end user of the resource who will still need to navigate their personal leadership abilities into the integration of the whole. Many resources exist for individual leaders and there seems to be no end to the expansive field of leadership research styles and theories. Just as expansive are how leadership itself is defined. Hudson (2020) stated that the definition of leadership is ever evolving to match the research of leadership. For example, Vecchiotti (2018) showed that further back in the history of leadership as more women entered the role of leadership, the definitions morphed from that of authority to one who recognized followers. Vecchiotti (2018) then showed that leadership definitions transitioned again after a new, younger generation emerged which now places value in definitions such as collaboration, balance, and feedback. One example of a formal definition is that in the work of Gandolfi and Stone (2018), which reflected leadership to be a series of components that contain an individual or individuals with a follower or followers and actions, goals, and objectives.

In reading the research, it can be challenging to determine sometimes if leadership is a positive or negative experience. Zhao and Li (2019) showed that leadership as a research topic is complicated and intimidating, leaving those maneuvering through literature feeling as though it is chaotic and lacked focus. Just as there are views of opportunities in leadership, there are also views regarding the value of leadership. Grisaffe et al. (2016) stated that leadership is a critical force in obtaining desired organizational outcomes through employee performance. Leadership must constantly change and lead change. Anderson et al. (2017) pointed to the fact that as the world continues to change, the topic of and approach to leadership must also evolve and change as new generations enter the workforce.

When it comes to styles and theories, the selection of combinations is endless. For example, in a paper by Kelly and MacDonald (2019), the researchers studied authoritarian, democratic, laissez-faire, and bureaucratic. Saeed and Mughal (2019) studied transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire approach in leadership. GÜmÜsay (2019) studied authentic, ethical, and servant leadership. Seidel et al. (2019) studied authentic, leader-member-exchange, complexity, distributed, transformational, servant, and situational leadership. The objective of reviewing individual leadership strategies and theories in this literature review is to look where leadership research is most plentiful, and the focus is heaviest, with the individual approach to leadership. This literature review will look at democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, laissez-faire leadership, strategic leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, coach-style leadership, bureaucratic leadership, and servant leadership.

Before reviewing these leadership styles, a history of how literature has arrived at these styles is beneficial. In the 1960s, Douglas McGregor introduced the theories of motivation known as Theory X and Theory Y. Şahin et al. (2017) reflected that Theory X style managers believed that employees must be controlled or threatened into an effort that achieves organizational objectives. Şahin et al. (2017) continued that Theory Y style managers maintain a more positive view of employees, believe that they enjoy work responsibility, and take creative actions to maximize their performance. Not long after this body of work, it became further expanded upon as Theory Z emerged. Barney (2004) discussed the work of William Ouchi, which reflected on the change in management from psychology in Theory X and Y to sociology in Theory Z, which provided a new set of tools that increased the role of others in decision-making and other focuses of well-being that increased both satisfaction and loyalty. Today's leadership theories and styles find many similarities in these theories of the past.

Democratic Leadership. Research shows that the democratic leadership approach favors individuals and is often found in political systems. Fiaz et al. (2017) showed the democratic leadership style to be one that focuses on people with an emphasis on group interaction with whom they share the leadership functions. Fiaz et al. (2017) also revealed that this style is benevolent and participative, believing that most people are trustworthy, self-motivated, like responsibility and challenging work. Saleem et al. (2017) showed that the democratic leadership style allows for maximum participation of employees in the decision-making process. Drouin et al. (2018) showed that democratic leaders value their team member's input, which may make their decisions more useful as they capture a wide array of viewpoints. Along with making more effective decisions, Buzdar and Fatima (2018) stated that the democratic leader is a more rational approach and is reason oriented when it comes to accomplishing tasks.

The democratic leadership style showed a positive effect on organizational performance in research. Imhangbe et al. (2019) on leadership behaviors of principals within the educational system of Nigeria showed that schools with the best performance often had principals who exhibited the democratic leadership style. Imhangbe et al. (2019) also revealed that this style had a significant impact on the working atmosphere and teacher's job performance through building good morale, team spirit, creating confidence, and practical goal setting. Aligning with these results, Drouin et al. (2018) showed that teachers preferred this style as it felt they could discuss issues with their leaders. Saleem et al. (2017) demonstrated that schoolteachers were often more committed to both their profession and institution when the democratic leadership style is in place with their leadership.

It is not just teachers and educational systems that is able to enjoy the benefits of the democratic leadership style. Miloloža (2018) showed that companies who are experiencing

stagnation, small companies, and those oriented towards international markets had a positive impact when the democratic leadership style is in place. However, the democratic process is not effective in all organizations. Cunningham et al. (2015) showed that the healthcare industry preferred strategic and coaching approaches to leadership over a democratic approach. Lojpur et al. (2015) showed that in substantial organizations, the democratic leadership style might not be as present as these organizations exhibit more control, rules, and procedures. Aside from organizations, Cunningham et al. (2015) also revealed that males tend to favor the democratic approach while women favored a strategic approach.

Cunningham et al. (2015) showed that there is a disadvantage to the democratic approach as it may take additional time for the leader to make their decision while leaders consider the input from his or her team members. Nagendra and Farooqui (2016) agreed with this approach as their work showed that not only does the democratic approach bog down the decision-making process, it also produces workable results that often require an enormous amount of effort. Nagendra and Farooqui (2016) also showed that due to the democratic leadership decentralized decision-making process, the chances for poor decision-making and weak execution increase as often, everybody involved has an equal stake and shared level of expertise. This decentralized decision-making process is the antithesis of an organizational leadership framework as it leaves strategy and action to the interpretation of the individual rather than the individuals leading through the synthesized approach interpreted by the organization. The shifting focus of leadership research from individualized to a collective unit cannot be about leaders leading leaders.

Autocratic Leadership. Lin et al. (2019) described autocratic leadership as decision-making entirely alone, by a singular leader. The environments in which the autocratic leadership

style appears varied across leadership. Venter and Farrington (2016) showed that the autocratic leadership environment often appears in small business environments like the family-owned business where the business is still within the first generation. Venter and Farrington (2016) also revealed that this is not the preferred style of leadership within that type of business environment. In other environments, however, autocratic leadership is a more natural way of life. In a study by Truong and Hallinger's (2017) school leadership in Vietnam, three of their cases showed that principals used autocratic leadership to create both control and harmony in a culture or environment that tended to adopt naturally to this style. This is the environment that many educational institutions are moving away from in favor of a more distributed leadership process. Chishty-Mujahid (2016) showed that this leadership style is quite prevalent in any highly competitive area of business.

Research also reflects other positive attributes of autocratic leadership. Drouin et al. (2018) showed that the autocratic leadership style might be useful where a quick decision occurs, or a project is low risk. Bojadjiev et al. (2015) showed that the autocratic leadership style could be of value when a company is in the early stages of growth or experiencing a crisis. Loisel (2018) supported the view of this style in the face of a crisis stating that an autocratic leader may be most able to act decisively in that type of situation. A knowledgeable or experienced leader may best fill this role as Chishty-Mujahid (2016) showed that one could expect a well-informed autocratic leader to make decisions rapidly.

In continuing with the potential upside to autocratic leadership, some may prefer this type of leadership as it shifts all the responsibility and power to the leader. Harms et al. (2018) showed that the autocratic leader often takes complete responsibility for their employees. De Hoogh et al. (2015) showed that autocratic leadership could also benefit those who enjoy a

structured, orderly environment that provides direction and clarity. This statement is supported by Janićijević (2017), who revealed that the autocratic leaders control their environment through direct supervision. This example also seems to sometime be of benefit in situations or organizations, as McVicar (2015) stated that while research shows the style to be less creative, it also shows to be more productive.

The autocratic leadership style also faces much criticism. In research, the autocratic leader is focused on power and control to accomplish his or her objectives. Hentschel et al. (2018) revealed that autocratic leaders display behaviors that exhibit dominance and control. Janićijević (2017) stated that these types of leaders make all the decisions in the organization. Ritzenhöfer et al. (2019) showed that autocratic leaders control both decisions and direction of group goals. Fiaz et al. (2017) described the autocratic leader as placing more focus on performance and less focus on people.

Research reflects upon the many other negative consequences of the autocratic leadership style. De Hoogh et al. (2015) showed that one such negative consequence of autocratic leadership is that it limits decision-making for subordinates, which can leave them feeling undervalued or mistreated, resulting in negative team performance. This theme continued in the research by Lin et al. (2019), which showed that the autocratic leadership style lessens motivation, purpose, and value of an employee who can be left feeling treated and evaluated unfairly. Harms et al. (2018) showed that the autocratic leadership style is often associated with failure, with the leader often making all the decisions and expecting unquestioning obedience of their employees. Autocratic leadership is the perfect example of siloed leadership in which those under the autocratic leader experiences that leader's sole interpretation of the organization

direction which lacks coordination and collaboration with all working parts of the organization that would be found in an organizational leadership framework.

Laissez-Faire Leadership. The laissez-faire leadership style in the research reflected a hands-off approach. Zareen et al. (2015) also showed that this type of leader provides complete freedom to their employees but at the cost of them having no guidance from their leader. Bambale et al. (2017) showed that the autonomy of a laissez-faire leader provides leads to increased job satisfaction and productivity. Rao-Nicholson et al. (2016) showed that autonomy could improve through this leadership style. Zaman et al. (2017) continued that the perceived freedom and autonomy from this type of leadership style also creates in the employee mind an understanding of improved independent decision-making.

Another positive outlook is that the leader knowingly and purposefully selects the laissez-faire leadership style. In this scenario, this type of leader is allowing employees to make the most of their business decisions as they believe they excel most when they are left alone to address their work obligations in their way (AAPL Staff, 2019). The research of Uzunsaf Yamak and Zihni Eyüpoğlu (2018) showed that the laissez-faire leader has trust and belief in his or her staff. Some employees may welcome this trust. Zaman et al. (2017) showed that in the laissez-faire environment might even form better relationships with other employees.

The laissez-faire leader may, along with their employees, strengthen their organization. Zaman et al. (2017) stated that while this leadership style may not be appropriate in an organization that must track employee's goals and activities for success, the laissez-faire approach may work well in an educational or academic setting. In a study of school principals by Buzdar and Fatima (2018), the researchers showed that while principals with a laissez-faire approach have a low level of rational thinking, they score high when it comes to experiential

thinking. These leaders are often known to be flexible. Fiaz et al. (2017) showed that the laissez-faire leader is accessible and works with any structure without any suggestions or criticism. Uzunsaf Yamak and Zihni Eyüpoğlu (2018) showed that this leadership style works best in collectivistic cultures such as Islamic, Turkish Cypriots, and Turkish national cultures.

Some do not recognize the laissez-faire leadership style as leadership, while others recognize it as lacking leadership. George et al. (2017) recognized the fact that some may not recognize laissez-faire to be leadership. Bligh et al. (2018) best-described laissez-faire as the absence of leadership. This feeling of absence may stem from what it is the laissez-faire leader does not do for its employees. Buzdar and Fatima (2018) stated that the laissez-faire leader avoids making decisions and providing direction to his or her employees. Zareen et al. (2015) showed that the laissez-faire leader would delegate all decision-making to his or her followers in a manner that is incomplete disregard to their supervisory duties. DeLotell and Cates (2016) used the word “indifferent” to describe the laissez-faire leader.

Based on research, the laissez-faire leader does not often bring about positive results within their organization. Bligh et al. (2018) showed that the laissez-faire leadership style has adverse effects on employee learning and would be detrimental to any organization that would rely on continuous learning as part of remaining competitive. Aside from employee learning, Kanwal et al. (2019) revealed that a laissez-faire leadership environment is known to create feelings of stress and isolation amongst employees in the work environment. George et al. (2017) showed that through the laissez-faire leader’s avoidance also brings about high levels of burn out amongst employees. This isolation and burn out may cause loyalty issues with employees and their organization. DeLotell and Cates (2016) showed that the laissez-faire approach is not known to drive organizational commitment from its employees.

Research shows that there are many adverse effects on employees when exposed to a laissez-faire leadership environment. Kanwal et al. (2019) also showed that this type of leadership approach is known to create ambiguity amongst employees. This ambiguity may stem from what Imhangbe et al. (2019) showed in their research that the laissez-faire leadership style offers no attempt to motivate or recognize the needs of employees while also creating delays in the decision-making process. Failing to recognize the needs of employees can bring about many opportunities. van Prooijen and de Vries (2016) showed that the laissez-faire environment could create insecurities and even thoughts of conspiracy theories amongst employees that their leader is part of a larger secret plan of the organization, designed to do them wrong. Ågotnes et al. (2018) showed that the laissez-faire leadership environment is also known as a facilitator in workplace conflict and bullying. Ågotnes et al. (2018) also showed that the laissez-faire leader might be viewed as a form of passive-aggressive when leading, which causes emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction. The laissez-faire leadership approach may be the most dangerous of all in current business environments as it creates isolation and ambiguity in an environment where this research has shown these environments are already full of isolation and ambiguity at an organizational level. With an organizational leadership strategy formed through an organizational leadership framework ambiguity can be avoided.

Strategic Leadership. The research revealed that strategic leadership is for the few, those in top management, like the chief executive officer of an organization. Meuser et al. (2016) described strategic leadership as a leader's ability to anticipate and think strategy while working with others to create change. Meuser et al. (2016) continued that strategic leadership is often found in top management levels or leaders of the organization rather than leaders in the organization. In support of this view, leaders of an organization, Georgakakis et al. (2017)

showed that the chief executive officer is the most central strategic leader with the ability to form both the leadership team and their behavioral processes. This set up may not be the case in all situations. Simsek et al. (2015) supported the view of the chief executive officer as the central strategic leader in large firms but offered that this view may differ in new emerging firms with fewer hierarchical levels and more substantial entrepreneurial presence.

Strategic leadership takes a more global view or approach to leadership. Shao (2019) described strategic leadership theory as forming a future vision and communicating it to employees in a stimulating, motivating, and supportive fashion. This process is not an easy task, as Keeton (2018) showed that strategic leadership is challenging as it requires motivation through a tangible vision grounded in values from the organizational culture. Keeton (2018) went on to show that this task is difficult for the strategic leader to accomplish as they are more separated from the workforce and therefore need to be influential to remove the risk of being untrustworthy or disruptive to the workforce. Strategic leadership and the strategic leaders of an organization could use an organizational leadership framework, created from the vision, mission, and values of the organization, as a tool to proactively create a culture and align strategic leaders all driving the same principles throughout the organization.

Top leaders in an organization who practice strategic leadership, such as the CEO, take on a great deal of responsibility. Shao (2019) showed that strategic leadership theory reflects that the top manager's demographics and leadership are essential in strategy formation and implementation. Tang et al. (2016) cautioned that due to the centrality of the chief executive officer in strategic leadership, there should be an awareness of risk-taking due to overconfidence of the individual filling that role, especially those who serve as founding chief executive officer. Campos-García and Zúñiga-Vicente (2019) showed that strategic leadership perspectives could

cause leaders to be negatively perceived by an employee due to more passive and less participative attitudes. However, research reflected that this risk should be low as Birasnav and Bienstock (2019) stated that they consider both transformational and transactional leadership as characteristics of strategic leadership. Birasnav and Bienstock (2019) showed that the promotion of a trust climate in transformational leaders and the promotion of motivation in transactional leaders work well in serving the strategic leadership role. These top strategic leaders are key to the formation of an organizational leadership strategy through the organizational leadership framework.

Transformational Leadership. The transformational leadership style has a plethora of literature within the research community. Majeed et al. (2019) revealed that transformational leadership had become the highest form or research in literature. Ei Toufaili (2018) showed that transformational leadership to be first introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 through his research on political leaders. Ei Toufaili (2018) continued that this original work showed transformational leaders see an objective, discover the motivation of subordinates, and desires to meet those needs, which creates a mutual relationship where those subordinates turn into leaders, and the leaders turn into moral agents. Alqatawenh (2018) showed that the transformational leader practices four components of leadership: influence to increase loyalty, inspiration to create a vision, intellectual stimulation to create innovation, and empowerment to create authority. Expanding further upon these four components, Ohunakin et al. (2019) showed that the transformational leader embraces idealized influence through high moral standards, inspirational motivation through communicating an exciting vision of the future, individualized considerations through encouraging creative thinking beyond the status quo, and intellectual stimulation through considering their employee's ability, needs, and aspirations

The first of the four components practiced by a transformational leader is using influence to increase a follower's loyalty. Kammerhoff et al. (2019) supported this when it showed that transformational leadership helped drive commitment in an organization. Commitment can arise through the spirit of the workplace. Majeed et al. (2019) showed that transformational leadership could increase spirit in the workplace when partnered with emotional intelligence. The second component practiced by a transformational leader is using inspiration to create a compelling vision of the future. A compelling vision can increase motivation and drive results within an organization. Ghani et al. (2018) described transformational leadership as a future-oriented approach where leaders motivate employees to achieve organizational goals beyond expectations. This environment may arise through the leader-follower connection. Long et al. (2016) showed that transformational leadership enhances emotional ties between leaders and followers. Furthermore, Ahmad and Saad (2020) showed that the transformational leader could touch the hearts of their employees.

The third component practiced by a transformational leader is intellectual stimulation to increase creativity and innovation within an organization. Afsar et al. (2019) stated that transformational leadership improves employee adaptability and innovation. Ali et al. (2019) stated that a transformational leadership style is a practical approach in which leaders create positive change among their followers and acting in the interest of the group. Nging and Yazdanifard (2015) supported this when it showed that the transformational leadership style is essential to the implementation of successful change. Aponte (2018) showed that the transformational leader shows up well in both times of change and times of distress. The fourth and final component practiced by a transformational leader is using empowerment to create authority. Alqatawenh (2018) showed that transformational leadership has a positive influence on

workplace empowerment and job satisfaction. This information reflects that leader should understand empowerment's connection to job satisfaction. Another approach to empowerment is autonomy. Ahmad et al. (2017) showed that transformational leaders provide employees autonomy to improve their performance and overcome problems encountered in routine activities. Long et al. (2016) showed that transformational leaders provide employees a way to critically thinking.

The transformational leadership approach offers applications in a variety of leadership and organizational settings. Ohunakin et al. (2019) showed that the transformational approach is the most prevalent for understanding both individuals, groups, and organizational effectiveness within an organization. Ali et al. (2019) stated that the transformational leadership style offers leaders in the settings of higher education a greater chance of success in facing the challenges and complications of the modern world. According to Ahmad and Saad (2020), transformational leaders can better fill highly demanding roles within an organization. Supporting this statement, Curtis et al. (2017) showed that the transformational leader is high in rational thinking and behavioral coping. Based on research, females do this better. Ghani et al. (2018) revealed that due in part to its interactive style, female leaders prove to be better equipped to utilize the transformational leadership style. Hentschel et al. (2018) showed that because women do everything right in transformational leadership and men had lower expectations of the behaviors involved, when they did exhibit strong transformational leadership, they were more likely to be promoted for it over women.

