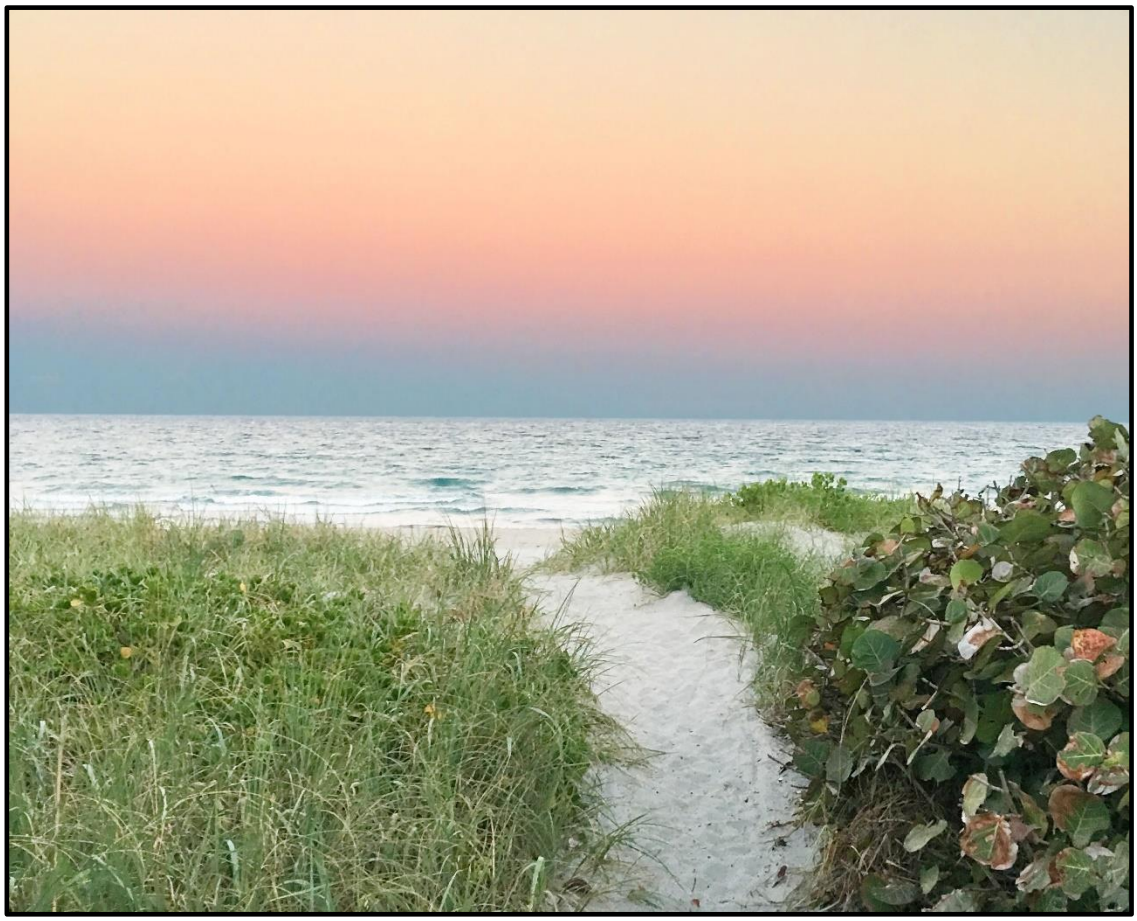
RELATIONAL LEADING PRACTICES IN A PROJECT TEAM: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION



Ronald W. Reidy

RELATIONAL LEADING PRACTICES IN A PROJECT TEAM:

AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

DISSERTATION

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by

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Abstract

In this qualitative study, I explored the influence of relational leading practices on a project team's organizational communication. The study took place within a global high-technology organization located in the United States. The project team was assembled in August 2015. Core project work was completed in March 2016. Post implementation stabilization monitoring of the software conversion functionality, and team member engagement, in a limited capacity, continued through July 2016 and November 2016 respectively. (A project timeline (Figure 1.1) is presented in Chapter One.) Team member interviews were held in July and August 2017. The 16 project team members in the study includes technical and non-technical personnel working to convert a major software application. My role in the project was that of program manager, peer, and researcher. Researching from a social constructionist worldview, an auto- and duo-ethnographic single case study design strategy was used. Thematic analysis with constant comparison was utilized as the primary data analysis tool for this study. Inductive analysis logic was used to identify themes and patterns. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews, a focus group, an interview with the independent third-party focus group facilitator, researcher notes/memos, observations, and project documentation. A concept map was created to demonstrate themes, relationships, experiences, and related documentation. The results of this study were compared to 12 relational leading practices known in the current literature review. Data from this thesis supported the 12 relational leading practices set forth by Gergen and Hersted. In addition, research from this thesis yielded four new relational leading practices. These findings were documented and categorized using thematic analysis guidelines and placed into three major categories: empowerment, open dialogue, and shared learning. All of the 16 practices in this study were discussed separately, then combined to create The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. The practices found in this framework support the definition of relational leading generated from this study, *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices.* This research will assist at least the project team members, my division, and the organization. The project team members benefited through the experiences of working in a relational leading project team environment by improving their engagement and communication skills, and increasing their productivity and enjoyment levels. Team members have indicated that their experience was positive, and that they will bring the new relational leading and communication skills learned to the future projects they participate in. Through this experience team members developed a strong relationship network and continue to engage and share knowledge with each other. This organizational division will benefit because project team members have adopted the relational leading practices learned in this project, and through the examples they set, and with the new skills they acquired, others within the organization will learn and benefit from the project team member's positive experiences. The greater organization may also realize benefits as project team members move to new projects that cross organizational boundaries. Through the relational leading practices and organizational communication processes learned and developed during the software conversion project, team member's knowledge will be available to be shared with a greater audience. Positive project team engagement through a project environment that promotes generative dialogue and opportunities to develop a vision of how to go on together, are realized. The research findings can benefit also both academic researchers and business practitioners in the theory and practice areas of relational leading and organizational communication.

Summary in Dutch

In deze kwalitatieve studie heb ik de invloed van zgn. relationele leiderschapspraktijken onderzocht op de organisatorische communicatie van een project team. De studie werd uitgevoerd binnen een wereldwijd opererend hightech bedrijf in de Verenigde Staten. Het project team werd samengesteld in augustus 2015. De essentie van het project werd in maart 2016 afgerond. Implementatie-stabilisatie 'monitoring' van de software conversie functionaliteit en beperkte team member betrokkenheid duurde nog tot november 2016. Een volledige projecttijdslijn is in het eerste hoofdstuk weergegeven. In juli en augustus 2017 werden interviews met de 16 teamleden afgenomen. Dit team bestond uit zowel technisch als niet-technisch geschoolde professionals die werkten aan de conversie van een belangrijke software applicatie. De auteur van deze thesis had de rol van project/program manager, collega en onderzoeker. Het onderzoek werd vanuit een sociaal-constructionistisch perspectief benaderd, en had een auto- en duo-etnografisch single case ontwerp.

De veld data werden verzameld via semi gestructureerde interviews; een focus groep; een interview door een onafhankelijke focus-groep facilitator; analyse van eigen onderzoeknotities, memo's en observaties; en project documentatie. De primaire data-analytische methode bestond uit thematische analyse met continue vergelijkingen; inductieve-analyse logica was toegepast om thema's en patronen vast te stellen. Om de thema's, relaties, ervaringen en gerelateerde documentatie zichtbaar te maken werd vervolgens een conceptueel frame gecreëerd.

De resultaten van deze studie werden vergeleken met 12 relationele leiderschapspraktijken bekend in de literatuur. De proefschriftdata ondersteunden niet alleen deze praktijken van Gergen en Hersted. Ze leverden ook vier nieuwe leiderschapspraktijken op. Deze bevindingen zijn vastgelegd en gecategoriseerd met gebruik van thematische analyserichtlijnen en in drie hoofdcategorieën onderverdeeld: empowerment, open dialoog, en gedeeld leren. Alle 16 praktijken werden apart geanalyseerd en toen gecombineerd in heg zgn. Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. De praktijken in dit raamwerk ondersteunen de definitie van relationeel leiderschap: verbonden *personen die betekenisvolle vooruitgang bewerkstelligen voor een positieve verandering via relationele praktijken*.