While highly regarded, transformational leadership is not without its opportunities. Almandeel (2017) showed that employees who are high in neuroticism, those who may have high anxiety, depression, will not respond well to transformational leadership. Supporting this

statement, Curtis et al. (2017) showed that there is not much correlation between transformational leadership and emotional coping. Kassotaki (2019) showed that transformational leadership is not as impactful for short-term results but is better at effecting performance over more extended periods. There are a few more areas as well, where transformational leadership has not been effective. Tintoré (2019) showed the criticism of transformational leadership as charismatic. Mozammel and Haan (2016) showed in their study of transformational leadership's impact on the banking sector in Bangladesh that transformational leadership does not affect or ensure employee engagement. The transformational leader begins with an objective to create influence, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and empowerment amongst followers yet not all transformational leaders may interpret or have equally effective perceptions of how the organization desires to achieve results.

Transactional Leadership. Transactional leadership seems to focus on action. Long et al. (2016) showed that transactional leadership is task-oriented rather than people-oriented. Zheng et al. (2019) showed that transactional leadership is two dimensional based on contingent rewards and management-by-exception. Ghani et al. (2018) showed that transactional leadership, which is also known as managerial leadership, places a focus on responsibility such as administration and group performance while rewarding performers and punishing failure. Hansen and Pihl-Thingvad (2019) referred to this approach as a focus on exchange-oriented behaviors. Within the two dimensions, many researchers went further in-depth regarding each. For example, exploring more of the reward side, Hansen and Pihl-Thingvad (2019) showed that transactional leadership focuses on the three dimensions of verbal rewards, material rewards, and contingent sanctions. In the management-by-exception side, Mgeni and Nayak (2016) showed that transactional leadership is a style in which the leaders set of behaviors focuses on

implementing strategy, improving hierarchical structure, rewarding performance, and correcting mistakes to increase organizational performance. Berraies and Zine El Abidine (2019) showed that transactional leadership foundation is on control and authority.

The transactional leader is focused. Zareen et al. (2015) reflected those transactional leaders focus on the characteristics of contingent rewards, active management by exception, and passive management by exception. Regarding contingent rewards, Saeed and Mughal (2019) described transactional leadership as a leader providing to an employee some benefit or reward for task completion. Explaining in a bit more detail, Garcia and Russo (2020) showed that transactional leaders attempt to engage employees through material rewards that cause those employees to repeat behaviors needed to receive rewards. In regards to management by exception, Kark et al. (2018) showed that under active management by exception the leaders take counter-active actions when errors occur while monitoring behavior and under passive management by exception the leader only corrects action when he or she is made aware of the need.

Research shows there are many downsides to transactional leadership. Regarding the leaders themselves, Tintoré (2019) stated that transactional leaders focus on promoting their self-interests. DeLotell and Cates (2016) showed that transactional leaders are not successful in driving organizational commitment. This lack of commitment could stem from the fact that Kanwal et al. (2019) showed that the transactional leader does not pay attention to the emotional needs the employee, which sacrifices their well-being. Khan et al. (2018) showed that this leadership behavior does not allow for employees to engage beyond their roles or think critically about the organization and its goals.

Even though research shows that transactional leadership is reward focused for obtaining goals and objectives, Brahim et al. (2015) showed that with how transactional leaders lead, employees might tend to achieve the minimum expectations to achieve rewards and avoid penalties. Kark et al. (2018) showed that transactional leadership elicits a prevention focus rather than promotion focuses from their employees. Mgeni and Nayak (2016) showed that transactional leadership lacks innovation as it does not allow for flexibility within an organization.

Advantages abound though in research with transactional leadership. For example, the research by Skudienė et al. (2018) contradicted previous research and showed that transactional leadership has a positive effect on workplace innovation behavior. Skudienė et al. (2018) continued that it is the contingent reward focus that drives employees towards being an innovation to obtain such a reward. Garcia and Russo (2020) showed that transactional leadership is positively related to the impact it has on team performance. Zareen et al. (2015) showed that transactional leadership could have a substantial impact on employee motivation.

Transactional leadership can also do very well in specific settings. Ghani et al. (2018) showed that transactional leadership is more suited for the narrow focus of crisis management and dealing with issues in an organization. Vuković et al. (2018) showed that transactional leadership is suitable for both parties when short-term goals are the focus. Kassotaki (2019) showed that, at the time, top management would use transactional leadership due to constraints within the organization. Khan et al. (2018) showed that transactional leadership occurs when an organization is stable, and they are trying to maintain the status quo. When it comes to settings that employees need, Kassotaki (2019) also showed that in an organizational setting where employees demand secure communication, direction, and specified goals, the transactional

leadership style would do well. Berraies and Zine El Abidine (2019) also showed that the transactional leaders focus is strong in clarity, making sure that employees know expectations but at the loss of creative thinking. Again, this leadership style focuses on objectives where other leaders may not interpret or have equally effective perceptions of how the organization desires to achieve results.

Coach-Style Leadership. Not much research exists on the coach-style leadership approach. To find a decent amount of information, there is a need to dig back a little further in history. Berg and Karlsen (2016) described coaching leadership as the facilitation of an individual's learning and development to increase or maximize their performance. In the coach-style experience, Hicks and McCracken (2013) stated that the approach is one that alters perceptions and behavioral patterns to increase effectiveness. Milner et al. (2018) reflected that this is accomplished using collaboration to increase the effectiveness of employees. Coaching-style leaders build collaboration through what Kasapoglu (2014) stated as creating dialogue that allows employees to determine their own long-term goals. Cunningham et al. (2015) supported this, showing that a coach helps to build self-awareness and confidence by asking probing questions and providing advice.

The coach-style leadership approach, as reflected by Harper (2012), is very influential and useful as it utilizes multiple leadership approaches to transform the leadership skills of others. This influence may come from what Milner et al. (2018) stated that the coach approach uses trust and respect to build empowerment that increases performance. Berg and Karlsen (2016) showed that this is a long-term approach with the end goal of building long-lasting personal strengths performance. This relationship work is not performed by only the leader. Kasapoglu (2014) stated that the coach-style leaders support the growth of employees by helping

them to identify and work in their areas of strengths and weaknesses. The employee, due in part to their involvement, is shown by Hicks and McCracken (2013) to change, which at the heart of the leadership approach, is more embraced by leaders who experience the collaborative process of coaching leadership.

There were many benefits shown to come from the coach-style leadership approach. Dello Russo et al. (2017) showed that coaching leaders are perceived as less manipulative when providing performance ratings. Dello Russo et al. (2017) also showed that coaching leaders pay close attention to the needs of their employees to build a more effective alliance. Grant et al. (2010) revealed that those who experienced coaching leadership were more likely to attain their goals. Grant et al. (2010) also suggested that this type of development has the potential to reach far beyond the corporate structure, affecting the well-being of society positively. The objective of an organizational leadership framework is to reduce current ambiguity in business for the coach-style leader creating a common behavioral compass in which to facilitate learning and growth.

Bureaucratic Leadership. Like coach-style leadership, bureaucratic leadership has a reduced presence in recent research. Researching the term results in work more towards the realm of politics. Cunningham et al. (2015) showed that the bureaucratic leader focuses on policies and procedures to lead their team, often in fear of failure or deviation from the organization's guidelines. Janićijević (2017) stated that the bureaucratic leaders and cultures occur in large, mature companies and public administrations. Nwibere (2013) stated that a bureaucratic leadership culture is one that values formality, rules, operating procedures, and a hierarchy. Nwibere (2013) went on to show that the bureaucratic culture is one that values stability and is not significant when it comes to organizational success. This stability is reflected by Bush (2014), who showed that bureaucratic leadership is one that limits flexibility, influence,

and decision-making, which stifles innovation and creativity. Mired in negativity, the limited recent research on the bureaucratic leadership approach suggested a movement away from it towards other leadership options.

Servant Leadership. In comparison to the leadership styles represented in this literature review, servant leadership by far had the largest selection of current research. Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2019) pointed to the origin of current research stemming from the work of Greenleaf's *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf (1977) pointed to the idea stemming from the reading of Hesse's *Journey to the East* as the inspiration for servant leadership. Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2019) showed that servant leadership, or at least influences of it, could be found in areas of studies from ancient monarchies to the Zhou Dynasty, Bedouin-Arab culture, and Confucius. Bavik (2020) pointed to the observation that servant leadership is often affiliated or associated with religious figures such as Jesus Christ, Mother Theresa, and Gandhi. This alignment reflects, at times, a contrary viewpoint. Locke (2019) suggested using caution in this affiliation of Jesus Christ and Christianity, for example, pointing to it as being potentially irresponsible and distracting to both Christianity and servant leadership theory.

The servant-leader starts differently than other leadership. Wang, Meng, et al. (2019) pointed to the servant leader as one who desired first to serve others and, through this desire, is aspired to lead. Greenleaf (1977) stated that a typical individual who prioritizes the role of leadership first, have a drive for power or acquisition of material possessions. Gandolfi and Stone (2018) pointed out that 10 characteristics make up a servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building of community. From these 10 characteristics, Heyler and Martin (2018) showed that a servant leader could be determined to be successful if their employees are

more likely to be those who have developed into their true potential, seeing their careers possibilities expand while becoming healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous.

Employees of servant leaders experience many benefits from the experience. A study by Wang, Yu, et al. (2019) showed that servant leadership has a positive effect on career skills, which promote an employee's career success. Wang, Yu, et al. (2019) showed that this success comes from the servant leader who fosters growth and development in employees while also positively influencing psychological and behavioral outcomes. Jaramillo et al. (2015) revealed that servant leadership leads to an employee-friendly work environment through its focus on the strengths of the individual over critical evaluation. Supporting this statement, Yang et al. (2019) showed that servant leaders encourage their employees while supporting them through empowerment and stimulating them to their full potential. In the research by McCune Stein and Ai Min (2019), the servant leader reflects an ability to treat their employees ethically. Liu (2019) showed that servant leadership often creates a safer emotional environment through acceptance, humility, and a focus on the employee's emotional well-being.

All of this focus from the servant leader on their employees provide great value and benefit to the employee's organization. Heyler and Martin (2018) showed that the strong servant leader could focus on the present while tying that to the broader context of the situation and its future, making the organization better because of their efforts. It should be noted that this research has reflected that the broader context in organizations are often mired in ambiguity. Kiker et al. (2019) showed that half of the companies of Fortunes "Best Places to Work" reveal regular practices around servant leadership. This could be attributed to the fact that servant leaders act as a bodyguard, reducing the stressors caused by organizational ambiguity which remains present. Rivkin et al. (2014) showed that servant leadership has a positive relationship

with employee's psychological health. Jaramillo et al. (2015) revealed that organizations with servant leadership also have collaborative environments that foster creativity and innovation. While servant leadership receives high marks in research it does not address the absence of opportunities with ambiguity and coordination of leaders at organizational level but rather seeks to serves those in the organizational environment.

Organizational Leadership Framework

Currently, there is no research literature which exists for the topic of an organizational leadership framework. This literature review attempted to lay out strengths and opportunity gaps of strategy, distributed leadership, and individual leadership approaches in business to support the organizational leadership framework definition. An organizational leadership framework is the synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behavioral efforts into universal guiding principles in which all facets of the business reference and follow to create more intelligent and coordinated magnetic like movements across the organization. The experience of distributed leadership in the field of education offers a glimpse of the possibilities with an organizational leadership framework. Pingping and Huang (2019) provided four approaches to building an effective distributed leadership environment. These four suggestions offer a solid foundation for the start of a leadership framework in educational institutions which Jones et al. (2012) reflected currently does not exist.

The organizational leadership framework foundation in research literature is found in distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is the expansion of leaders across an organization in which Latta (2019) described a collaborative, collective, and coordinated environment with a focus on integration. This describes the environment, but as Jones et al. (2012) reflected, there is no framework for effective leadership in environments like education where distributed

leadership is most practiced. The foundation of a created organizational leadership framework must be designed so that it embraces work with others, it belongs to the aggregate of the organization, and is the compass in which all movements are synchronized in business decisions.

The strategy section of this literature review revealed that strategy takes many different forms and approaches. Laeeque and Babar (2017) discussed the four-strategy areas of product, process, marketing, and organization. It showed that strategy spans time as Rentes et al. (2019) represented in discussing short, medium, long-term strategies. The vision, mission, and value statements guide leadership in the creation of strategy. The gap identified is that there are no strategies or framework around the concept of whole leadership, or leadership as a functional group, in organizations that bring about a more comprehensive understanding of executing the vision, mission, and values. The organizational leadership framework is not designed to replace what is currently offered in the vision, mission, and value strategies, but rather create a more coordinated effort amongst leadership in executing each statement. Pingping and Huang (2019) and Canterino et al. (2020) showed this is not the responsibility of one leader to form but rather leaders. Organizations benefit far more greatly from the collective approach leadership minds. Top strategist and organizational leaders are best suited to carry out this task as it should reflect the organizations desire in how the vision, mission, and values to be delivered or carried out.

Transition and Summary

The researcher in this first section informed the readers of the background, problem, and purpose of the study. This information included the opportunity to shift from an individual approach to leadership performance towards the more global approach of leadership as a collective unit in an organizational leadership framework. The conceptual framework showed how threading the learnings of leadership theory, strategies, and distributed leadership could

create organizational leadership frameworks customized to each organization that would create a more connected and collaborative approach to the business and its results. The literature review showed the approach to individual leadership and its focus on the development of self and a sampling of how that leadership creates and manages strategy. The learnings of distributed leadership show their learnings of the interconnectedness of leadership.

This literature review attempted to show that this chaos and lack of focus may be in part due to the silo that each strategy and leader lives in which is lacking coordinated efforts towards the organizations vision, mission, and values to how it would desire them to lead rather than the failure of individual leaders. Threading these learnings together showed there is a current gap in improving how leadership behaviors impact one another both inside and outside their sphere of influence to improve leadership performance. This gap, and solution focus, offers a direct relation to the field of leadership and reveals the possibility that leadership opportunity resolution is not necessarily a single leadership industry solution but specific to each organization. The results of this study assists in focusing the shift towards a more practical alternative in solving leadership opportunities for organizations. The next section of this research details information regarding data evolving around the study.

Section 2: The Project

Section 1 of this study was used to review the field of leadership and its current environment in business and research. While the field of leadership is rich in research at an individual leader level and strategies abound at the many processes and functional levels of an organization, the researcher proposed there is a gap in knowledge and literature regarding the purposeful coordination of leaders within an organization through a leadership strategy via the use of an organizational leadership framework. The organizational leadership framework is a synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behavioral efforts into universal guiding principles in which all facets of the business reference and follow to create more intelligent and coordinated magnetic like movements across the organization. MacLeod (2016) stated that in business there is a need for a clear vision, purposeful mission, and guiding values that form a constitution by which everything in the organization is measured, yet few organizations are meaningful, motivating, and inspiring in stating their objectives. When these objectives are set, Thompson (2017) pointed out that members of an organization need to know how managers desire to achieve these objectives along the way and if those actions are matching the desires of the organization.

The objective of this research is to begin a shift in research from leadership as an individual experience to that of a collective experience guided by the organization and provided through a single universal approach, the organizational leadership framework. This organizational leadership strategy, the organizational leadership framework, is thus far not represented well in research. When it comes to research representing the collective leadership experience organizational culture seems to be the main subject research has to offer on the topic. Díaz-Soloaga (2019) cited a definition of organizational culture as a set of behavioral habits

generated by the people of a company that crystallize in basic assumptions. Omazić et al. (2020) stated that culture is a cause and consequence of behavior that determines the overall success of an organization while directing the decisions and behaviors of management and employees alike.

The research of the collective leadership experience through organizational culture presents a reactive group influenced by their environment where Belias and Koustelios (2015) showed the leaders ability to understand and adapt determines their effectiveness. The organizational leadership framework eliminates an assumptive and reactive environment through further clarification and communication of the organizations desired leadership approach. Like a constitution, the organizational leadership framework reflects how the organizations desires those they employ to lead within their roles. Within this study the first initiative in setting up the shift from an individual to collective leadership experience focus is to show through a single case study that leadership is indeed uncoordinated and lacking a consistent approach around how their organization desires them to lead to accomplish the organizational objectives in their role. This section provides procedural information regarding participants, data collection, data analysis, and other pertinent information on how the study is to be performed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to expand upon the leadership body of knowledge by exploring the lack of an organizational leadership framework in a business environment and its effect on leadership and business results. Current leadership knowledge, learning, and focus seem to be on the individual leader. Lahtero et al. (2019) stated in their study of distributed leadership in the educational industry that traditional leadership approaches are often leaving individuals feeling demotivated with a decreased sense of well-being and lacking meaningfulness. Kellerman (2016) stated that in the world of business leadership as an industry

needs to shift its learning through the shedding of its obsession with individual leaders and shifting to a focus of creating a systemic approach. This research focused on leadership within the retail industry. Retail is the second-largest employer industry in the United States (Duffin, 2020), and it is also the eighth largest industry representing 5.8% of the Gross Domestic Product (Shriever, 2020). The retail industry's impact on the field of leadership is significant, while the researcher also has a working knowledge and experience in the field. This study sought to explore this more significant problem by highlighting the individualized leadership approach within retail store leadership in the United States and reveal the need for a systemic approach to leading within an organization to improve leadership and organizational effectiveness.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher in a qualitative study plays a far different role compared to that of a quantitative study. Stake (2010) stated that the qualitative researcher is an instrument themselves in the qualitative study, often observing and even playing a subjective role in the study as they use their own experience for interpretation. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that an understanding of philosophy in qualitative research is essential as it reviews the philosophical assumptions that underlie qualitative research such as how we formulate our problem and research questions, how those assumptions root themselves within the scholarly community that we work, and how that causes the researcher to evaluate related research criteria for decision-making. Creswell (2014) stated that in qualitative research, the inquirer or researcher is involved in intensive experiences with participants that could create a range of issues, and therefore it is vital that researchers identify their biases, values, and personal background reflexively.

According to Creswell (2014), because the researcher is an instrument of the study themselves, external influences such as the researcher's educational institution, leadership

mentors, or research community and internal influences such as the researcher's personal, educational, and career experiences should be addressed. The researcher's experience with the study includes performing the role of store manager in a retail environment for organizations with a vision, mission, or value statement. The researcher has experienced both the presence and lack of a leadership framework in a retail environment. The work under a leadership framework is part of the inspiration for this study. The researcher has identified potential biases based on values and personal background and acknowledges that the inspiration from experience and mentorship of leaders helped identify this knowledge gap and inspiration for the study. Therefore, the researcher used university guidelines and scholarly text to help design and bind the case in a way that identified participants and interacted with them, their data, along with how it is handled in an ethical way which conforms to scientific research methods. It is important that in the study results the researcher reflected those results that are expected, unexpected, and unusual as suggested by Creswell (2014).

Participants

Creswell (2014) stated that the following ethical considerations need addressing before the beginning of a study: code of ethics for the researchers' professional institution, application to the institutional review board, retrieval of necessary permissions, selection of a site without vested interests, and negotiation for authorship of the publication. The educational institution of the researcher has precautions to ensure all ethical considerations are in place. Participants in the study needed to complete consent-to-participate forms. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), this form expresses the following: the right for the participant to withdraw, describes the purpose and procedures of the study including researcher as the author, protects the confidentiality of the study, expresses known risks to participants in the study, expected benefits to participants in the

study, and signature of both participant and researcher. No participant selection came from any organization where the researcher stood to benefit from the research.

Access of participants is randomized but specific to the selected organization due to its use of a leadership framework and follows the process outlined in the data collection section of this study. This is what Creswell (2014) referred to as purposefully selected participants as they help the researcher to best understand the problem and research questions. No contact with any participant occurred without prior approval of the Institutional Review Board. Contact of participants occurred via email rather than sources that track relationships or profile views such as the likes of social media. Potential participants were briefed on all aspects of the study for complete clarity and stressed to each participant is an option to withdraw at any time for any reason. As with all research, protecting the privacy and anonymity of the participants is an essential part of this process.

Research Method and Design

This qualitative case study sought to understand further the need for an organizational leadership framework that sets forth principles, a compass, or the constitution of leadership behaviors that is a synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behavioral efforts to create more magnetic leadership movements that shift the focus of research from leadership as an individual approach to that of a collective unit. This study aimed to create a foundation for future work in the organizational leadership framework by seeking to show that each leader of an organization takes a different uncoordinated approach to achieving the vision, mission, or values of an organization that is formed through their own understanding of their individual leadership experience. The creation of an organizational leadership framework is to change the current business environment approach to leadership and the culture or environment

it creates from reactive to proactive. This section discusses the selection of a qualitative method and digs further into the design's choice of a case study.

Method

The method of this research study is qualitative. Creswell (2014) stated that the qualitative research design lends itself to a social constructivist world view where people desire to understand where they live and work. Creswell and Poth (2018) described qualitative research as a problem that needs exploring within a group or population in which identifiable variables cannot easily measure and has a strong desire to understand the context of the participants. This study sought to understand if leaders are indeed coordinated in their efforts to achieve an organization's, vision, mission, or values under a leadership framework is the objective. Such a behavioral focus makes selection and measuring of a variable challenging. The study sought to understand the context and construct of the participants. Stake (2010) stated that from a qualitative study, the reader gets a better sense of experience in a complicated situation. This description further aligns the study's objective with the selected qualitative method as it sought to study the experience of leaders within a retail industry setting and the complexity in how the individuals, groups, and organizations interact.

Design

This study is designed as a single case study. Creswell (2014) stated that case studies can be found in many fields and are used to evaluate programs, events, activities, or processes of one or more participants. Case studies are useful in a variety of settings. Yin (2014) stated that case studies are popular in the study of business and arise out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Understanding the dynamics of leaders without a common approach to how the organization desires its members to achieve their vision, mission, or values is one such

example. Creswell and Poth (2018) described the case study as a qualitative approach where researchers study and explore real-life bounded systems over a period through the data collection of multiple sources.

Yin (2014) described a case study as one of the most challenging avenues in social science with the researcher's goal to fairly collect, present, and analyze data. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the objective of a quality instrumental case study is to present an in-depth understanding of the problem through multiple sources. This being a single case study design allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the organizational leadership framework. This case and its objectives align with Yin's (2014) first rationale of a critical case design in that it wished to contribute significant knowledge and theory building by attempting to shape and shift future research in the field of leadership. As this case examined the global nature of an organization's leadership it has what Yin (2014) referred to as a holistic design with both its strengths and opportunities found in the nature of the case itself. With the single case design the researcher can reach a greater percentage of the leaders in a single organization providing more depth, understanding, and saturation. The design of this research as a single case focused on using multiple units of analysis through interviews at different levels of overall store leadership beginning with the store manager and ending with the district manager. Yin (2014) described the use of multiple units of analysis as seeking to repeat the data produced to predict similar or contrasting results. This description aligned with how the case is bound along with its population and sampling. Through data saturation and ethical collection and analysis of the data collected the researcher presented a well-rounded set of research results which reflect expected, unexpected, and unusual results (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sampling

The population selected for this study were retail store managers along with their overall store leaders identified as district managers. The store manager respective leaders included those who are solely responsible for the leadership of store managers and the store functional unit who have no subordinates responsible for other areas or functional units of the business such as corporate office or distribution center roles. The selected retail store manager group and their respective leaders are a part of a retail organization in the United States which practiced a form of an organizational leadership framework in communicating the direction of an organizational objective. This research anticipated that store managers would provide coordinated approaches, experiences, perspectives, and interpretations towards accomplishing the overall objectives of an organization while each leadership level closer to the top of the leadership hierarchy would align more closely to one another and the overall organizational objectives.

The National Retail Federation (2020) stated that the retail industry supports forty-two million American jobs while directly employing 29 million people. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the number of front-line supervisors leading this work force is 1,171,900. Statista (2020) showed that these employees worked across 442,597 different brick-and-mortar locations across the United States which would also equate to the equal amount of store managers within the United States.

For this study, the researcher limited the selection of a retail organization to those based in the United States with a store count between 100 and 500 brick-and-mortar retail locations that were identifiable in practice a form of a vision, mission, or value statements, and offered a form of the leadership framework. While no statistics were readily available the researchers 23 years of experience in the retail industry contained knowledge that this count would provide the

organization with at least two district managers at the upper level of leadership while allowing for a manageable purposeful sample size that also provided room for a maximum variation approach. At the higher echelon of management, the sample size would be less, increasing in size at the store manager role where the sample size expected to hit saturation of new response at approximately no more than 10 to 15% of the store manager population after the purposeful and randomized candidate selection process. Creswell (2014) described saturation as data which no longer reveals new insights.

Yin (2014) stated that in sampling within a case study the size will never be adequate to represent the larger population and that the case, rather than being a sample itself, is meant to instead shed empirical light about a theoretical concept. However, Gill (2020) stated that the selection of an appropriate sampling process will enhance the rigor of a qualitative study. With the list of qualified retailers containing potential participants for the study, the researcher then initiated contact with organizations explaining the study and requesting permission to interview participants. Once permission was obtained from an organization, participants were selected at random across the organization by the researcher using their available email list that represent different geographical locations throughout the United States. After a comprehensive explanation of the study and upon showing interest in participation, two qualifying questions were asked of potential store manager and district manager interview candidates.

The first qualification required the candidate be able to acknowledge awareness of and familiarity with or access to the organization objective and vision, mission, or values and leadership framework. This verification of the participants ability to identify the organizational objectives and ensures they can provide insightful responses to the interview questions. The second qualification required the participant to be with their organization and in their role for a

minimum of one year. The selection of store managers and their respective leaders due to their experience and place within the organization is an example of what Creswell and Poth (2018) described as purposeful sampling or selecting of participants that inform the understanding of the research's problem or central phenomenon. Steffens et al. (2014) stated that individuals display higher level of performance as their tenure increases at an organization. One year allows the participants' the experience of all seasons of the retailer along with at least one formal feedback process. This provides the candidates both experience and confidence in their ability to answer the interview questions.

Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that case studies prefer unusual cases with maximum variation. The population and sampling of this research provided such variation. Farrugia (2019) stated that maximum variation involves the recruitment of study participants who vary widely on dimensions of interest while identifying themes that hold true across a diverse sample. The population of store manager and district manager candidates is vast in its selection while the sampling process gives confidence to variation.

The selection of store managers as a base for this study along with their respective leaders is due to the complexity and boundary spanning reaches of their role. Loi et al. (2018) stated that the role of the store manager is complex with the individual applying a broad set of skills to act as if they were entrepreneur's running their own business. Nuvolari et al. (2018) stated that the entrepreneur and his or her journey is complex in activities which involve a wide array of talents, skills, and abilities with varying outcomes. However, while store managers may act as entrepreneurs running their individual stores, they are doing so to fulfill the objectives or vision, mission, and values of an organization.

Making the challenge even more complex is their position as middle management. Leavitt (2005) discussed that even as organizations attempt to flatten their structure, hierarchy remains leaving middle managers as being expected to both humanize and inspire while also systemizing their people to tighten controls and speed up operations. Leavitt (2005) continued that the modern middle manager-leader should investigate and develop themselves to become savvy about the power and politics of their organization. Store managers as middle management are left to navigate the world of the organization above their role to better guide those whom they lead.

Arnold et al. (2019) stated that store managers play a critical role in linking top management and retail employees while being vital in the fulfillment of corporate strategy in the store environment. The role of a store manager in a retail environment is essential in the execution and achievement of the company's vision, mission, or value strategies. However, as acting entrepreneurs, each store manager may have their own values and perspectives that are different from the organization which influence the decisions and strategy they chose for their location which directly affects their business and those employed at the location. For example, Vieira et al. (2018) showed that salespeople encounter different types of leadership behaviors through leaders who project their beliefs. This reflects the suggestion that without an organizational leadership framework stating desired behaviors and approaches to reach their objectives, store managers may be providing an aimless uncoordinated approach in achieving those objectives. Hughes and Denison (2019) stated that the future of leadership needs to be an interaction or process rather than a person. This study sought to provide a path forward towards that purpose through revealing the need for an organizational leadership framework or strategy.

Yin (2014) stated that when a single case design is selected more insight should be provided as to why a single case design is selected. This research sought to be the foundation for a shift in future research from the individual leadership focus to leadership as a collective process through an organizational leadership framework. A group of store and district manager candidates from a single organization will provide greater depth and variation regarding their collective experience at various organizational levels and reveal greater insights with a more expansive participant count that obtains a higher ratio of the participant population to better reach saturation. This in-depth analysis of the research theory at different roles within an organization is an example of what Farrugia (2019) stated as an exploration of various aspects to increase confidence in study findings through replication. However, this study fully expected and anticipated the need for future research and simply sought to serve as a foundation for future research that will include steps such as a multiple case study of the same design and studies that implement and lack an organizational leadership framework.

Data Collection

Stake (2010) stated that qualitative research is also known as interpretive research as it relies on the observers to interpret and reinterpret meanings of the observations. The researcher leads in this interpretation as they are conducting the research. The researcher in qualitative research designs the study, collects the data, and analysis the results. Stake (2010) stated that the most valuable instrument in qualitative research is the researcher. Creswell and Poth (2018) pointed out that in qualitative research, the researcher often creates the instrument itself, such as an interview, rather than relying on the interview tools of another research. This case study and its data arrived through the interviewing process. Interviewing is an essential process for clarification and understanding of individuals and their environment. Stake (2010) stated that

interviews obtain information held by the person, collect numerical aggregation of information from many persons, and find out about a thing the researcher is unable to view themselves through probing questions. Creswell and Poth (2018) described interviewing as a social interaction where knowledge gets constructed in an interactive attempt to understand the world from the subject's point of view. This point of view is difficult to capture via other avenues.

The data collection used in this qualitative case study is an interview guide. With a retail organization within the United States identified, the researcher used qualifying questions to determine participants for the process of being interviewed for the study. The researcher in this case study designed open-ended probing interview questions to uncover information central to the two research questions of the case study. Within the interview guide questions designed around a leader's decision-making in how they approach their role as a leader represent the first central research question, how leaders approach the vision, mission, or values of an organization. This represented the first central research question. Within these questions the researcher expected lower variance and some alignment in an environment with an organizational leadership framework simply due to nature of the work and routines found in having the same metrics and goals tracked. These questions expected to find alignment due to design of the role or job description.

Follow-up questions are important to a study and need to be carefully planned. Yin (2014) stated to avoid the word why in follow-up questions as it creates defensiveness in the interviewee, instead use of the word how should be used to create more friendly and nonthreatening questions. Follow-up questions for this case study were designed as such to avoid defensiveness and reveal further information central to the two research questions of the case study. Within the interview guide questions designed around the participant's interpretation of

how, or the prioritization and arrival of their approach, represented the second central research question, how does the presence of an organizational leadership framework affect the leader's approach towards accomplishing the vision, mission, or values. Within these questions the researcher expected little variance with alignment in an environment with an organizational leadership framework as there may still be interpretation opportunities from leaders of the organization in how they are desired to lead.

Creswell (2014) stated that it is the researcher who makes the interpretations of the statistical results through interpreting themes and patterns which emerge in the data. This process makes the researcher an instrument of the study conducted in qualitative research. These interviews were recorded and transcribed to code and interpret the data retrieved from the participants. Creswell (2014) stated that interviewing explores a process and recommends note-taking during the interview process in the case of equipment failure. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that these notes also help the researcher organize thoughts during the interview process, such as how to organize the data and its themes.

The interview guide itself conformed to the recommendation of Creswell (2014) who stated that procedures for interview protocol include the following: heading, instructions for the interviewer, questions along with probing for those questions, space to record responses, a thank you statement, space for logs along with comments on reliability and validity. These transcriptions will be kept on the researcher's hard drive and labeled by the position and interviewee number so that not disclose the possible identity of any participant. In coding the data, each level of leadership will be labeled as follows: SM for Store Manager and DM for District Manager. The set up for this case study labeled the participants at the store manager level

as SM(1), SM(2), SM(3), and so on while the store managers leader were labeled DM(1), DM(2), and so on to identify the different levels of leadership.

The coding method within each case used a pattern matching technique. Yin (2014) described the pattern matching technique as desirable in pattern-matching logic as it compares an empirically based pattern, one based on findings from the case study with the predicted ones before data are collected. Within this case each level of leadership remained separate from one another in data analysis to provide more depth in the study by allowing the researcher to analyze the data at increasing levels of the organization. The research design provided the researcher data regarding the experience at different levels to determine if alignment and coordination strengthened or weakened up and down the leadership hierarchy. While a single case study, the multi-level leadership approach allows for a form of cross-case synthesis to be applied which Yin (2014) described as making results stronger and more robust due to aggregated findings across a series of studies.

Data Analysis

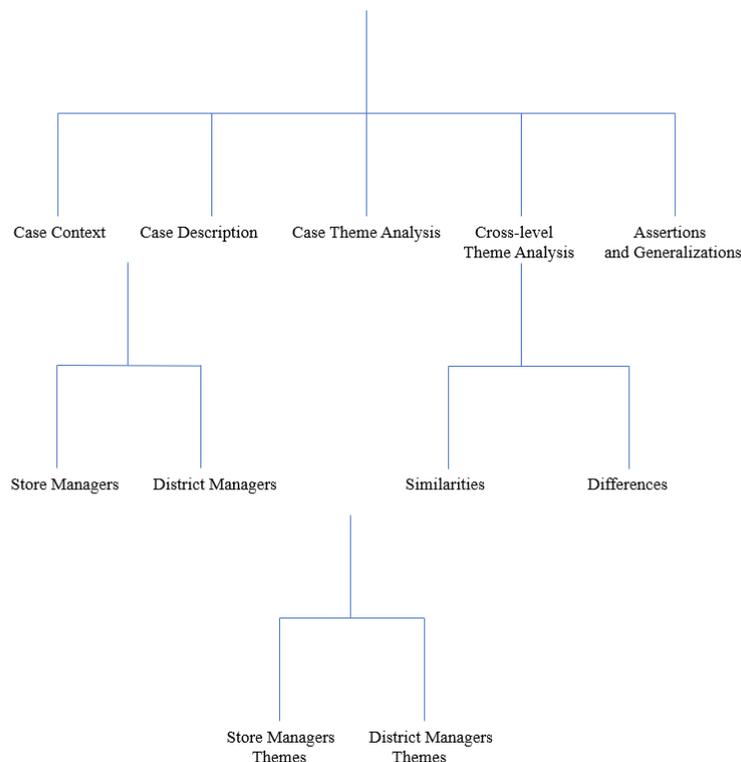
Yin (2014) stated that there must be caution taken in the analysis of data so that questions of the case study remain the unit of analysis while the unit of data collection remain at a separate and different level. This specific case study focused on the presence of a corporate strategy around leadership, named in this study as an organizational leadership framework. Thompson (2017) stated that while the purpose of an organization explains why they exist, and the mission and vision explains where they are going, organizations need clear direction to explain how they desire to their members to behave or achieve the objectives along the way. The data analysis focused on the decision-making of leaders with an organizational leadership framework. The research sought to discover if the presence of an organizational leadership framework led to a

coordinated approach amongst leaders towards the organizational objectives where each leader interprets and aligns similarly in how to achieve the organizational objectives along with how the organization desires them to achieve the organizational objectives.

Stake (2010) stated that coding is the classification and sorting of all data sets according to the topics and themes relevant to the study. The coding for this case study used ATLAS.ti 9, a coding software that provides a workbench and tools for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of text. (ATLAS.ti, 2020). The coding process followed the table in Figure 2 provided through guidance by Creswell and Poth (2018). In a continuation of that guidance, the results discussed and disclosed, included the expected, unexpected, and unusual (or interesting) categories from coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

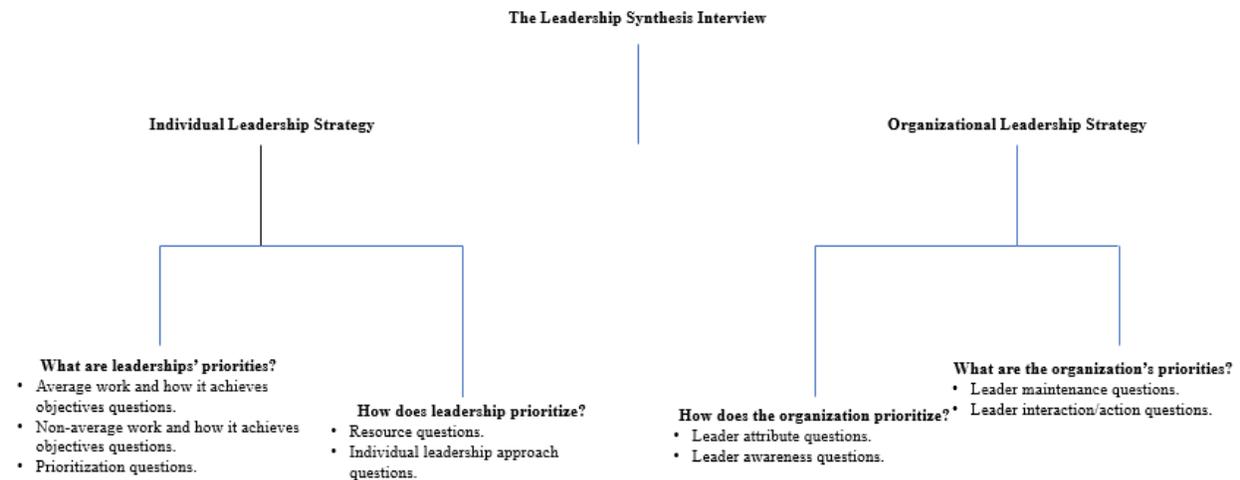
Figure 2

Coding Process



In coding the data, each level of leadership was labeled as follows: SM for Store Manager and DM for District Manager. Each participant represented their category with a number after the code as follows: SM1 and DM1. These levels each represented a specific data set within ATLAS.ti. Interview transcripts from interviewees provided data sources from the individual participants. Creswell (2014) stated that upon completing transcripts of the interview, they should be read for accuracy and organized to be coded for themes and descriptions to be interpreted and validated for accuracy. The interview transcripts were labeled with the participants' respective level and code that represented each leader's approach and perspective within their role.