Dit onderzoek heeft een positieve invloed gehad op de team leden die werkten in het project, de divisie waarin ze handelden en ook de grotere organisatie waarin ze opereerden. De werkervaringen van team leden profiteerden vooral van de relationele leiderschapspraktijken: ze verbeterden erdoor hun betrokkenheid, communicatieve vaardigheden en productiviteit alsmede het plezier in hun werk. De team leden hebben ook gesteld dat hun aangeleerde (c.q. getrainde) relationele leiderschaps- en communicatieve vaardigheden tijdens het project positieve effecten sorteerden in hun nieuwe en toekomstige projecten. M.a.w., door de projectervaringen met de 16 relationele leiderschapspraktijken hebben de team leden een sterk relatienetwerk ontwikkeld waarin ze met elkaar ervaringen en kennis zullen blijven delen. De relationele leiderschapspraktijken die ze in dit project hebben meegemaakt hebben ze ook overgenomen, wat in hun volgende projecten binnen deze bedrijfsdivisie vruchten zal afwerpen. Via de opgedane positieve ervaringen in dit project zullen de teamleden een goed voorbeeld geven aan anderen in andere projecten. Indien team leden later doorstromen naar nieuwe projecten buiten deze bedrijfsdivisie, dan kan de invloed van de in dit project meegemaakte praktijken nog omvangrijker worden. Door dat de relationele leiderschapspraktijken en organisatiecommunicatie processen die aangeleerd en ontwikkeld zijn tijdens de software conversie project zal deze ervaringskennis van de teamleden beschikbaar zijn voor een groter publiek.

Kort samenvattend: Er is positieve team betrokkenheid gecreëerd door een projectomgeving dat generatieve dialoog bevorderde en mogelijkheden schiep om samen een visie te ontwikkelen op hoe best samen te werken. De onderzoeksbevindingen kunnen nuttig zijn voor academische onderzoekers en professionals in de praktijk die geïnteresseerd zijn in effectief of relationeel leiderschap en organisatiecommunicatie.

Dedication

To my wife Mary, for her love, friendship, encouragement, unwavering support, and always welcome good humor, my love always.

I will also be forever grateful to my parents, my mother Virginia, and my late father, Robert J. Reidy Sr., who taught their children positive life values, and the importance of being curious learners. Thank you, with love and heartfelt appreciation.

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Preface

My interest in the area of relational leading has developed throughout my research as a Ph.D. student. As I attended workshops and conducted research, I developed a curiosity about relational leading that continued to increase when I realized the potential of investigating its ability to influence organizational communication within a business organization. The construct of relational leading belongs to the same interpretative family as social construction. I am interested in relational leading because it is a nascent area of exploration that recognizes leadership as something other than that of one central leadership character exhibiting individual traits such as charisma. Rather, relational leading "is an activity, not a personal attribute" (Gergen & Hersted, 2013, p. 30). "Relational leading refers to the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future" (Gergen, 2009b, p. 333).

The objective of my research was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading and to provide an understanding of the influence of relational leading on organizational communication. My research interest was focused on exploring how and what relational leading practices may emerge and are evident within a project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. In a relational leading style, this means that not only management, but also all other levels of the organization have the opportunity and are encouraged to develop and practice relational leading in their everyday business communications. Communications are how we interact, impact others, and get things done (Stavros & Torres, 2018). I believe that in developing and encouraging relational leading practices organizational communications are strengthened. This belief is also supported by the relational leading writings of Gergen and Hersted (2013) when discussing creating organizational culture. Gergen and Hersted note "Organizational culture is largely produced by the way we talk together" (p. 56).