Each question within the interview guide was placed in a category within the case. Category alignment can be viewed in Figure 3. The two categories align with the two central research questions: approach to accomplishing the objectives and effects of an organizational leadership framework. Each research question is set up as a subcategory respective to its category. ATLAS.ti was used to identify themes between the different categories and subcategories, or interview questions within a single interviewee and the others within that case. Once a single level was coded each level was then coded against one another to determine themes within the data of each so that triangulation through different samples could occur adding to the validity of the study.

Figure 3*Interview Guide Category Alignment***Qualitative Reliability and Validity**

Creswell (2014) stated that in qualitative studies, validity is the researcher checking for accuracy of findings through procedures. Yin (2014) stated that there are three forms of validity: Construct validity with an example tactic of using multiple sources of evidence, internal validity with an example tactic of pattern matching, and external validity with an example tactic of replication logic. With construct validity, one such approach is triangulation. Stake (2010) stated that triangulation is looking at evidence multiple times and through different vantage points. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that triangulation with different data sources and various emerging themes adds validity to the study. Within this case study, triangulation arrived through the setup of the case and its makeup with varying participation levels in the study. The setup of varying participation levels and a well-formed interview guide also aimed to address saturation. Creswell (2014) stated that saturation occurs when you stop collecting data as it no longer provides new insight or properties. Creswell and Poth (2018) continued that saturation occurs when the researcher no longer finds new information to understand a category. Another approach

used in this case study is member-checking, which Creswell (2014) described as affording participants of the study the ability to check for accuracy.

Within the same text, Creswell (2014) also described a detailed description, clarifying bias, and presenting negative information as forms of construct validity. This research makes every effort to provide detailed information regarding data regarding each level of the case and cross-level analysis in arriving at assertions and generalizations. It is important again to clarify any researcher bias for this case study. The researcher had many years of leadership in the environment and role of store manager within the case study. The researcher had worked in both environments with and without an organizational leadership framework. The researcher's experience, along with research on the field of leadership, believes that this study can address a significant opportunity to improve the field of leadership. This information is also why it will be essential to present all data findings, including those that run counter to this perspective or the themes of the study to present a more realistic and valid view.

In this case study, the researchers position that the presence of a clear strategy or framework around leadership created a construct that this leaves open the opportunity for individual perspectives while also maintaining an organizational perspective creating more alignment within leadership. This construct and its examination in the case study through the analysis of an organization which practices the use of a vision, mission, or values statement for the form of an overall company objective and how this is interpreted by its leadership address and align with the central research questions. With these constructs in place, Yin (2014) showed that the use of pattern matching, explanation building, addressing rival explanations, and the use of logic models proved a way to address internal validity. The theoretical proposition of this study lent itself to external validity. Yin (2014) showed that a case study must have analytical

generalization or to be generalizable beyond the immediate study regardless of method. The theory and constructs of the case study provided for this generalization. Yin (2014) pointed to replication logic in multiple case studies and while this was a single case study more depth is attempted through the search for replication in themes at the various position levels of the participants in the case.

Creswell (2014) stated that reliability in qualitative studies indicates that the researcher's approach to their work is consistent. Furthermore, Yin (2014) stated that reliability minimizes the bias and errors in a study by creating and documenting many operational steps so that the case study is repeatable for the same results. The researcher has created a case study design where replication can occur, and validation is achievable for reliability. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that reliability is possible through detailed notes and accurate transcription of interviews for coding. The researcher used notetaking during the interview process and transcribed interviews with the software program ATLAS.ti for accurate coding of all data.

Transition and Summary

This qualitative case study sought to address a gap in leadership knowledge through changing the focus on individual leadership to that of leadership as a collective system within an organization via the organizational leadership strategy of an organizational leadership framework. With no research literature on the topic the researcher sought to theorize that with an organizational leadership framework, leaders of an organization efforts to achieve the vision, mission, or values which reflect the main objectives of an organization, are often more coordinated and rather than left to the interpretation of the individual leader. This section discussed the research method, design, participants, along with the data collection and analysis.

These sections described the foundation of how the study was designed and performed by the researcher. The next section discusses the results of the data and findings participant interviews.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The researcher had multiple objectives in section three of this study, beginning with an overview of the study. This overview provided why the research is significant to leadership, procedures performed, and the relationship to the central research questions. In addition, provided is a presentation of the findings. The presentation of the findings included, themes discovered, interpretation of themes, representation and visualization of the data, relationship to the findings, and summary of the findings. Representation and visualization of the data breaks down results found around the two central research questions. Further data relating to the central research questions, conceptual framework, anticipated themes, literature, and the problem statement are in the relationship to the findings section. Next an application for professional practice offers further details on why and how the work is significant to leadership. Following this information are recommendations for actions from the study and further study suggestions. Finally, the section concludes with reflections of the researcher's experience and a summary of the study conclusions.

Overview of the Study

This qualitative case study's objective was to focus on the need for an organizational leadership framework that shifts the focus from the individual leadership experience to that of a collective unit. Kellerman (2016) stated that leadership as an industry needs reconceiving through shedding its obsession with individual leaders and shifting to a learning focus that creates a systemic approach to leadership. The organizational leadership framework aims to support such a leadership industry transition by offering a platform for future research and a resource in which organizations and leaders may leverage in the pursuit of a collective leadership environment. Leadership as both a role and industry continue to transform. Vecchiotti (2018)

showed that further back in the history of leadership, as more women entered the role of leadership, the definitions morphed from that of authority to one who recognized followers. Vecchiotti (2018) continued that leadership definitions transitioned after a new, younger generation emerged, which now places value in definitions such as collaboration, balance, and feedback.

These generational changes continue to evolve the workplace. Mahmoud et al. (2021) showed that the younger generation of employees are more intrinsically motivated. These individuals wish to have impact and have just as much potential of exhibiting leadership behaviors as their leaders, much like that of the teacher experience within distributed leadership of the educational industry. The role of leadership is both evolving and expanding, crossing both boundaries and functions. Anderson and Sun (2017) stated that with the extensive overlaps in leadership styles, there needs to be a shift away from the individual leader and towards a coordinated full-range integration leadership strategy.

However, the field of leadership remains focused on the relationship between followers and leaders, missing the opportunity to approach leadership as a functional unit or group of individuals. The lack of knowledge in research literature also identifies a gap in the practice of this leadership approach in the world of business where leadership is practiced. Cockerell (2018) stated that most organizations' chief executive officers, board members, and executives focus solely on creating business strategies around growth or innovation while failing to realize that they need a leadership strategy. The objective of the organizational leadership framework is to offer a solution or platform in leadership research and the business world to build an expanded leadership approach.

While no research currently exists in leadership around the organizational leadership framework or the collective unit experience, the study of distributed leadership in the educational system offered an ideal resource for this study. Jones and Harvey (2017) showed that as educational institutions experience a change in their industry, they have found a need to focus on leadership, which crosses boundaries, shares knowledge, and recognizes the need for shared responsibility and collaboration. The change the educational industry is experiencing in this area reflects the one suggested by the researcher and research literature in leadership. Bagwell (2019) stated that distributed leadership offers a way to rethink human capital through a new leadership perspective of multiple individuals at varying levels. Furthermore, Latta (2019) described distributed leadership as the movement away from the influence of single individuals towards a network of interacting individuals with a variety of expertise and unlimited boundaries distributed across many leaders.

This study aimed to take information in the research literature of leadership along with the research literature of distributed leadership expansion in educational settings, and thread that information through the learnings of the study. The learning and data gained from the approach of this study may then provide the foundation of an impactful shift from the focus on leadership as an individual experience to that of a collective group experience. The setting for the study involved a brick-and-mortar retailer within the United States that offered participants at both a store manager and district manager leadership role. Creswell (2014) stated that saturation occurs when you stop collecting data as it no longer provides new insight or properties. At the point of saturation, the study contained 12 participants. At the district manager role, two participants were referenced in this study: D1 and D2. Ten participants were referenced in this study at the store manager role: S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, and S10. This sample size represented

approximately 10% of the population of each role within the organization. Yin (2014) stated that in sampling within a case study, the size will never be adequate to represent the larger population and that the case, rather than being a sample itself, is meant to shed empirical light about a theoretical concept instead.

Each of the participants in the study participated in a nineteen-question interview. The interview guide, carefully crafted under the guidance of research theory, ensured the research's quality and a focus on the central research questions. According to Yin (2014), adequately worded interview questions focusing on the organization and multiple sources avoid the research becoming a survey to ensure the quality of research. The two central research questions sought to understand how leaders approach accomplishing their organization's objectives, such as those represented in the vision, mission, and values, and how the presence of an organizational leadership framework affects leadership's approach. The nineteen-question interview guide divided the analysis into two data sets, each with its respective subsets of data. Stake (2010) stated that triangulation is looking at evidence multiple times and through different vantage points. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that triangulation with different data sources and various emerging themes adds validity to the study. The two central research questions are analyzed through two data sets. The two data sets and their respective subsets were analyzed both across the participant's respective roles and one another's cross-functional roles along with the organization's leadership framework to obtain themes in the data.

Five themes were expected within this research for an organizational leadership framework, two within the first central research question and three within the second central research question. The two expected themes within the first central research question are that participants would align in their decision-making and prioritization and that the leadership

framework of the participating organization would be pointed to as the resource. The three expected themes of the second central research questions are that first participants would identify behavior traits of their leadership framework as how the participating organization views their success. The second is that participants would have a strong onboarding and development under the leadership framework. The third is that participants would identify the leadership framework as having a strong impact on how their leadership relates to one another as a functional group.

Here a priority is placed on alignment amongst the participants' answers within their respective roles to the interview question being asked. Based on the conceptual framework of this research an environment without a leadership framework expects individual leaders to form their own leadership interpretation and strategy to accomplish the overall mission, vision, or values. The presence of an organizational leadership framework offered a single common language in which all leaders collaboratively reference or use as a guide to accomplish the overall mission, vision, or values. The participating organization of this study contained a leadership framework so high alignment was expected throughout the study that directly relates back to the leadership framework.

Presentation of the Findings

This qualitative case study focused on two central research questions through the researcher's conceptual framework regarding an organizational leadership framework. The central research questions in this study aimed to understand the leaders' approach to their role and what affect an organizational leadership framework had on the leaders' approach. The selected organization's leadership framework provided the researcher detailed information of the employer's desired leadership behaviors or characteristics of the leaders within the participating organization. An interview guide, carefully crafted under the guide of qualitative research

literature by the researcher, obtained data from the participants that were central to the two research questions and conceptual framework of this study.

The participants' data and the participating organization's leadership framework obtained in this study were analyzed for themes at the store manager and the district manager role with each overall role theme results then compared to one another. This learning from the participants, their leadership framework, research literature on leadership, and research literature on distributed leadership, provided the researcher significant insight into the two central research questions of this study. The detailed results are presented in this portion of the study through the sections titled themes discovered, interpretations of the themes, representation and visualization of the findings, and relationship of the findings.

The selection of participants for the study came from a brick-and-mortar retail business that practiced a leadership framework within the United States and whom were at the store manager or district manager role and had been in position for at least one year. Retail store managers represent an important leadership role within their organizations. Arnold et al. (2019) stated that store managers are crucial to implementing corporate strategy in a retail environment and often find themselves facilitators in bridging various unconnected parties within an organization. Arnold et al. (2019) continued that with this being the case, there is a need to understand the boundary-spanning aspect of the store manager role from top management. This selection process fulfilled Creswell and Poth's (2018) description of purposeful sampling or selecting participants to understand the research's problem or central phenomenon. The participants' tenure of at least one year further supported the selection of these participants as Steffens et al. (2014) stated that individuals display a higher level of performance as their tenure increases at an organization. This ensured a presence regarding knowledge of role, a familiarity

with the participating organization's leadership framework and its execution within each participant.

The organization of the participants reflected its desire for a leadership framework to create guidelines or a shared global language in which to operate ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). This research defined an organizational leadership framework as a synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behavioral efforts into universal guiding principles that all facets of the business reference and follow to create more intelligent and coordinated magnetic-like movements across the organization. The selected organization's leadership framework and details, according to "The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership" (2018), is as follows:

Collaboration: 1) Establish clear shared goals, trust your players to know their roles, and stick to the game plan; 2) Provide transparency. Share your thinking and logic with others and involve them in decision-making; and 3) Build and nurture productive relationships, the backbone of every winning organization.

Confidence: 1) Act and lead with integrity by being true to yourself and your values; 2) Learning lasts a lifetime. Remember: Accepting you don't know the answer takes confidence; and 3) Set high expectations for yourself and the team. Recognize when targets are reached and when they are not and address the gaps.

Creativity: 1) Constantly seek the new by asking questions. Accept failure as part of the process; 2) Enable creativity by being present and engaging people in conversations beyond bullet points; and 3) Turn ideas into action by encouraging your team to embrace constraints and deeper into conversations.

Themes Discovered

The themes provided through data revealed both expected and unexpected results based upon the conceptual framework created by the researcher. The first central research question had two expected themes. The two expected themes within the first central research question are that first participants would align in their decision-making and prioritization, and second that the leadership framework of the participating organization would be pointed to as the resource. While leadership job descriptions create similar responsibilities across each role of the study individual interpretation of how to approach should also align with the presence of a leadership framework. The resulting theme supported this theory as a high degree of alignment occurred both with each role and across both functional roles. Leaders at the participating organization created a people-first culture that placed its top priority in regularly occurring conversations with those they are leading. The topics of these conversations uncovered the next priority of leaders, the personal and professional development experience of individuals. The development of self and others is a top priority for the leaders within this organization. Finally, it is viewed that these two priorities are supported through the administrative activities that kept both top of mind. This order of leadership decision-making and prioritization behaviors remained strong across both roles.

After this first theme, the remaining themes results were all unexpected. The second theme expected both roles to point towards the leadership framework as a resource that influenced decision-making and prioritization while also influencing the individual leadership approach. However, the data provided an unexpected theme amongst the participants that prior mentorships and leadership experiences were key to their decision-making and prioritization. The leadership framework of the organization had not been cited by participants as neither a

personal nor professional resource used in their decision-making or prioritization. The leadership framework seemed to create a culture on purpose that drove a united leadership and decision-making approach, yet the participants did not work it on purpose.

The second central research question had three expected themes that again, all contained unexpected results. The three expected themes of the second central research questions are that first participants would identify behavior traits of their leadership framework as how the participating organization views their success. The second is that participants would have a strong onboarding and development under the leadership framework. The third is that participants would identify the leadership framework as having a strong impact on how their leadership relates to one another as a functional group. The first unexpected theme result revealed participants again borrowed from prior mentorships and leadership experiences to determine the desired attributes of their organization and used future experiences with those whom they lead as determining factors on success of their leadership role.

The second unexpected theme result revealed that while most participants were introduced to the leadership framework, there were no formal processes in place as to how they were onboarded or developed within the use of the leadership framework. This lack of processes for the leadership framework may have created an atmosphere where the leadership framework of the participating organization is underutilized. Interestingly, in the third unexpected theme result, participants acknowledged the leadership framework as playing a role in the impact of their leadership impacting one another, but some acknowledged that the actions are not purposefully performed. It appeared that in this participating organization the leadership framework found itself as a useful but underutilized tool. The following sections provides a more detailed discussion of the themes and study results.

Interpretation of Themes

Alignment of the participants' answers to the interview questions expected to be high across all themes with all answers pointing to and reflecting the leadership framework as a guide in which all leaders leveraged for knowledge. In the first theme of the first central research question the researcher did expect some role conformity. Sembiring and Normi (2021) showed in their research tools such as job descriptions are used to ensure that activities get carried out following the role's responsibilities. Within an employee or participant's role, how the role is formed with resources such as job descriptions is assumed to have created alignment within the study. This possibility of conformity received attention through the researchers questioning which allowed for individualized interpretation of role priority with decision-making and prioritization. While there were multiple expected themes in the study, only this first theme of participant prioritization and decision-making aligned as expected by the researcher. The participants placed their priority in regular conversations with employees that prioritized personal and professional development of others while using administrative duties to keep these first two as top priorities. A people first culture is reflected in the interview answers.

The participating organization's leadership framework reflected the desire for a people first culture. Through collaboration, the organization placed a focus on building and nurturing relationships ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). Through confidence, the organization placed a focus on the values of a dedication to lifetime learning and making it okay to not know the answer ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). Finally, through creativity, the organization placed a focus on meaningful engagement with others ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). The resulting interview data reflected the organization achieved this people

first culture. However, a people first culture does not reflect the entirety of the participating organization's leadership framework.

It is important to recall that the participating organization reflected its desire for a leadership framework to create guidelines or a shared global language in which to operate ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). In collaboration while the participants seemed to focus on building nurturing relationships, the organization also focused on establishing clear shared goals, and providing transparency in thinking were also priorities ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). In confidence while the participants focused on lifetime learning, the organization also focused on setting high expectations along with acting with integrity were also priorities ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). Finally, in creativity while the participants focused on meaningful engagements, the organization also focused on asking questions and embracing constraints by turning ideas into actions were of importance ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). In addition to a people first theme, two additional themes of action around goals and detailed communication were also a priority in their leadership framework. These focuses did not seem to make a strong appearance in the data leaving a large portion of the participating organizations leadership framework unrealized or underrepresented. These unrepresented sections of the participating organization's leadership framework offer insight into the remaining unexpected theme results throughout the rest of the research.

The leadership framework created alignment around one of its common themes, people. However, in the second theme, participants did not point to the leadership framework as the resource for their actions and learning. In this study's first unexpected theme result, alignment formed through the participants citing of previous work environments and mentors or leaders rather the leadership framework of their organization. The data later reflected an

acknowledgement by participants that the leadership framework unconsciously has impact in their role with one another. Yet the present experience of leadership in the leadership framework is largely ignored by the participants. Warrick (2017) showed that in environments with organizational cultures, many leaders are unaware of the significant impact culture has on the individual. Deductive reasoning of the research analysis provided a scenario that the participating organization's leadership framework indeed played a role in the people culture alignment and those participants' future leadership versions of themselves may at that time down the road credit the leadership framework.

The remaining data in the study expected high alignment amongst participants that pointed all actions of the participants to the leadership framework of the participating organization. Again, while alignment occurred, it had not occurred around the leadership framework as expected. The third theme revealed that leaders referenced prior mentorships and leadership experiences as the determination of desired attributes for their role and that future experiences with those whom they lead or led are determinates for understanding if they are successful within their role. The fourth theme revealed that leaders did not experience a strong formal onboarding or development process to the leadership framework. Finally, in the fifth theme leaders acknowledged the impact of the leadership framework on one another yet reflected often it is not proactively worked but rather subconscious in nature. The overall themes of this case study reflected opportunities for more structure in the participating organization's leadership framework.

This alignment, in the lack of alignment amongst themes appeared related to the lack of structure around onboarding and ongoing development of the leadership framework found in the fourth theme. When it came to being introduced and developed in how to lead through the

leadership framework, participant offered similar but varying descriptions of their personal experiences with no reference to an organizational system, process, or set of tools. When it comes to onboarding, Chillakuri (2020) shared that effective onboarding programs quickly introduces employees to the organization's values allowing them to adjust to the organization's culture and social aspects of their role. When it comes to continued development, Serbes (2017) shared individuals become more familiar with goals through increased awareness of self and organizational mechanisms which ultimately increase both interactions and achievement of destinations. "The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership" (2018) of the participating organization reflected that in the leadership framework, leaders need buy-in for a shared vision in collaboration, confidence, and creativity. The lack of both onboarding and ongoing development to the participating organization's leadership framework most certainly created a void or possible lack of buy-in and most certainly contributed to lack of alignment with the leadership framework.

Participants were known to refer to the leadership framework as vague or complicated. For example, participant D1, when referencing the leadership framework, stated "It's very ambiguous in my opinion. I'm used to working where there are very clearly defined competencies" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021). Like the distributed leadership experience, the leadership framework is far different from that of a traditional leadership environment. Chitpin (2020) described the essence of distributed leadership as separating the practice of leadership from the position of leadership. This separation process requires a different approach to leadership. Kim et al. (2017) described working in a distributed leadership environment requiring a different skill set that is collective, integrated, and interdependent because of the cross-boundary change. Currently, participants referenced self-development as practice and

development under the leadership framework. This self-development approach reflects the confidence behaviors shared by Gameplan-a (“The 3 C’s Behind Great Leadership,” 2018).

However, self-development towards a leadership framework is not sustainable for neither employees nor the organization. For example, Profiroiu and Hurdubei (2018) showed that competency models are cascaded to employees through training, career development, and performance management so that they may contribute to the success of their organizations. Yet in this study the leadership framework is absent of such an approach. In the literature review section of this study, distributed leadership research reflected that alignment and clarity are essential in distributed leadership environment. A suggestion by Pingping and Huang (2019) is to standardize leadership through alignment of responsibility and role clarity. Participants in this study may experience more success within the leadership framework through a more formal, collaborative, and structured onboarding and development environment specific to the leadership framework provided by the participating organization.

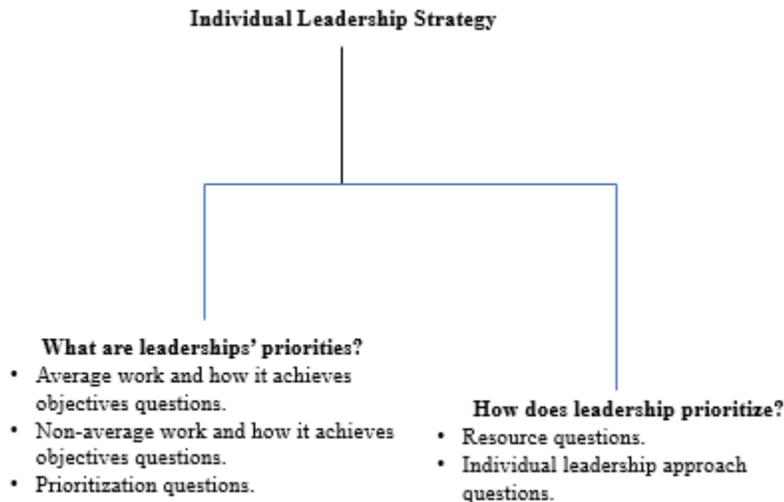
Additionally, the study left unexplored and unanswered questions around feedback directed towards the leadership framework. Park and Choi (2020) described feedback as providing clear communication of the organization’s expected goals and behaviors which improve both individual and organizational effectiveness. Participants focused on conversations with others as a priority, but the researcher did not explore frequency and formality of these conversations the leaders, participants of this study received themselves. Park and Choi (2020) showed that the more frequently performance feedback is provided the more an employee’s performance enhanced. This unexplored area of feedback culture leadership receives in the study left the researcher with unknown information that could have offered further explanation in the data analysis. Further information regarding data analysis is offered in the next section.

Representation and Visualization of the Data

The following sections represent a detailed analysis of the data. The data are presented with a logical flow that mirrors the central research questions of the study. First, central research question one is analyzed through its two themes. Next, central research question two is analyzed through its three themes. Each theme is formed through sets of interview questions. These interview questions are found in Appendix A of the study.

Research Question One Analysis

Research question one contained two data sets within the interview guide, each broken down at the store manager and district manager theme with both compared at a single level (Figure 4). The first data set included information regarding what are the leadership priorities within the participant's role (What are leaderships' priorities), including common and uncommon activities and the prioritization of these activities and represent the first two themes of the study relating to the first central research question of this study. The first theme of the study pertains to questions that are addressed through interview questions one, two, three, four, five, and six. The second theme of the study included information regarding how a leader approaches their role (How does leadership prioritize), including personal resources, organizational resources, and leadership style get addressed in questions seven, eight, nine, and ten.

Figure 4*Research Question One Data Set*

What Are Leaderships' Priorities? This section represents the first theme in the focus of the first central research question. Interview questions involving what leadership priorities are coded for three subsets of data that are comprised of six interview questions to arrive at its overarching theme. The first coded are interview questions one and two, which focused on most of the participants' leadership activities and why those activities are essential to their role and objectives in accomplishing the organization's mission, vision, or purpose. The second coded are interview questions three and four which focused on the remaining participants' leadership activities that were still important to business but not performed often. Those activities that do not occur often yet are still essential to their role and objectives in accomplishing the organization's mission, vision, or purpose.

The third coded are interview questions five and six which asked the participants to rank in order of importance and why the leadership activities were most vital to accomplishing their role and the organization's mission, vision, and purpose. These subsets of data received analysis across the individual SM and DM level roles; then, each level is compared to one another to

establish a final theme at a functional and cross-functional level. The interview data were then related to the organization's leadership framework philosophy and analyzed for the final theme to create a comprehensive understanding of the case study through multiple sources providing triangulation. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that triangulation with different data sources and various emerging themes adds validity to the study.

The first subset of data, interview questions one and two contained information about the most common activities of the role. The district manager-level participants focused the bulk of their leadership activities on conversations and activities needed to prepare for these conversations. Participant D2 referred to these conversations as "Touch bases" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021). While both participants at the DM level discussed it as essential to achieving the company goals, participant D2 stated, "Talent is at the root of everything we do" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021), which aligned with the answer of participant D1. Time planned for essential activities such as people and the teams played an essential part in the bulk of their everyday leadership roles.

Within the same first subset of data, the store manager level participants, like the district manager level participants, focused on conversations such as formal and informal coaching along with role modeling behaviors. Differing slightly were additional activities to make these actions better rather than prepping for the conversation, such as found at the district manager level. What did not vary is that both levels strongly felt that time planned for essential activities such as people and the team is an essential part of the bulk of their everyday leadership roles. Participant S3 stated, "My most important job is taking care of the internal employee" (Personal Interview, July 7, 2021). Participant S2 summed up the belief in this approach by stating, "When you invest

in your team, you are investing into your business as well" (Personal Interview, July 9, 2021).

The participants' data strongly showed that people are a top priority.

The second subset of data, interview questions three and four, contained information about the remaining role's activities that were uncommon yet still vital to the needs of the business. The district manager-level participants focused their remaining leadership activities on administrative activities. Participant D2 took a defensive approach describing the leader as often "The blocker that makes your team successful" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021), while participant D1 described offensive administrative activities such as working on new pay bands for staff. Both used these administrative activities as supporting individuals and teams. Participant D1 summed up this approach as the desire "To be the employer of choice" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021).

Within this subset of data, the store manager level participants focused their remaining leadership activities on administrative functions such as office activities like planning and scheduling. Participant S5 described this experience as setting a plan for the week and revising said plan daily. However, another strong theme emerged in role modeling or performing the role of the associate. Participant S6 described this as "Letting your associates see that you do just as much as them and you role model everything" (Personal Interview, August 28, 2021). The most robust reasoning behind this approach is building a stronger team through building bonds, trust, and morals. Participant S9 stated, "When I am doing it alongside my team, whatever the activity I am doing, it builds that mutual respect and bond for each other" (Personal Interview, August 24, 2021). The participants' data reflected that while these actions may be administrative in nature it is purely to support the people

The third and final subset of data, interview questions five and six, contained information about the priority or importance of the tasks in the first two sub themes. The district manager level participants focused on talent interactions in person and through regular electronic methods consistently as top priorities and the administrative duties to keep these a priority. Both candidates' first and second priorities were on and remote bases with their leadership teams, while the third priority is administratively supporting their talent pipeline. Both candidates again aligned that we affect the business through people and the quality of their lives. Participant D1 stated, "If we don't have the right people or any people we are in big trouble" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021). Participant D2 also reflected that in the work they do, "Someone's life could be changed forever" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021).

Within this final subset of data, the store managers again aligned. Nearly identically mirroring the rankings of the district managers, the store managers made touch bases and store walks/work for the people; their top two priorities with the third priority is administratively supporting their talent pipeline. At the district manager level, operational or administrative activities were selected as a base or foundation to support the essential activities of the development or training of people and ensure there is a proper plan to ensure the absolute best use of these people.

Participant S4, when discussing a portion of the operational activities, described it as being "That structure that can support you" (Personal Interview, July 12, 2021). The store manager level puts people in the most critical part of their role. While participant S10 reflected, "You have to have good people" (Personal Interview, August 27, 2021), participant S4 described having good people investing in or raising, like thinking, "About how your parents raised you" (Personal Interview, July 12, 2021). Participant S7 explored this concept a bit more through

demonstrating the store managers' second priority of development, stating that when coaching to behaviors, "They can change and develop in their role" (Personal Interview, July 28, 2021). The data in this subset reaffirmed the data of the first two with the alignment of participants in ranking the order of importance for the top three activities within their role. The priority being regular conversations with employees, followed by their personal and professional development, and finished with the administrative duties that keep these first two priorities top of mind.

In these three subsets of data regarding what are leaderships' priorities, alignment remained prevalent for participants across the same functional role and role hierarchy from store managers to district managers. The data placement may have varied slightly; however, a strong theme appeared across the two roles. People and a connection to said people were a top priority. While a personal connection seemed necessary, professional development through coaching and training received emphasis. Communication with workers played the most vital role in the leaders' activities. These people activities found support through vital operational activities that provided for a people performance feedback environment. These behaviors exhibited the leadership framework of the organization through collaboration belief that relationships are the foundation of leadership, confidence belief in lifelong learning, and creativity's belief that leaders take the time to be present ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018).

How Does Leadership Prioritize? This section represents the second theme in the focus of the first central research question. The second data set of research question one contained four coded questions with three subsets of data to arrive at its overarching theme. The first subset of data is interview question seven regarding personal resources, while the second subset of data is interview question eight regarding organizational resources. The third subset of data is interview questions nine and ten, which contain information regarding the leadership approach. Within this

data the researcher expected to see less alignment among the personal resources yet strong alignment through the organizational resource of the leadership framework influencing the leadership behavior. This data also sought to understand if the leadership framework influenced alignment with leadership style.

The first subset of data, interview question seven, contained information regarding personal resources used in decision-making in the leader's role to prioritize activities in the first four questions. At the district manager level, both spoke of learning through experience. While participant D1 spoke to a traditional learning background in a corporate environment. "I've come from world-class companies that have a lot of structure in place. That helped me here because there are areas that we don't have a lot of structure" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021).

Participant D2 spoke about leadership learning through the setting of an athlete while referencing John Wooden's book *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success*. Participant D2 related this experience learning to the leadership framework as well, stating that "The leadership framework always comes back to me on how I show up every single day as a leader" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021).

Within this subset of data, the store managers offered a similar approach. The most common approach is that many learned through the experience learning of other corporate environments. Participant S3 referenced "The nuances that occur or happen as a store manager over the years" (Personal Interview, July 7, 2021), while participant S10 mentioned, "All of those pieces of training experienced to us over the years" (Personal Interview, August 27, 2021). Like the district manager level, this group also mentioned the nontraditional experience learning of leadership as an athlete. For example, participant S6 stated that as an athlete, "Training, coaching, discipline, and time management, all of those things are instilled in my DNA"

(Personal Interview, August 28, 2021). Where variance did occur is a slight result of leadership learning through the family. For example, participants S5 family owned a business where the participant grew up and worked. It is this experience where participant S5 stated they were "Showed the importance of community" (Personal Interview, August 28, 2021). While alignment expected to vary here amongst participants a common result occurred citing previous leadership or work experiences as personal resources in their leadership decision-making.

The second subset of data, interview question eight, contained information on organizational resources used in decision-making in the leader's role to prioritize activities in the first four questions. It is here that the research data obtained did not match what would have been expected out of a leadership framework environment, alignment. At the district manager level, organizational resources lacked use. While participant D2 mentioned one training program provided to the participant years earlier, participant D1 stated, "I do not" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021). Here the reliance came from the resources leaders experienced in interview question five.

To the researcher's surprise, within the second subset of data, interview question six, the store managers also did not align with the leadership framework as an organizational resource. Few did mention the use of this tool. For example, when asked, participant S4 and participant S8 directly cited the leadership framework, while participant S1 stated that it "Has played a pretty big role for me" (Personal Interview, July 12, 2021). The remaining participants did not reference the leadership framework. Participant S2 stated, "I do not think there is anything I get from the organization itself" (Personal Interview, July 9, 2021). Many cited forms, tools, and pieces of training as organizational resources rather than the leadership framework as an initial priority or

resource. While answers varied from store managers to district manager, the common result here is that the leadership framework is not used as a guide in decision-making.

The third subset of data, interview questions nine and ten, contained information regarding the preferred leadership approach and sought to understand its alignment with the leadership framework. The district manager level offered no alignment in choice of leadership style in interview question nine, although it is worth noting that participant D2 mentioned servant leadership but admitted the style is a "Buzz word" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021). Concerning interview question ten's arrival at this selected leadership approach, both participants aligned in what they called great leaders from their past.

Within the same data subset, the store managers also did not align with a leadership style for interview question nine. Like at the district manager level, servant leadership style is the only quotable researched leadership style cited by participants S1, S2, and S8. Participants' powerful stories from past experiences seemed to have formed the desire to be a servant leader. Answers seemed to vary significantly in choice. Like at the district manager level, alignment did seem to come in the data from interview question 10, where the answer of previous impactful or great leaders is a common finding. In total, four of the 12 participants cited the servant leadership style as their preferred approach. The researcher did not investigate leadership styles or confirm any of the participants' knowledge of or actual display of behaviors in any leadership style. It appeared here that the leadership framework may influence the individual leadership style, but not enough data were present to determine with certainty. This is important in showing that the leadership framework allows for individuality and is not an attempt to eliminate traditional leadership but rather unite leaders with a common guide or language.

The how does leadership prioritize data set offered an unexpected theme that did not align with research expectations. Alignment in personal resources had an unexpected stronger correlation, while alignment in organizational resources lacked alignment even with a leadership framework. The leadership framework had a clear impact in creating a culture on purpose. This alignment revealed a people-first culture in which actions and behaviors of the participants strongly aligned with one another and the behaviors of the organization's leadership framework at a surface level. However, only four of the 12 participants referenced the leadership framework as a tool used for prioritization or decision-making behavior. Interestingly, participants heavily referenced what they had learned from previous organizational experience and leadership mentors as solid influences. Deductive reasoning shows at this point in the research that participants may be unconsciously or instinctively using the leadership framework based on their previous organizational or leadership experience. This data also reflects that only a portion of leadership framework of the participating organization is being leveraged by its leaders.

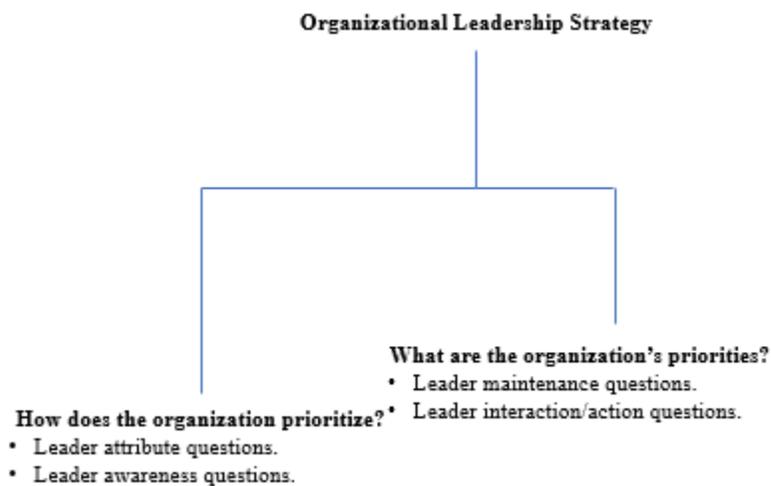
Research Question Two Analysis

Research question two contained two data sets within the interview guide, each broken down at the store manager and district manager role (Figure 5). These subsets received analysis across the individual SM and DM level roles. Each level is compared to establish functional and cross-functional themes with three themes emerging from the data. The first data set included information pertaining to what are the organization's priorities within the leader role (What the organization priorities). These questions include what actions are taken by leaders and how those actions are driven in questions eleven, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. The second data set for research question two includes data regarding how the organization prioritizes regarding the organizational leadership framework impacts the organization and its leaders (How does the

organization prioritize), as addressed in interview questions fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen. These questions offer the second and third themes in this set of data. The second theme addresses the organization leverages use of the leadership framework and the third them addresses how that impacts their leaders. Appendix A contains a listing of the interview questions within the interview guide.

Figure 5

Research Question Two Data Set



What Are the Organization Priorities? This section represents the first theme in the focus of the second central research question. Within this data set were four questions coded for results in two subsets with to obtain one overall theme. The first subset is interview questions eleven and twelve, which offered data regarding leadership attributes desired by the company and insights as to why the participants selected these attributes. The second subset is interview questions thirteen and fourteen, which offered data regarding knowledge of success in role. These subsets expected a higher degree of alignment as the leadership framework speaks to the desired attributes and ultimately, it is these desired attributes that offer success in the leadership role in the participating organization.