Social and relational construction were selected as the perspective for understanding the influence of relational leading because they are rooted in the dialogical process, where according to McNamee (2004a), people are able to make meaning together through the coordination of activities. McNamee further notes that:

> When we refigure meaning as relational, we regard it as practice, a *performance* that inevitably involves more than one participant. This draws our attention to the *process* of meaning making as well as the *relationship* within which meaning is constructed. We are less focused on the "proper" or "best" way to be professionals or provide information. Our focus, instead, is centered on the multiple ways in which social transformation can take place. Further, our focus is centered on participants engaged in the immediate moment and the wide array of both common and diverse voices, relations, communities, and experiences that each brings to the current context. (McNamee, 2004b, p. 18)

McNamee notes the importance of process and relationship in the construction of meaning, Gergen (1997) suggests "there is a close relationship between meaning and order" (p. 268). This is reinforced by my business experience in that the ability for people to co-develop meaning and coordinate activities in the business world is vital to the success of the organization. I find this especially true in terms of constructing activities and practices that encourage positive communication environments. In writing with regards to the study of organizational practices, McNamee (n.d.) states: "The study of organizational practices must focus on the ways in which our joint activities create and sustain communities of participants" (p. 2). When describing the relational orientation of social construction, McNamee adds: "meaning emerges in the joint activities of persons in the relation" (p. 3). Through this dissertation research I explored and have a clear understanding of the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. Research results, the conclusion, and recommendations are found in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

The thought of organizational communication being influenced by relational leading practices in a way that allows project teams to flourish is of deep interest to me as a project manager. I believe it is through social processes where dialogue takes place that a project team can fully develop its unique cultural identity. When I began my business career, I had not worked in a corporate setting and was unsure as to what I might find. My first job following graduation was located in the headquarters of an insurance company. It seemed like a good choice considering the salary offered, proximity to home, and the positive reputation the company held in the local community. It did not take long for me to recognize there were certain expected behaviors and many status oriented aspects to the organization. There was a mechanistic feel to how people were treated, managed, and expected to behave.

The workday began at 8:30AM when an audio tone was broadcast throughout the building. Managers and supervisors readily took notice as to the whereabouts of staff members. The audio tone also sounded before and at the end of the lunch period. The workday ended with yet another audio signal. Office furniture was color-coded based on one's seniority and status. Rookies like myself were stationed at beige colored desks located in an open area. Personnel of higher status located within the general pool of workers were provided black desks and black chairs. Director and assistant vice presidents were segregated from the masses and cocooned within movable soundproof cubicle walls. Senior executives were located on each floor in the center of the building and had private elevators that whisked them from the underground parking garage directly to their office area or the executive dining room. This center area of the building was affectionately named "the core."

Rules were plentiful and adherence to them expected. Conducting non-business conversations with colleagues was frowned upon during work time and those participating in such activities or perceived to be participating in such activities frequently heard a supervisor clearing his throat to raise awareness of the violation. Clever colleagues wanting to hold non-work conversations often migrated to the open file stacks adjacent to the work area. Here individuals could jockey files in and out of the shelves for some time while making after work plans or discussing a sporting event with a colleague. Activity always seemed brisk in the file area.

The physical segregation of management from employees, rigid behavior expectations to conform, and efforts to restrict communication between coworkers through a command and control leadership style felt quite foreign and robotic to me. My time at the insurance company ended after three years.

After the world of insurance, I began a career in high-technology that continues to this day. The environment is much less rigid than the insurance company. Socialization and open employee communications are welcomed by the majority of managers, especially when resolving business issues. Within this environment, approaches to employee management are varied based on manager experience and style, and the organizational leadership where one resides. This organization's leadership had tendencies to be more hierarchical in nature. Depending on the significance of a work initiative and associated demands, they could also exhibit entity-based command and control behaviors. As a project team manager with social constructionist and relational leading views, my goal is to facilitate and continue to develop relational leading practices throughout the organization.

Relational leadership, a precursor to relational leading, takes a "relational perspective that views leadership as a process of social construction through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 654). This perspective is different than that of an "entity perspective" as the focus is not on individual leader attributes (p. 654). "Relational leadership is a view that sees leadership as emerging from social processes and relationships among people. A key assumption of relational leadership is that leadership is co-constructed in social/historical context" (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012b, p. 570). Gergen (2009b) suggests that relational leading is a post-

modernist social construction-related construct that breaks from the traditional notion of leadership where one solely focuses on personal traits, e.g., visionary or charismatic skills and where one does not take into account supporting relationships. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012) advised that the common understanding of what leadership is should be redefined away from leader-centric and more towards "the constructions people make about themselves, their relations, tasks, and objectives" (p. 221).

The possibility of enriched dialogue and expanded individual and organizational communication and openness within the project team were influential in choosing relational leading for this study. To move from the concept of leadership as a leader-centric understanding to leadership as a collaborative co-construction process suggests consideration for best practices. Gergen (2009a) refers to some important daily practices in leading relationally. These daily practices include "positive sharing," "adding value," and "image building" through narrative and metaphor (p. 148). Positive sharing in the workplace invites people to be "free to express their ideas." Adding value expands the notion of ideas being generated by one individual to a more collaborative approach e.g., "let's explore that idea," becoming a joint exercise with "others injecting value." Image building via metaphor and narrative complements the daily practices of positive sharing and adding value acting as the glue that provides ideas "greater shape and dimension" (p. 149). In this study, I continued the precedent of relational leading practices as set forth by Gergen (2009a, 2015) and Gergen and Hersted (2013).

Organizational communication was selected as a construct to further the understanding of the relational leading influence in this study. Organizational communication when represented as Byers (1997) stated: "both behaviors and symbols, generated either intentionally or unintentionally, occurring between and among people who assign meaning to them, within an organizational setting" (p. 4), reflects the co-construction dialogical theme found in relational leading where leading occurs. To invite and empower individuals within an organization to actively collaborate in the communication process is important, especially because of the global nature of organizations today. I believe "relational leading", using the unbounded term Gergen (2009b) prefers, referring to "the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future" (p. 333) fits nicely into the narrative of this study where generative dialogue between persons to improve organizational communication should be encouraged. Berger and Luckmann (1967) refer to this type of generative dialogue as "the dialectic, which is present each moment the individual identifies with his significant others…the individual not only takes on the roles and attitudes of others, but in the same process takes on their world" (p. 132).

Relational leading is an emergent area in leadership research, and studies on how relational leading can influence a project team's organizational communication are limited. Relational leading and organizational communication are the primary constructs in this study. These constructs will be discussed next in the Background of the Study section.

Background of the Study

My interest in relational leading and effective organizational communication began emerging as a result of managing project team work initiatives and graduate school studies. As my learning of social construction and relational leading increased, I began to put into practice what I was learning. This practice took the form of personal conversations, developing project strategies, and my approach to managing project teams. Managing project team initiatives required me to reach out globally across the organization and to our customer base to better understand customer needs and communicate important program milestones. This was a perfect opportunity to apply what I was learning across the organizational activities I participated in. Given the nature of project team management, there is a common goal to successfully prepare for possible risk and opportunity outcomes. Effective communication is an important factor in determining both.

Organizational communication may be viewed "as both behaviors and symbols, generated either intentionally or unintentionally, occurring between and among people who assign meaning to them, within an organizational setting" (Byers, 1997, p. 4). Conrad and Poole (2011) note that communication in organizations "is generally defined as a process through which people, acting together, create sustain,

and manage meanings through the use of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context" (p. 5).

Gergen (2009a) notes that those qualities previously identified with leaders such as charisma or visionary are focused on an individual and do not take into account the supporting relationships. Gergen states that from a constructionist perspective "it is useful to replace the concept of leadership with *relational leading*" (p. 149). Relational leading refers to the manner the relationship is executed, versus a focus on the individual characteristics. Leadership in a global project team environment must differentiate itself and has responsibility to ensure that employees have the needed practices to successfully communicate with customers and peers in order to develop positive relationships.

The Research Problem

In my 38 years of business experience, I have rarely witnessed a manager establishing or supporting relational leading practices in the workplace. As a result, traditional styles of leadership practices that I have experienced such as trait (Bass & Bass, 2008), skills (Zaccaro, 2007) and style approaches (Northouse, 2013) are often deployed. Based on work experiences, it is my opinion these approaches tend to stifle employee growth and restrict organizational communication. My proposal was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether they emerged and were evident in the project team, and its influence on the project team's communication. This was achieved through the research of relational leading practices of the project team within an organizational setting.