The first subset of data contained interview questions eleven and twelve which focused on attributes desired of leaders within the organization and how participants arrived at this conclusion. To the surprise of the researcher, there is no alignment at the district manager level. No commonalities existed within either of the interview questions. The word team did appear, which correlated with the first research questions overwhelming data theme of a people first culture. Neither participant referenced the leadership framework language. Words such as humility and integrity were used, which may align with the leadership framework, but not referenced is the resource itself.

Within the first subset of data, the store manager participants also offered no alignment or commonalities. The only trait that repeated a second time is empathy, mentioned by both participant S2 and participant S8. The theme of people first observed in the first research question data were even more prevalent in interview question twelve at the store manager level than that of the district manager level. Participant S9 summed up this people-first approach as a "Genuine care and compassion for people that desire to find what is going to enhance them and make them the best at work" (Personal Interview, August 24, 2021). Like at the district manager level, no participant referenced the leadership framework or its language. Like in the district manager role, empathy and compassion were used, which may align with the leadership framework but not referenced. Previously, the leadership framework has revealed impact on leadership behavior through alignment of the participants in their role prioritization. The data in these results reflect that any actions taken by participants are done so subconsciously rather than the leadership framework acting as a continuous resource or guide.

The second subset of data, interview questions thirteen and fourteen, offered data from the participants regarding their knowledge of success in their role as a leader. At the district

manager level, role alignment had been created but again at an unexpected result. It appeared difficult for a leader to know if they were successful in their role. Neither participant referenced any of the languages in the leadership framework. Participant D1 stated, "It is hard to know that" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021). While both referenced briefly hitting goals, the people first culture seemed to shine through in these answers as well. For example, participant D2 reflecting participant D1 mentioned that often years down the road, if a leader can get even one person to state, "This has made a huge impact in my life" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021), they would know they are successful as leaders.

Within this same subset of data for the store managers, similar results emerged to that of the district managers. Participant S3 and participant S8 referenced the lack of knowledge in the success of the role. Participant S3 mentioned, "This one has been challenging for me" (Personal Interview, July 7, 2021), while participant S8 stated, "I think that none of us ever know if we are fulfilling it right" (Personal Interview, August 24, 2021). The remaining participants focused heavily on the people-first culture, and participant S2 even expressed feelings like the district manager level that down the road, or future feedback is an important measurement. Feedback also mattered. Participant S7 stated, "Getting feedback. I always ask about the start, stop, continue" (Personal Interview, July 28, 2021). This feedback is referenced as essential to receive from the consumer as well. In this theme, participants sought out feedback. However, the data makes it clear through the lack of leadership knowledge regarding their success in role that the environment lacks a structured feedback environment tied to the leadership framework performance.

How Does the Organization Prioritize? This section represents the second and third theme in the focus of the second central research question. Within this subset of data, four

questions received coding for themes in two areas. The second theme of the second central research question is found through interview questions fifteen and sixteen, which offered data regarding how participants were introduced to and trained for the leadership framework. The third theme of the second central research question is found through interview question seventeen and eighteen, which offered data around leadership impact on one another and needs for success. Within these two themes, alignment of participants' answers to the interview questions expected to remain high except for interview question eighteen, which may experience needs that differ based on the individual leader experience.

The first subset of data, interview questions fifteen and sixteen, described how leaders are introduced and trained in the leadership framework. Interview question fifteen's introduction to the leadership framework at the district manager level offered alignment but with an unexpected result. Both participants aligned that no formal introduction occurred to the leadership framework. Simply put, participant D1 stated, "I do not believe I was" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021). At the district manager level for interview questions sixteen regarding how they continue to grow in the knowledge of the leadership framework, both participants cited the leadership attributes of the leadership framework. Both participants also mentioned maintaining growth and knowledge through their practice due to its complex nature. Participant D1 referred to the leadership framework as ambiguous, while participant D2 referred to the leadership framework as complex.

Within this same subset of data, results presented slightly different at the store manager level than at the district manager level. For interview question fifteen introducing leaders to the leadership framework, while participant S6 stated, "To be truthful, I was not" (Personal Interview, August 28, 2021), the remaining participants received an introduction through various

meetings. However, this is where the commonality or alignment ends. Each setting is different for each participant. It appears no formal way of introducing leaders to the leadership framework existed. For interview question sixteen, like at the district manager level, alignment occurred at an unexpected result. Participants remain productive and efficient with the leadership framework through teaching themselves or others. This self-taught approach is a similar response to the district manager level role of practice. Participant S4 offered tremendous insight in that through personal development, they challenge themselves, and through teaching others, they "Get to learn different perspectives on how to interpret the leadership framework" (Personal Interview, July 12, 2021). Self-development in the leadership framework is inefficient at best as it leaves room for inconsistency amongst the individual participant's interpretations. A formal process to introduce or transition new leaders and grow performance of tenured leaders in use of the leadership framework is needed to fully leverage success for participants and the organization alike.

The second subset of data, interview question seventeen, offered data regarding how the leadership framework impacts interactions with colleagues. Again, the data at the district manager level offered unexpected alignment. Both participants acknowledged the existence of the leadership framework in some of their interactions. However, participant D1 mentioned that the actions were unconscious when working its attributes, while participant D2 referenced a similar belief that relating actions to the leadership framework do not occur. Any attributes of the leadership framework exhibited during interactions with others may be present but not necessarily on purpose.

Within the same subset of data, the store managers offered a different perspective and experience. Participants' S1, S2, and S9 aligned with the district manager level in that it does not

impact interactions. Participant S1 stated, "I do not think it has" (Personal Interview, July 12, 2021), while participant S2 stated, "Not by the book" (Personal Interview, July 9, 2021), aligning with the experience at the district manager level that it does not consciously get worked. Participant S9 went a bit further in mentioning that while it has not changed things for them much, they stated it may have somehow enhanced who they are as a leader. The remaining participants believe in the leadership framework attributes affecting their interactions with others. Participant S10 stated that it "Established shared goals in collaboration involving others in decision-making and builds productive relationships" (Personal Interview, August 27, 2021). Participant S2 mentioned that the leadership framework offers purposes in accountability which holds a standard for how they behave. The mix of subconscious and proactive leadership framework use in interactions reflect the lack of participant alignment to the leadership framework found in earlier analysis. This absence of consistency in participants' alignment towards the leadership framework is reflective of the organization's absences of consistency in onboarding, training, and feedback directly tied to the leadership framework.

The third and final subset of data are interview question eighteen. Within this subset of data, the researcher expected the least amount of alignment. This lack of alignment occurred at the district manager level. When it came to opportunities by the organization that needs addressing to strengthen leadership, participant D1 mentioned a lack of focus, stating, "We tend to try and go after everything at once. You cannot do any one thing well if you are trying to fix or do ten things" (Personal Interview, June 7, 2021). Participant D2 drilled down further and focused on learning programs stating that they "Are not very intuitive to the actual outcome. There is a textbook way of doing it then there is reality" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021). This statement appears to reflect the opportunity previously mentioned in the onboarding

and ongoing training and development around the leadership framework discovered in earlier analysis. There seemed to be a disconnect between creating the tool or resource of the leadership framework and the actual use.

In this same subset of data, the store managers also offered little alignment and more themes here than any other subset of data. The most prevalent results evolved around conversations and communication when it came to opportunities by the organization that needs addressing to strengthen leadership. Participant S2 reflected that worrying about having the appropriate language has placed the concern for the human side of the business as an allusion. Participant S5 stated that more effective feedback from multiple sources would help to improve or make better leaders. Participant S10 expressed a desire to experience more organic connections. This reflects the opportunity missed by the researcher to explore further the feedback culture tied directly to performance in the leadership framework.

Many expressed learning as an opportunity. Participant S4 stated that any missed learning is at the fault of self "Cause I did not seek the knowledge" (Personal Interview, July 12, 2021). Participant S8 expressed workshops for learning because "There was so much value when we were all doing it together" (Personal Interview, August 24, 2021). Participant S6 expressed similar notions and added that these workshop-type training "Help to continue to develop relationships" (Personal Interview, August 28, 2021). These reflect participant's D2 notions mentioned at the district manager level of quality training. The remainder of the group reflects the notions of participant D1 at the district manager level, a lack of focus. Participant S1 mentioned that programs implemented are out of touch with the store experience. Participant S7 called these programs "The flavor of the month" (Personal Interview, July 28, 2021) that eventually fizzle out. Participant S10 stated that this could be resolved by "Listening and figuring

a way to participate in what day in and day out looks like" (Personal Interview, August 27, 2021). This reflects the leadership framework and its priority or place in the organization may not be fully understood by the participating leaders.

Inconsistent results appeared between the store manager and district manager roles when it came to being introduced to the leadership framework. The district managers did not receive an introduction, while store managers did but inconsistently. There is, however, consistency within the inconsistency that there is no formal introduction to the leadership framework experienced. The same revelation occurred with continued training and development within the leadership framework. Elahi and Bilal (2020) showed that the success of a business process management lies in its ability to embrace the culture, change, motivation, and communication while being consistent in practice, involvement, empowerment of employees, and embodying of the organizational structure. Structure in onboarding and development around the leadership framework revealed itself as an opportunity.

Furthermore, this section revealed mixed results when it came to how the leadership framework impacted their interactions with similar and increased roles of responsibility. The district manager level felt it had no impact, while seven out of the 10 participants felt the leadership framework impacted these interactions. While some felt the leadership framework had no impact, some felt they had already been exhibiting the behaviors of the leadership framework, while others still felt it is an essential tool for them to use as a guide to maneuver through interactions in the company. In response to opportunities, continued improvement in communications and a more substantial training and development process were common themes amongst participants. Here, participants first identified or recognized a need for improved development processes. While their identification is not specific to the leadership framework,

formalized training, and development in use of the leadership framework is necessary. Second, participants identified an opportunity to improve communication within the organization. This reflects the researchers missed opportunity to understand the feedback system as it relates to the leadership framework.

The data and lack of alignment in these subsets are unexpected. The leadership framework lays out the desired attributes of a leader but does not get referenced by any leader at either level. The analysis further revealed that leadership did not know if they were successful in their roles as leaders under the leadership framework. This lack of knowledge in role performance is an unexpected result in the data as the leadership framework states behaviors required for success. Furthermore, these results revealed a missed opportunity by the researcher in the exploration of the participants' feedback culture. Understanding how the organization offers its leaders' performance feedback tied to the leadership framework may have offered further insight into strengths and opportunities regarding implementation and utilization of their leadership framework.

Relationship to Findings

This section provides detailed information regarding how findings of the research relate to key areas of the research proposal. The first area covered is how the findings addressed each of the research questions. The second area covered is how the findings related to each element in the conceptual framework of the study. The third area covered is how the findings related to any anticipated, unanticipated, or missing themes. The fourth area covered is how the findings related to similarities and differences in the research literature. The fifth and final area covered in this section covered how the findings related to the problem being studied.

The Research Questions

The formation of the interview guide questions and the data analysis around these questions helped the researcher ensure that the data provided addressed the specific research questions. Research question one focused on what ways or how individual leaders approach their role within a leadership framework environment. The specific research question is how leaders approach accomplishing their overall organization's objectives, such as those represented in the vision, mission, and values?

The research environment within this case study contained an organizational leadership framework. Therefore, results of the interview data analysis representing research question one and the conceptual framework would reflect a high degree of alignment in their understanding and approach to the leadership role. Sembiring and Normi (2021) showed in their research tools such as job descriptions are used to ensure that activities get carried out following the role's responsibilities. Seeking possible alignment in the decision-making and prioritization of how participants approached and prioritized their roles allowed for the leaders individualized approach and provided the sought-after data of research question one while avoiding potential conformity that would have come with a focus on job descriptions.

The analysis around this first central research question provided the only expected theme while every other theme result remained unexpected. The only expected theme occurred around the decision-making and prioritization of the participants' leadership role. Across both roles the overwhelming theme to appear is a priority of conversations with staff at a personal and professional level. These conversations focused around personal and professional development. It is recognized by participants at both level that these two priorities were supported through operational or administrative activities that kept both top of mind. The first of the unexpected

themes reflected that the participants pointed to previous mentorships or career experiences when crediting their decision-making and prioritization skills rather than the leadership framework of the participating organization. Further analysis does support that the leadership framework did contribute to the alignment of how participants approach their leadership role. The results reflect how the leaders approach their role, through a people first approach which is represented as a portion of the participating organizations leadership framework.

Research question two focused on what ways or how the leadership framework affected the individual leader's approach. The specific research question is how does an organizational leadership framework affect leadership's approach towards accomplishing their overall organization's objectives, such as those represented in the vision, mission, and values? The research environment within this case study contained an organizational leadership framework. Therefore, results of the interview data analysis representing research question two and the conceptual framework would reflect alignment through the leadership framework and its impact. Unexpectedly no alignment to the leadership framework occurred overall. However, data from this research question still provided information regarding impact on the presence of a leadership framework and its impact on the leader's approach to role.

Research reflected three unexpected themes within the focus of the second central research question. The first unexpected theme revealed that although the organization provides participants with desired attributes that make for a successful unified approach to leadership, no participants could point to those desired attributes or use them to determine success in role. The second unexpected theme revealed that while most were introduced to the leadership framework there is no formal approach along with no formal ongoing training or development in the leadership framework. Traditional leadership environments that do not contain a leadership

framework often contain guides such as annual performance reviews and competency models specific to their position in which leaders often have experience and a working knowledge of said tools. While self-development is a value found in this participating organization's leadership framework, taking such an approach with a resource new to many leaders lessened its effectiveness by leaving leaders to their individual interpretations, something that is attempted to be avoided through the leadership framework.

The third unexpected theme revealed that while participants acknowledged an influence of the leadership framework on their interactions with others, it is often subconscious in nature rather than purposely worked. Further insights reflected a previous data analysis concern while also revealing a missed opportunity on the part of the researcher. Participants shared that there is a lack of commitment or focus on the organization combined with a need for better training and improved communication. The need for improved commitment and training reflects the data analysis that revealed no formal onboarding and training to the leadership framework. The need for improved communication revealed the researcher's missed opportunity seeking information regarding how participants within the organization are provided feedback related directly to their leadership framework performance.

These themes reflect that the participating organization's leadership framework has a direct impact on the leadership role and environment but at a lessened value to that of what had been expected in anticipated themes. An organizational leadership framework is likened to that of any other organizational tool, its success is based solely on the commitment of use from those within the organization. In this case study, the participating organization's leadership framework use by the participants reflected the use by the organization. While the themes and answers for the two central research questions were unexpected, information from the analysis of research

question one and two representing the study's overall theme analysis provided results that revealed how to improve an organizational leadership framework's impact.

The Conceptual Framework

The layout of data analysis in this research presents the same organization of both the research questions and the conceptual framework. The research questions asked how leaders approach accomplishing their overall organization's objectives such as those represented in the vision, mission, and values with an organizational leadership framework and how such a framework's presence affected their leadership's approach. The interview questions were related to the organization's leadership framework philosophy and analyzed for the final theme to create a comprehensive understanding of the case study through multiple sources providing triangulation. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that triangulation with different data sources and various emerging themes adds validity to the study. This reflects the steps taken in the design phase ensured research questions were addressed a way that is supported through standards of scientific qualitative case study research.

The overview of the conceptual framework showed individual leadership strategy interpretations without an organizational leadership framework and coordinated group movements with one approach with an organizational leadership framework. Within the first part of the conceptual framework of this study, the researcher theorized that in environments lacking the presence of an organizational leadership framework, varying roles and levels would set their leadership strategies to arrive at the mission, vision, or purpose of an organization and lack alignment (Figure 6). Kachaner et al. (2016) showed that leadership and executives use a variety of approaches to understand and develop the strategy of their organizations. This varied approach could create a lack of alignment within organizations that do not use an organizational leadership

framework as each leader practiced what they would believe is valued most in accomplishing the overall objectives.

Figure 6

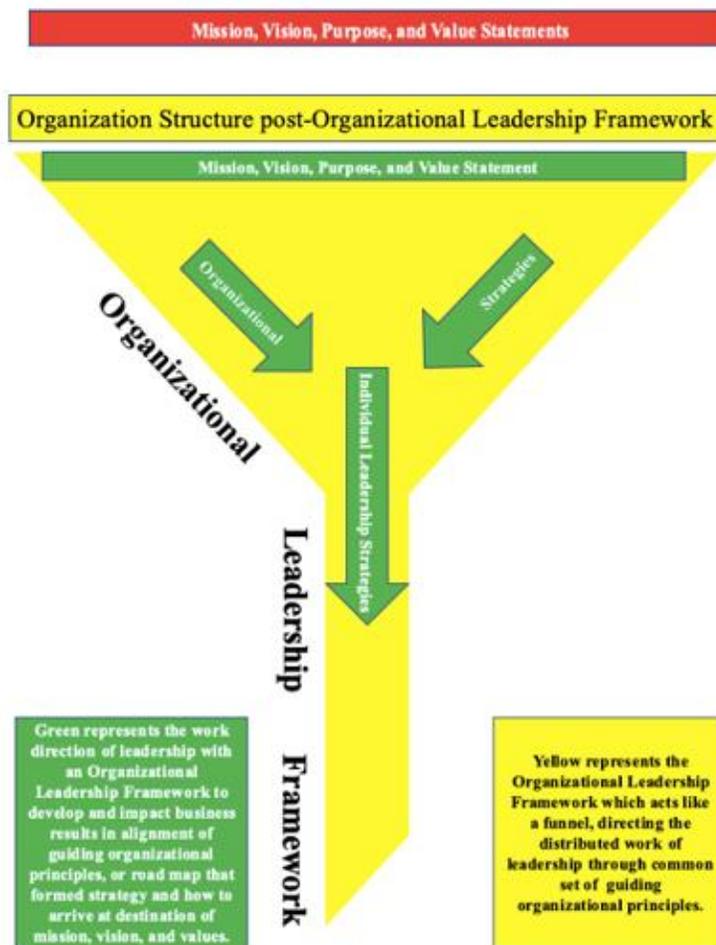
Organization Structure pre-Organizational Leadership Framework



Within the second part of this study's conceptual framework, the researcher theorized that in environments with an organizational leadership framework, the framework acts as a guide to interpret the desired leadership behaviors and actions needed to accomplish the mission, vision, and purpose (Figure 7). The variety of approaches used by leadership and executives mentioned previously in this research by Kachaner et al. (2016) would be limited. The presence of an organizational leadership framework aligned to the leadership approach in behaviors and actions expected high alignment amongst individual leaders while having a high impact on daily leadership within the organization.