When compared to traditional styles of leadership practices, relational leading is an emergent social constructionist leadership process. Uhl-Bien (2006) notes that "the concept of relationship-oriented behavior" was brought forth by Coons and Stogdill (1957, p. 654). "The term *relational leadership* is surprisingly new (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan; 2000; Drath, 2001; Murrell, 1997; Uhl-Bien, 2003; Uhl-Bien, 2005)" (p. 654). For this study, the term relational leadership is considered a precursor to relational leading as it shares many of the same elements. Relational leading practices discovered in the literature were compared to relational leading practices discovered within the project team to determine its influence on organizational communication. Through the research process, the discovery of new relational leading practices was documented and are revealed in Chapter 5.

In my business experience as a project team manager, I have observed efforts by organizational project teams looking to understand how they might better communicate in order to develop mutual understandings with other internal and external people. The noted groups were not related to human resources but to engineering, customer service, and education. Perhaps the reason for these individual group efforts is because these groups have more direct exposure to external vendor groups and customers, and they feel the need to bridge gaps in their respective processes. Whatever the reasons, they sensed or experienced a need to improve communication in order to succeed. This organizational communication challenge is one experienced by project teams as new members engage and new program initiatives arise.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication.

The research questions are:

1. What is the meaning of relational leading?
2. What are the practices of relational leading?
3. What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?
4. How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's communication?

The definition of "practices" in this study is taken from the writings of Gergen and Hersted (2013) and is defined as relational "forms of interchange from which the organization is nourished and from which new potentials are created" (p. 31).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed from the literature review on leadership that included historical leadership, socially constructed leadership with an emphasis on relational leading and leadership, and organizational communication. The literature review is comprised of two sections with a focus on relational leading. The first section of the review begins with social construction-related constructs including relational construction and relational leading. The second section focuses on organizational communication. Review of the literature resulted in the emergence of 12 key practices of relational leading (See Table 1.1).

Table 1. 1 *Relational Leading Practices*

Adding Value	Appreciation	Collaboration	Connectivity
Continuous Learning	Dialogue	Distribution	Environment
Horizontal Decision-Making	Image Building	Networking	Positive Sharing

Note. Please refer to Appendix A for literature where these practices emerged.

Relational practices noted by Gergen (2009a) include "adding value, collaboration, connectivity, continuous learning, dialogue, distribution, environment, horizontal decision-making, image building, networking, and positive sharing," (p. 149). Gergen and Hersted (2013) reiterate these relational practices and add the practice of "appreciation" (p. 30). When referring to daily practices Gergen (2009a) states the practices of "adding value, image building, and positive sharing… are among the top candidates" (p. 149). Gergen and Hersted inform us that all levels of the organization should actively participate in these practices and that senior organization members have a "heightened responsibility" to do so (2013, p. 30). Moore (2014) states "To find leadership, we must look to the practices within which it is occurring" (p. 85). In this study, I continue the precedent of relational leading practices as set forth by Gergen (2009a) and Gergen and Hersted (2013). The relational leading practices in Table 1.1 were compared to the data collected and analyzed in this research study. Each of the practices in this study were reviewed and analyzed separately. When the practices from this study and the literature were combined, they created The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework (Table 5.4). The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework is discussed in Chapter 5. Findings on how relational leading practices emerge and are evident within the project team further contribute to this study and relational leading theory.

Assumptions

To guide this study, certain assumptions were made. Assumptions are defined as "postulates, premises, or propositions that are accepted as operations for the purpose of research" (Irby & Lunenburg, 2008, p. 137). Assumptions stated by the researcher involve important topic issues believed to be genuine (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The first assumption for this study was that the process of relational leading can influence a project team's organizational communication. Based on the literature reviewed, one or more practices of relational leading positively contributed to this assumption. The second assumption was that relational leading is an activity that one can learn. Third, one may introduce relational-leading practices into a project team environment to strengthen organizational communications.