Figure 7

Organization Structure post-Organizational Leadership Framework



The results of the data did reflect that the presence of the participating organization's leadership framework created alignment that resulted in participants creating a unified approach in the creation of a people first culture. Most did not perceive the leadership framework as the cause of their actions. A few participants did acknowledge that any actions contributed to the leadership framework may not be conscious. However, information on the presence of the leadership framework affects within the participants' role did align with the conceptual framework. The data revealed that leaders reflected coordinated movements and interpretations of role priorities. While opportunities presented themselves in the data results, they were

unexpected yet added to information that would make an organizational leadership framework more impactful.

Anticipated Themes

Two themes were expected around the first central research question seeking data on how participating leaders approach accomplishing overall objectives of the organization. Here the researcher anticipated a high degree of alignment amongst participants' answers in two areas. The first anticipated theme is how participants prioritize and approach their role. While the varying participants at each level would have the same job description that creates the same tasks, decision-making and prioritization left open the possibility of varying individual perception to approaching their leadership role. Since the participating organization offered a leadership framework it is also anticipated that in the second theme participants would collectively point towards the leadership framework as a resource or guide that influenced their leadership approach.

Three themes were expected around the second central research question which sought to understand how the organizational leadership framework affected the leadership approach. For the first theme, a high degree of alignment is anticipated amongst the participants' answers due to the presence of a leadership framework when seeking knowledge regarding desired attributes or leadership behaviors that best make for successful fulfillment of role when accomplishing the overall objectives of the organization. Here, it was expected that participants point towards the common language of the leadership framework put in place by the participating organization when citing their responses. The second theme should have seen a similar high degree of alignment amongst participants' answers seeking knowledge around the participants' transition or onboarding and development to a working leadership environment with a leadership

framework. The third and final theme should have seen a high degree of alignment amongst participant answers seeking information on the leadership frameworks impact beyond the boundaries of the participants' role. Heightened awareness in a leader's impact of interactions with others and needs of the role should maintain a consensus in an environment where desired behavioral leadership characteristics are funneled through an organizational leadership framework.

It had been anticipated that due to the presence of a leadership framework, themes would evolve from the results that align leadership in their decision-making and prioritization while pointing towards the leadership framework as the source of said alignment. However, the results of the research produced unexpected themes. The first central research question expected two themes. While leaders did align in their decision-making and prioritization as the first theme anticipated, results of the participants' interviews produced a theme that pointed towards previous mentorships and experiences as the source for their choices. The second central research question expected three themes. The results of the study produced an unexpected first and second theme results in this section. The first theme again pointed to previous experience as a resource while the second theme reflected no formal onboarding or development to the leadership framework. The third and final theme from the results of the participants' interviews revealed that while leaders acknowledged influence of the leadership framework in their interactions, it may be at more of a subconscious level than proactively worked.

This research revealed that while value may be found in an organizational leadership framework as the foundation for a leadership strategy within organizations, that value is dependent on execution. The definition in this research of the organizational leadership framework reflects that the framework cannot stand alone. The organizational leadership

framework, according to Alenezi (2019), shows that when expertly planned, has potential for high levels of impact on its participants and its organization. The interview results revealed in this study opportunity in a lack of onboarding and training to the leadership framework. This is reflected further in the inconsistent overall anticipated and unanticipated themes of the study. A missing theme identified by the research results revealed a missed opportunity to study feedback culture provided to participants that is directly tied to leadership framework performance. Focusing on the opportunity areas around structure provided by onboarding and development and further exploring consistent feedback in an organizational leadership framework environment may provide a more consistent implementation and utilization of the organizational leadership framework as a resource.

The Literature

Research literature regarding the topic of distributed leadership in an educational setting is used to thread the learnings from such writings to the learnings found in this study on organizational leadership frameworks. Latta (2019) referenced distributed leadership and its three conceptual forms of distribution in leadership as collaborative, collective, and coordinated. The description of the objective for the participating organization's leadership framework and this research's definition of an organizational leadership framework aligns closely with this description of distributed leaderships' collaborative, collective, and coordinated environment. The analysis of the participating organization's leadership framework lacked coordination. While the leadership framework is introduced to the participants it had not been maintained through structure such as a coordinated onboarding and training effort on the part of the organization. A detailed understanding of the feedback environment for the leadership framework is a missed opportunity within the research that may have revealed further strengths and opportunities.

Latta (2019) shared that structure is a defining dimension of distributed leadership. While the participants' leadership framework has a structure in its formation, there is a lack of structure revolving around the onboarding and training or development experience of the leadership framework. Mifsud (2017) reflected that a lack of structure in distributed leadership leads to struggle and even tension amongst leaders. This structure insight applies to the organizational leadership framework. Here, the analysis revealed struggle of the participants to understand desired behaviors and success in role even with the leadership framework of the participating organization pointed out desired attributes that make for a successful leader. This left tension between the participants and the organization as they pointed out the organization's lack in commitment or focus and weak training or development around such focuses. The lack of structure in onboarding, ongoing training and development, and feedback is an opportunity area that needs addressing for the resource of a leadership framework to be most impactful.

Rao-Nicholson et al. (2020) further described distributed leadership as a shared-goal and collaborative, driven method that allows for the sharing of leadership across groups and organizations to achieve common objectives. The participating organization's leadership framework offered such an approach, but participants' data revealed a people first driven culture that focused on development but lacked behaviors geared towards a collaborative goal driven environment. Like distributed leadership in which Shani (2020) referred to as plural leadership, the organizational leadership framework environment is much the same. Klein et al. (2018) referred to teachers in distributed leadership as either teacher followers or teacher leaders. As leadership expands and evolves, an organizational leadership framework environment may best borrow from distributed leadership by viewing plural leadership and individual employees as leaders of self and people. This suggestion aligns itself in research. Rao-Nicholson et al. (2020)

showed that a distributed leadership environment advances the welfare of employees, allowing them to participate in the decision-making process and enhancing both engagement and productivity. The people first driven culture of the participating organization can drive leadership behaviors such as the plural leadership reflected in distributed leadership and the leadership framework.

Research literature revealed that the subject of leadership is evolving. Vecchiotti (2018) showed that as women entered the role of leadership, the definitions morphed from that of authority to one who recognized followers then reflected as a new, younger generation emerge value in is placed in definitions such as collaboration, balance, and feedback. The importance of the individualized approach to leadership is changing. Allio (2018c) stated that the role of leadership is starting to diminish as the focus of strategy rises. Furthermore, Kellerman (2016) stated that leadership as an industry needs reconceiving through shedding its obsession with individual leaders and shift to a focus of learning to create a systemic approach to leadership. Adding to this thought process within the research literature of leadership, Henry (2018) showed that management and leadership need to understand the depth, breadth, and inter-connectedness of problems and address them with a more global approach. In accepting this thought process and threading the learnings found in both the research literature of leadership, distributed leadership, and the data analysis of this study provides a platform for this to happen through the foundation of an organizational leadership framework. The organizational leadership framework offers the collaborative, collective, and coordinated environment of distributed leadership described by Latta (2019). This is reflected in the definition of organizational leadership framework offered in this research and described in the participating organization's explanation of need for their leadership framework. The research analysis revealed the importance of a

coordinated environment and how if missing, reduces the impact of an organizational leadership framework on leaders and the organization.

The Problem

The general problem addressed is the failure of organizations to create a leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework, a synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behaviors into universal guiding principles which all facets of business reference to create more intelligent and coordinated magnetic like movements. The general problem statement in this research addresses the failure of organizations to create a leadership strategy. Cockerell (2018) stated that most organizations' chief executive officers, board members, and executives focus solely on creating business strategies around growth or innovation while failing to realize that they need a leadership strategy. Supporting this view, Holloway et al. (2018) showed that individual leaders require support, shared values, and vision that comes through a practical leadership framework. The review of leadership literature in this study acknowledged the need for a shift in leadership from the individualized approach to something more collective, however, revealed nothing that offered a solution for this shift. This research attempts to offer a platform for addressing this failure through an organizational leadership framework.

The participating organization reflected in their need for a leadership framework that it desires to create guidelines or a shared global language in which to operate ("The 3 C's Behind Great Leadership," 2018). The framework in which the participating organization exhibited reflected the Latta (2019) description of distributed leadership as collaborative, collective, and coordinated in nature. The work of distributed leadership provided the universal guiding principles as described in this research's definition of an organizational leadership framework.

The analysis of the data and emerging themes reveal that the leadership framework of the participating organization did have an impact on participating leaders that coordinated decision-making and prioritization. However, the lack of coordination at the organizational level lessened the impact of the leadership framework. Onboarding and training to the leadership framework had been revealed as needed in the data while feedback to the leadership framework performance of the individual leader appeared as a missed opportunity in the research results.

This qualitative case study reviewed an organization attempting to create an overall leadership strategy through an organizational leadership framework. The participating organization's leadership framework demonstrated a positive impact on the coordination of how individual leaders approach their role in through decision-making and prioritization. Inconsistency in how the leadership framework is used and impacts leaders is reflected through the inconsistency exhibited in onboarding, training, and possible performance feedback communication directly related to the leadership framework. The research revealed the leadership framework to be a viable candidate as a platform or solution to the problem with its effectiveness relating to the coordination at the organizational level. This study, and the organizational leadership framework offers a foundation to provide future guidance in which future research may build upon. This knowledge may be used by organizations in the formation of their organizational leadership frameworks and their respective leadership in how to maneuver through said framework.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study revealed anticipated and unanticipated results along with the revealing of a missing theme. The leadership framework of the participating organization did have an impact on participating leaders. Leaders were coordinated in their decision-making and

prioritization across both roles that created a people first culture. Leaders prioritized conversations with a focus on personal and professional development and is supported through operational or administrative activities that keep these priorities top of mind. However, this was only a portion of the participating organizations leadership framework. The impact of the leadership framework is not fully realized or understood by the participants. Resources cited involved previous mentors or leadership experiences rather than the leadership framework. Leaders were not able to recognize desired attributes or behaviors along with if they were successful in role despite the leadership framework stating this information.

Results revealed that participants were not onboarded or developed to appropriately use the leadership framework in the way the organization had intended. This left development and use of the framework up to the individual interpretation of each participant. Participants recognized that the leadership framework has impact on their interactions with others but often cite that it is done so subconsciously rather than proactively worked. Furthermore, participants revealed a need for improved organizational focus, development, and communication. This focus and development need pointed out by the participants reflected themes within the data analysis that the leadership framework seemed to be introduced then moved on from without continued onboarding and development needs being addressed. The need addressed by participants in improved communication presented a missed opportunity by the researcher to explore this subject in its direct relation to the leadership framework.

The conceptual framework of this study found support in the resulting data analysis that with the presence of a leadership framework formed coordinated movement within the participating organization and its leaders. The unanticipated and missing themes of this research has revealed opportunities within the organizational leadership framework. However, the

resulting themes of the research reflect that the organizational leadership framework offers a promising foundation for research and organizations to build upon in addressing the knowledge gap and lack of practice in leadership and business for an overall leadership strategy within organizations.

Applications to Professional Practice

This research reflected that there is a need for the field of leadership to transition, or evolve, to something more practical. Kellerman (2016) reflected that the entire leadership industry needs reconceiving. This body of work offers the potential to improve the general business practice of leadership by providing two different approaches that address the need for leadership to evolve or reconceive. The first approach provides a foundation in research literature in which to build upon organizational leadership framework studies. The second approach provides a foundation of learning for organizations. For example, this study attempts to transform the practice of leadership from that of a traditional approach to leadership as a function of a collective unit. This transition from a focus on the individual leader to leadership as a collective unit does not attempt to diminish the role or experience of the individual leadership experience but rather enhance that experience through an expanded global view of how leadership functions.

Improving General Business Practice

Within the first approach of general business practice, this study attempts to provide a foundation through the organizational leadership framework to shift research's literature on leadership which remains focused on the relationship between the leader and the follower. Norenberg (2020) reflected individual leadership failures are creating low engagement levels that create an inability to meet targets and low company growth with this traditional focus.

Approaching leadership as a collective unit offers the potential to strengthen leadership and its results. Bongiovi (2017) showed there is a need to move away from this leader-follower approach and not just fix the leader but the leadership system. The participating organization of this study revealed that leadership needs a framework in which a shared global language offers a common vocabulary that creates lines within its leadership to operate (“The 3 C’s Behind Great Leadership,” 2018).

The results of this study reflected that when individual leaders operate under the boundaries of an organizational leadership framework, only a small portion of their leadership approach aligned with the organizational leadership framework. Implementation opportunities produced mixed results. Within this study, a portion of the participating organization placed value in collaboration (i.e., building and nurturing relationships), confidence (i.e., dedication to lifetime learning), and creativity (i.e., meaningful engagement with others; “The 3 C’s Behind Great Leadership,” 2018). Results aligned with these leadership guidelines and reflected that those leaders at the participating organization created a people-first culture that placed its top priority in regularly occurring conversations with those they are leading. The topics of these conversations uncovered the next priority of leaders, individuals' personal and professional development experience. The development of self and others is a top priority for the leaders within this organization. Finally, these two priorities found support through the administrative activities that kept both top of mind. This order of leadership decision-making and prioritization behaviors remained strong across both roles within the study.

The result of the study revealed that alignment in interpretation of desired leadership behaviors along with the resulting leadership culture of those behaviors within the environment of an organizational leadership framework is dependent upon implementation and follow through

processes. The portion of the study's individual leadership behavior alignment to the participating organizations leadership framework offers promise as it reflected the potential of an organizational leadership framework to shift the focus to leadership as collective unit. Further topic research, including but not limited to improvements in the implementation and processes of an organizational leadership framework, potentially offers a strong foundation in which to build future learnings and resources that guide the field of leadership to its next evolutionary phase. A phase that values and understands leadership as more than just a role, but a function and system made up of individuals in need of an overall strategy that respects the cross-boundary, cross-functional, endless reach of its impact.

Potential Application Strategies

The result of the study had not been without its challenges. However, within these challenges, opportunities for potential application strategies arise to make the implementation of an organizational leadership framework more effective. Early in the interview process, research results reflected that those participants could not directly point to their leadership framework as a resource that influenced their decision-making. Warrick (2017) showed that in environments with organizational cultures, many leaders are unaware of culture's significant impact on the individual. This lack of awareness may be due to the next challenge, the lack of onboarding, and ongoing training in how to lead within the leadership framework of the participating organization.

Participants in an organizational leadership framework may experience more success within the leadership framework through a more formal, collaborative, and structured onboarding and development environment specific to the leadership framework provided by the participating organization. Leaders in an organization with a traditional approach to leadership

may be used to resources such as competency models and yearly performance reviews for direction. Profiroiu and Hurdubei (2018) showed that competency models are cascaded to employees through training, career development, and performance management to contribute to the success of their organizations. With traditional yearly performance, reviews come feedback. Park and Choi (2020) described feedback as providing clear communication of the organization's expected goals and behaviors, improving individual and organizational effectiveness. With these traditional resources absent from a leader's toolbox under an organizational leadership framework, onboarding and feedback allows those leaders to execute the new global leadership language more effectively. As participant D2 reflected, the leadership framework could come across as "Oversimplifying and somewhat complicated for people to understand" (Personal Interview, September 7, 2021).

An effective onboarding program geared towards operating within an organizational leadership framework will help individuals better adjust to their roles. Chillakuri (2020) shared that effective onboarding programs quickly introduce employees to the organization's values allowing them to adjust to the organization's culture and social aspects of their role. This improved adjustment to their role should then help positively impact performance in the role. Serbes (2017) shared individuals become more familiar with goals through increased awareness of self and organizational mechanisms, which ultimately increase interactions and destinations. Increased feedback away from the yearly performance standard will aid in the continued increase of performance. Park and Choi (2020) showed that with more frequently provided performance feedback, the more enhanced an employee's performance. Gorbatov and Lane (2018) showed that too much-increased feedback could lead to a decrease in task effort and performance. This research is not a case study on performance feedback, but yearly feedback under the

organizational leadership framework is not enough while there may be a tipping point where feedback becomes overwhelming. The suggestion by this researcher is that a possible quarterly feedback system that, as Gorbatov and Lane (2018) reflected, provides frequent, structured feedback that drives consistency across all parts of the organization and makes it easy to identify and prioritize behaviors. This approach best reflects and mirrors the design of the organizational leadership framework.

The make-up or content creation of an organizational leadership framework is vital. The organizational leadership framework is about removing the individual experience. It is not about a leader leading other leaders. The participating organization reflected in their leadership framework that success could not arrive through a single leader but rather a team of leadership that learns at an organizational level (“The 3 C’s Behind Great Leadership,” 2018). Research reveals that strategic leadership is for the few, those in top management, like the chief executive officer of an organization. Meuser et al. (2016) reflected that strategy forming occurs in an organization's top leadership. When forming the content of the leadership strategy that makes up an organizational leadership framework, it should come from a collective group of top stakeholders within the organization creating buy-in from the top down and reflecting the organization's desires rather than that of a single individual. Taking the advice in this section and applying the organizational leadership framework to an environment currently lacking one while taking measurements such as key product indicators and employee net promoter scores before, during, and well after its implementation would provide a tremendous amount of data.

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

Schroth (2019) reflected that the new generation of workforce is more diverse, highly educated, and achievement-oriented than any other generational workforce. This evolution is

creating a more capable workforce. Gabrielova and Buchko (2021) reflected the newer generations desire to manage their projects to demonstrate and develop skill sets. They have both a need and desire to develop themselves in their leadership skills and the individual leadership development resources will be plentiful. Allio (2018b) cited individual leaders drove the global market for leadership education and improvement to over 20 billion dollars in 2017 through various courses, seminars, and degree programs to improve performance for themselves and their organizations. However, as noted in this research, the leadership industry needs a shift and must continue to evolve to be more effective and reflect the current workplace. The work of distributed leadership in the education industry is moving away from the principal teacher structure understanding that the leader and their follower relationships are changing. Amar and Hlupic (2016) reflected that leadership is failing to properly recognize the distribution of power due to it being legitimized that the leader is the source. The organizational leadership framework creates an opportunity to distribute power by creating a synthesis of an organization's strategies, functions, culture, and individual behavioral efforts create more coordinated movements for all to follow.

Recommendations for Further Study

This qualitative case study on organizational leadership framework setting took place in a brick-and-mortar retail organization with a leadership framework within the United States. It focused on leaders at the store manager and district manager levels who lead those whose primary responsibilities are a retail store environment. This initial study could not compare this environment to one without a leadership framework. The researcher recommends that a similar study, modified appropriately to the environment, takes place in a traditional leadership environment that lacks an organizational leadership framework and focuses more on traditional

resources such as the annual review, competency models, and job descriptions as directions for leadership.

As mentioned, modifications need to occur to replicate the study in a traditional leadership environment. First, the second central research question verbiage needs to be adjusted to reflect the lack of an organizational leadership framework. Second, interview questions fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen would need to be modified, changing the verbiage leadership framework to resources appropriate to the setting such as annual review, competency models, or job description. According to Human Resource Management International Digest (2019), the appraisal process is where the employees work with their leaders towards goals or outcomes while the manager attempts to guide behaviors towards increased performance and the achievement of organizational objects. In an environment without an organizational leadership framework, this would seem to be the primary source or tool essentially guiding all leadership behaviors.