Unit of Analysis and Participants

The unit of analysis for this qualitative auto- and duo-ethnography single case study was a high-technology organization project team. The team consisted of 23 technical and business professionals chartered with the responsibility to support a global corporate program to convert all finance, manufacturing, sales, and related global infrastructure to a new vendor platform. A project timeline appears in Figure 1.1.

This timeline represents the main milestones of the project from conception to completion. Beginning in April 2010 corporate research began to identify potential replacements for the existing software platform. The research lasted approximately 21 months. In December 2012 the research was completed and a new software platform was selected. In April 2013 core corporate value chain organizations such as finance, manufacturing, sales, and IT were engaged to begin discussions that lasted 11 months. These discussions centered around how the project should proceed including new software platform development and conversion from the old platform to the new. In May 2015 I was asked to present an overview of my organization to the corporate committee. My presentation described the nature of my organization, our suppliers, customers, and our expectations for the new software platform. Details of my organizational requirements were documented and subsequently reviewed by senior members of my organization for approval. In July 2015 senior leaders in my organization met to review the impact to our business and committed their full support to the project. This support included selecting subject matter experts (SME's) from each of the organizational groups to participate under my program management leadership.

In August 2015 the team of SME's began full project engagement. In March 2016 our team completed all required task deliverables and began the post implementation stabilization process. This process involved the monitoring of all processing and reporting activities relating to the handling of our business data in the new software platform. It also included behind the scenes maintenance of the old software platform to allow for a check and balance process to compare the data through July 2016. In July 2016 the post implementation stabilization monitoring officially ended. At this time a limited number of team members were engaged to monitor business process and troubleshoot any issues that were system or client knowledge related. November 2016 marked the official project end as the new software conversion platform was deemed stable and fully active as the production system of record. The project SME's who were also the case study participants for this research migrated back into their previous organizational roles.

Specific responsibility of the case study participants was the support of a 650-person global business division to ensure no losses in productivity and/or system functionality occurred. This support included changes to a global system, associated processes, tools, and best practices. A purposeful sample of 23 participants from this project team was invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews and a focus group to answer this study's questions. Due to several individuals leaving the company, and others not wishing to participate in the study, 16 team members agreed to participate in the 1:1 interviews. From the 16, eight were randomly selected to participate in the focus group based on team member availability and the timing of the availability of the focus group facilitator.