With these changes in verbiage occurring, a new study should be initiated, keeping the rest of the study the same, including conceptual framework and data sets along with their respective subsets of data. That information can then receive analysis in the same fashion as this study, and the results of each study are then compared to one another and analyzed for further comprehension or understanding of the organizational leadership framework phenomenon. This data would reveal more detailed insight into leadership environments with and without the organizational leadership framework.

Those directly impacted by such a study are the study's participants. The risk of the study would be minimal, meaning that which they would encounter in everyday life. Commitment to the study would be their time, which averaged one hour. Participants in the new study should

expect to see no direct benefit. In contrast, benefits to society include knowledge from the study, which can help by addressing gaps in the scholarly literature about leadership as a collective unit and the need for strategy or a framework that would coordinate efforts amongst leaders while more clearly communicating desired actions or movements amongst leadership, making the individual leader more successful in their role. Study results could be shared with participants while study results published for the benefit of the greater research community.

Utilizing an organizational leadership framework creates a unifying language and leadership experience to address any potential obstacles. Continued research and resources are needed to address the skill sets needed by those who work in this new type of environment, and executives and board members work to create the said environment. Future studies could shift the focus from how different leadership styles affect their followers to how different leadership styles affect one another and their approach towards the organizational leadership framework.

This qualitative case study on organizational leadership framework provided a critical perspective in shifting from leadership as an individual focus to leadership as a collective focus for the field of leadership research literature. However, the research has opened the doorway for far more questions than what it could provide in answers. For example, it is a limited sample provided in the study. Retail leadership represents only one industry or portion of the business world. Further studies in other industries outside of retail with their leadership would help to understand further and validate the organizational leadership framework.

The research of organizational leadership frameworks, like the role of leadership itself, has limitless boundaries. Further research recommended for organizational leadership frameworks occurs in human resources. This study left unexplored the feedback culture of an organizational leadership framework. Rivera et al.'s (2021) traditional performance management

may no longer be ideal for the new generation of workers as ongoing feedback provides a more cohesive picture of actual performance. The content of the organizational leadership framework serving as the North Star for this ongoing feedback could prove beneficial as a tool to eradicate the outdated yearly performance review process and help to determine an adequate amount of feedback sessions throughout a given year.

Finally, the content formation of the organizational leadership framework needs research. The organizational leadership framework must not become a hierarchy of a single leader leading leaders. Groups of organizational executives or board members must unite to create their organizational leadership framework. However, at this early point in the research, they may not have access to the proper tools or complete knowledge of forming such a framework. This research reflected through Latta (2019) that distributed leadership is collaborative, collective, and coordinated. The participants in this study experienced a leadership framework that, through Gameplan-a (“The 3 C’s Behind Great Leadership,” 2018), reflected the values of collaboration, confidence, and creativity. While similar themes appeared, these are by no means prescriptive now. As such, leadership itself may not be prescriptive across the entire field. However, further research may reveal themes across industries or business approaches.

Reflections

This research began with a desire from the researcher to provide a resource to improve a leader's ability to perform effectively. The researcher's own experience with leadership and leading others has not been reciprocal with the experience of being led. In being led, the researcher has lacked positive, impactful, growth experiences. Instead, the researcher has experienced a career of individual leaders achieving organizational objectives that positively position themselves for success. Often without regard for interest in the success of those they

lead or the organization. The researcher learned that an organizational leadership framework does more than provide leaders with opportunities to perform more effectively. When properly executed, it transfers the relationship of power in leadership from individual leaders to the organization, creating an opportunity for a culture on purpose through a designed leadership strategy. A strategy that recognizes leadership as a collective group producing a function for their organization through a specifically designed approach to achieve organizational objectives rather than reacting to the results of individual interpretations and their efforts.

Through the lens of distributed leadership, this approach allows all participants to lead in achieving objectives within the guidelines set by their organization. It recognizes that when a leadership strategy is put in place by an organization through an organizational leadership framework and executed with excellence, all individuals in the organization exposed to the leadership framework have the capability to lead. In the end, the researchers shift in this research exhibited the shift being attempted in this research. Rather than the research simply offering a resource for a leader's ability to perform more effectively, this researcher hopes that this study offers a foundation for a complete shift in the field of leadership. A shift that removes the focus of the individual leader as the focus and difference maker and places a priority on understanding the perspective of leadership as a collective unit that, when strategized, offers far more success for both the field of leadership and organizations alike.

Personal and Professional Growth

The researcher expected the study results to reflect complete alignment to the organizational leadership framework due to its nature and formation. The researcher quickly learned that the organizational leadership framework, like many other approaches to business and leadership, is only as effective as the implementation and follow through processes. Additionally,

as the researcher progressed through the study processes, it was observed that there were far more questions left than what the study would answer. It became clear that the hope and desire would be not to provide answers but understand the potential of this research to be used as a platform to create further works that would substantially positively impact the field of leadership. While the research revealed anomalies, the data reflected potential in providing a platform to create opportunities for future research that shifts the industry of leadership as experienced from an individual level to understanding leadership as a collective experience or group in need of a strategy found in the organizational leadership framework.

As reflected previously in this research, the researcher has biased views on an organizational leadership framework. The researcher has experience working within retail settings that both have and do not have a leadership framework. The researcher's personal experience reflects that the lack of an organizational leadership framework leaves too much to the interpretation of the individual leader. The leadership framework provides direction or clarity for the desired leadership approach, creating what the researcher felt is an aligned and united leadership front making for a more successful leadership environment. The researcher's bias is addressed in the study through appropriate actions such as triangulation, saturation, revelation of anomalies, and discussion of all potential biases as suggested when doing scientific research. As a result of this study, changes to the researcher's ideas about leadership and the organizational leadership framework were not changed but enhanced. Prior to this work, the researcher viewed leadership through the lens of a leader-follower relationship. It appeared that a leader's understanding of the workplace environment and comprehending the best approach to take with their followers would result in the most success for all parties involved. The presence of an organizational leadership framework, it seemed, would modify this process, and the focus on the

leader-follower relationship may not bring the most impact. Finding more impactful leadership results seem to come from understanding the individual leadership experience in perspective to the larger functional unit of leadership and that success is not found in the hands an individual leader but rather found in the effectiveness or function of the leadership group.

However, concluding this study, the researcher views leadership reach as endless. In understanding leadership as a collective group or function rather than a position or role, the researcher's perspective of leadership has changed. The researcher arrived at three distinct perspectives. The first perspective is that leadership as it currently stands is uncoordinated at best. Individual leaders interpret the best approach to achieve organizational objectives through their followers, leaving open the possibility for many negative consequences and too few success opportunities for all parties involved. The second perspective is that an organizational leadership framework does not simplify but completely changes the process or approach and effects all parts of the organization. Onboarding, training, development, feedback, performance reviews, all must change in their approach. The third perspective is that anyone can lead if given the proper parameters. Distributed leadership and generational leadership studies reflected that leadership as a role is fading. If organizations take the opportunity to set the parameters of leadership behaviors through an organizational leadership framework strategy, all participants within the organization can exhibit those behaviors. It creates a view that there are leaders and leaders of people and that actions taken are no longer just about the directional relationship with a power dynamic but had provided the researcher with a global perspective of leadership. It also creates an understanding that a leadership strategy such as an organizational leadership framework can proactively create a culture when done correctly. The opportunities and unexpected results in the researcher's opinion only further supported the possibilities that the organizational leadership

framework could achieve if adapted consistently and executed exceptionally across leadership in the business world.

Biblical Perspective

The work of this study and the selected educational institution in which it occurred had been designed and selected with a purpose. The researcher desired to integrate their faith in the pursuit of the terminal degree to reflect the researcher's leadership mentor, the study itself, and the degree. The researcher has a bias in that they believed the pinnacle of the educational journey in leadership would be best reflected with the pinnacle example of leadership, that of Jesus Christ. The researcher believes that He exhibited leadership traits that make Him the most effective leader in the history of the world and uses Him as a leadership mentor. Additionally, with this terminal degree, aligning with Jesus as terminal payment of sin also had special meaning to the researcher. The study of the organizational leadership framework desired to shift the focus from the individual leader to that of a collective unit that unites leadership towards a common language and objective. In Exodus 18, Moses's father-in-law Jethro exclaimed that he was taking on too much for one man. So, Moses in Exodus 18 used man to create judges to help him teach God's commands, laws, and will. In Exodus 18:1-27, he taught others to serve as judges, teaching people how to live and duties they should perform. In this Old Testament setting there were few leaders and many followers. In the New Testament under The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus gave His disciples authority and commanded them to make disciples of all the nations. Jesus equaled the playing field in creating a foundation in which all could carry out the work that had been started. In the Old Testament, leadership is centralized to the singular, while in the New Testament, leadership became outsourced to the plurality. This leadership example reflects that in the days of Moses, few leaders were leading many, while in the days of

Jesus, leadership in and through Christ is being expanded. No longer is it just for the elite few, but through the Great Commission, all may be Disciples of Christ. This example of the transformation in the Old Testament to the New Testament approaches to leadership reflects the desired example of the organizational leadership framework to transition today's leadership from a singular to collective approach.

To further illustrate the need for growth, it is best to illustrate using a similar transition that took place that began in the book of Exodus. In Exodus 17:6, NKJV it is said "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink." Here Moses followed the instructions as directed. But God provided us with yet another example of transition and requirement for growth along with consequences of choosing the same path and actions. Later, in Numbers 20:8 NKJV, God commanded

Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus, you shall bring them water for them out of the rock and give drink to the congregation and their animals.

Yet, verse 11 of the same chapter Moses instead struck the rock twice and with this act, in verse 12 God let Moses know he would not be bringing the assembly into the land they have been given. God showed that He would be requiring constant growth and a transition from works such as those in the Old Testament to faith such as those in the New Testament. He also showed that lack of growth and transition had consequences. This growth and transition required by God of His people reflects the work of this research and its efforts to reveal that like individuals must grow, so must the field of leadership. It must grow past its viewpoint of works through individuals and to an understanding of leadership as a fellowship. This comprehensive

perspective of leadership as a collective unit allows for greater clarity of and focus on the leadership strategy.

Within literature of the business world, Van Duzer (2010) created a framework for doing business according to God's will. This framework is for businesses to serve their communities and employees sustainably and collaboratively. In this statement, business transcends into a community, lacking traditional boundaries, for a more collaborative and sustainable environment. This transcending of boundaries reflects the more progressive views and approaches we are seeing in today's business world. The organizational leadership framework attempts to shift a focus from the singularity of leadership to the plurality of leadership, which aligns with Van Duzer's (2010) framework for doing business. The organizational leadership framework, like that of Van Duzer's (2010) framework, recognizes that leadership transcends or lacks boundaries and must be more collaborative and sustainable than ever before.

Summary and Study Conclusions

This study started with a specific calling or focus. Cockerell (2018) reflected that organizations fail to realize their need for a leadership strategy. The researcher set off on an educational journey with this information in hand. A review of the research literature found the support of this need perspective. Ready (2018) reflected there needed to be a shift in leadership. Kellerman (2016) shared that the industry needs to shed its obsession with the individual leader. Ready (2019) reflected further that leadership is no longer about one person and that everyone must adopt a leadership mindset. Upon searching for solutions within the literature, no strong foundation seemed to exist within the business world. Within the educational industry, the researcher discovered distributed leadership. Latta (2019) described distributed leadership as the movement away from the influence of single individuals towards a network of interacting

individuals with a variety of expertise and unlimited boundaries distributed across many leaders. The educational industry seemed to understand and attempt to address what researchers such as Ready and Kellerman state are needs within the field of leadership.

Within the study of distributed leadership, shifting the focus away from the individual leader and towards a more collective approach to leadership provides many lessons. However, an educational setting is far different from the business world. The researcher acknowledged the gap or need for a new approach to answering the call of previous researchers for a change to the current leadership approach. At the start of this study, the researcher felt the work would provide a new understanding for leaders to approach leadership. However, upon completion, the reality is that this study of organizational leadership frameworks best serves as a platform or foundation for shifting the focus of the leadership industry to its next phase, that of understanding leadership as a collective functional unit. The researcher expected the participating organization's leadership framework and participants to align strongly with one another and point towards an example of producing such a shift like the one being called for in researcher and seen in distributed leadership.

Results of the study left more questions than it seemed to provide answers. Only one of the five themes went as anticipated. While this successful theme is the most vital to the study as it reflected individuals aligning in their leadership approach towards accomplishing the organization's overall objectives, their alignment is only towards a portion of their leadership framework. The leadership participants did not directly point towards the leadership framework as a resource for decision-making. Participants did not point towards the leadership framework behaviors for desired attributes or how to be successful in the role. To a small extent, some understood and pointed towards the leadership framework as positively affecting their

collaboration or leadership as a collective unit. However, the lack of onboarding, training and development to the organizational leadership framework that occurred in a theme of the study explained the opportunities presented. The participating organization created its leadership framework then created opportunities in its execution. Though this opportunity occurred, there is a promise found in that sole, partially successful theme. Leaders aligned as a group and reflected a small demonstration of leadership as a collective unit. This researcher hopes that this work is offered and used as a foundation for the desired shift in leadership. May this study be used for further works that advance the field of leadership from an individual experience to the understanding of leadership as a collective unit.

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Appendix A. Interview Questions

- 1) Could you please describe your average workday as a leader for your organization? The term average in this question means the activities that you would spend most (Approximately 80%) of your time performing during your workday.
- 2) In what ways, or how, do you feel these activities fulfill mission or overall objectives of your organization?
- 3) Could you please describe what remaining activities you perform that may not be considered average (Approximately 20% of your time) as a leader for your organization, but you still feel are important in the success of your business?
- 4) In what ways, or how, do you feel these activities fulfill mission or overall objectives of your organization?
- 5) Regarding the activities of the first four questions, could you please list in order of importance the top three activities in your role that are most impactful to the success of your business and achieving the mission or overall objectives of your organization?
- 6) In what ways, or how, did you arrive at the conclusion to each of these three rankings?
- 7) Regarding the activities of the first four questions, what personal leadership knowledge, experiences, and resources do you feel aided in your prioritization decision-making?
- 8) Regarding the activities of the first four questions, what organizational resources do you feel aided in your prioritization decision-making?
- 9) Could you please describe your preferred leadership approach or style with those whom you lead in accomplishing the mission or overall objectives of your organization?
- 10) Could you please describe what personal leadership knowledge, experiences, and resources helped you arrive at your preferred approach?
- 11) Could you please describe what attributes are desired in their leaders as they work to achieve the mission or overall objective of the organization?
- 12) In what ways, or how, did you arrive to this conclusion?
- 13) Could you please describe how you know if you are successfully fulfilling your leadership role within your organization?
- 14) In what ways, or how, did you arrive to this conclusion?
- 15) Could you please describe both how you were trained or introduced to the leadership framework?
- 16) Could you please describe how you continue to grow in or maintain your knowledge and experience in the leadership framework?
- 17) Could you please describe how the leadership framework impacts your interactions with colleagues of similar and different roles and what this does for your business results?
- 18) Could you please describe how your organization could better help you to lead more effectively in achieving their mission or overall objectives of your organization?
- 19) When it comes to an overall organizational leadership strategy for your organization, is there anything that has not been discussed in which the researcher should consider?

Appendix B. Research Permission Request

Dear ...,

As a graduate student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Business degree with a cognate in leadership. The title of my research project is Organizational Leadership Framework, and the purpose of my research is to address the knowledge gap in leadership research literature in the use of an organizational leadership framework.

I am writing to request your permission to contact leaders at the store manager and district manager level to request an interview for my research study. Candidates will be contacted by email to determine participation. Prior to the virtual, transcribed, and audio recorded interview stage, any selected participant for the study will be presented with informed consent information prior to taking part. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to xxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.edu. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

John R. Sparks
Researcher
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.edu

Appendix C. Interview Research Recruitment Letter

Dear ...:

As a graduate student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Business degree with a cognate in leadership. The purpose of my research is to address the research knowledge gap in leadership about the use of an organizational leadership framework. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants will include leaders who have primary roles responsible for the overall performance of a retail store. These leaders work at an organization with physical stores in the United States. To be eligible for the study, the participating leaders' responsibility level must be at the Regional, District, or Store Manager Position. Each participant within these levels must meet two qualifications. First, the participating leaders must have been at their organization and in their role for at least one year. Second, the leaders' primary responsibilities are retail stores and lead no other people in functional units outside of physical retail stores such as corporate offices or distribution centers.

If willing, participants will take part in a virtual, transcribed, and audio-recorded interview. This should take 60 minutes or less to complete. If desired, a transcript review is available for participants to review their answers and make any corrections. Names and other identifying information of participants will remain confidential.

To take part, please contact me at xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.edu or (xxx) xxx-xxxx for more information and/or to schedule an interview. A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document holds more information about my research. Please e-sign the consent document and return it to me before, or at the time of, the interview. Participants will receive a \$10 Starbucks gift card as a thank you for their time and participation in the interview process.

Sincerely,

John Robert Sparks
Researcher
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.edu

Appendix D. Interview Research Consent Form**Consent**

Title of the Project: Organizational Leadership Framework

Principal Investigator: John R. Sparks, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to take part in a research study. To be eligible for the study, the participating leaders' responsibility level must be at the Regional, District, or Store Manager Position. Each participant within these levels must meet two qualifications. First, the participating leaders must have been at their organization and in their role for at least one year. Second, the leaders' primary responsibilities are retail stores and lead no other people in functional units outside of physical retail stores such as corporate offices or distribution centers. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please, take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

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

The purpose of the study is to address the knowledge gap in leadership about the use of an overall organizational leadership strategy. The theory is that organizations need a leadership strategy or organizational leadership framework that takes a collective unit view of leadership, how leaders interact, and its role as one with endless boundaries that are also cross-cultural and cross-functional. This study aims to be a base for future research that shifts the focus from leadership at the individual leader level to a collective system of leaders in need of coordination.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. A virtual, transcribed, and audio-recorded interview. This process will take, on average, 60 minutes or less.
2. If desired, participants can review interview transcripts for accuracy and make any desired corrections. This process will take an average of 30 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include knowledge from the study, which can help by addressing gaps in the scholarly literature about leadership as a collective unit and the need for strategy or a framework that would coordinate efforts amongst leaders while more clearly communicating desired actions or movements amongst leadership, making the individual leader more successful in their role.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of codes.
- Interviews will occur virtually, allowing the participant to select their own time and private location.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may appear in future presentations.
- Interview recordings occur for transcription with transcripts stored on a password-protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants receive a \$10 Starbucks Gift Card for taking part in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is John R. Sparks. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at xxx-xxx-xxx or xxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Scott Maltzie, at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.edu.

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

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

Your Consent

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

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date