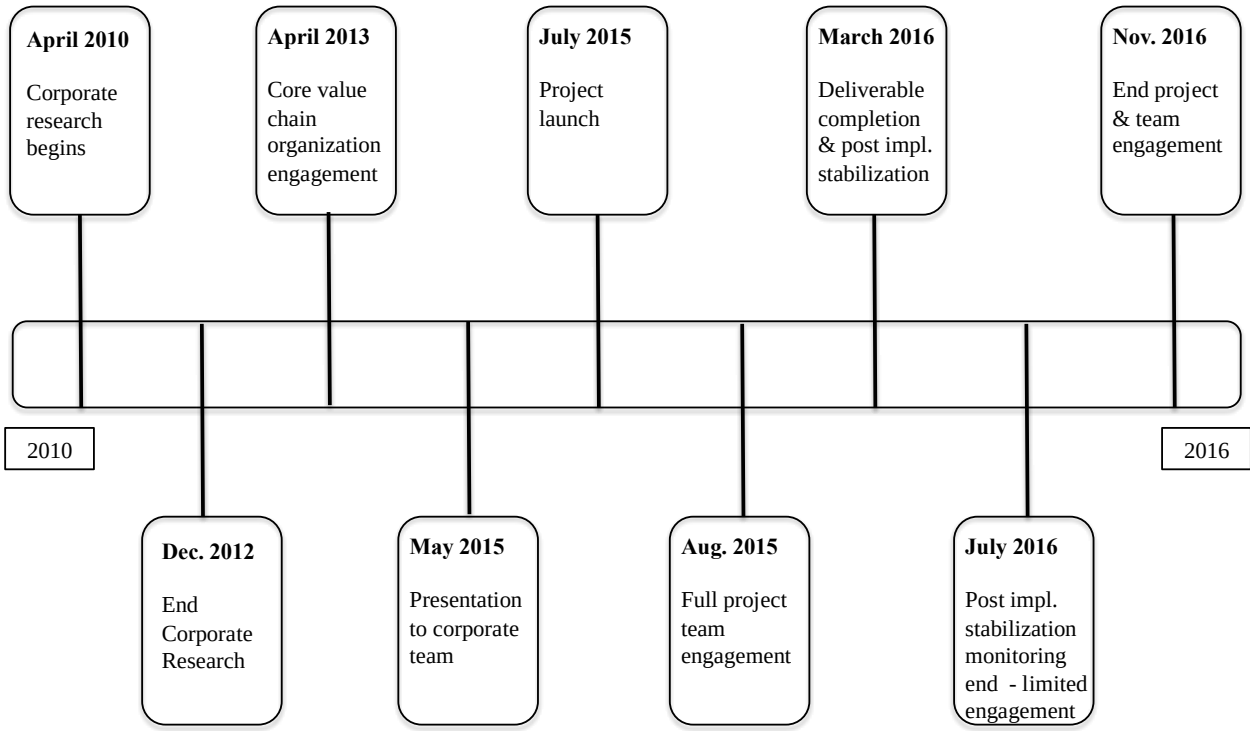

Figure 1. 1 Project Timeline

Significance of the Study

Leadership and organizational communication are established fields of study. This study is significant because relational leading research is limited and gaps exist in the literature insofar as research on how relational leading practices emerge and are evident from within a project team and influence the project team's organizational communication. A few related studies include Dawson (2011) who studied the influence of a leadership development program on the personal and professional lives of attendees. Taking a social constructionist perspective, relational leading practices such as everyone in the organization "sharing the performance of leadership," and having leaders relinquish control were emphasized in the leadership development program (p. 144). Belden-Charles (2011) studied "collaborative, collective, and relational" leading practices over a significant period of time in a learning community created for women leaders (p. 9). Moore (2014) examined the practices of relational leading in action learning teams. In his three-year study, Moore investigated how leadership might be re-framed to meet increased demands for organizational capacity in today's world through action learning. The demand for increased collaboration, effective communication, and relational leading practices continues. Currently, there is a growing focus by business and the private sector to improve communications internally and externally throughout their organizations and customer base. The global expansion of businesses, increased competition, and the diasporas of ethnic cultures fuel this initiative. I believe engaging in relational leading practices will assist in improving communications within and across organizations.

From a practitioner perspective, this thesis' intent was to develop applied recommendations linking relational leading practices and organizational communication. My "view" is based largely on social constructionist concepts, theory, and practices. The primary audience for these recommendations will be individuals in my organization. The secondary audience for this research may be others such as

senior leaders, project team leaders and managers, and organization practitioners who desire generative organizational dialogue, effective communications, and continuous learning at all levels of the enterprise.

Key Contributions of the Study

This study makes five contributions. First, the meaning of relational leading was discovered based on the review of the literature and the findings of this study. Gergen, (2009b), defines relational leading as "*the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future*" (p. 333). Based on the findings of this study, relational leading is defined as *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices.*

The second contribution relates to what are the practices of relational leading. This study found multiple data points in the research and the literature to answer this Question 2. The literature showed 12 relational leading practices. Specific to Question 2, four practices were initially discovered in this research study: *empowerment, shared learning, reliance, and commonalities*. However, when I examined the construct of organizational communication, two more relational leading practices were discovered: *open dialogue and accountability*, increasing the number of practices from this study to six. Then, when reviewing how to introduce relational leading practices into organizations, two additional practices from this study were discovered: *environment and playfulness*, bringing the total number of relational leading practices to eight, additions to the 12 that had been identified by others before. Each practice discovered from this study has supporting elements that were identified. The relationships between practices and corresponding elements are displayed in Chapter 4 and discussed further in Chapter 5.

Comparing practices from the literature and this research, it was found that four of the eight findings from this research overlapped with practices from the literature. These four are: commonalities, empowerment, open dialogue, and shared learning. My empirical research supported the 12 practices of Gergen and Hersted, and identified four new practices. The research was based on the following sources: a thematic analysis of 16 semi-structured interviews; a focus group consisting of eight project team members; one interview with the focus group facilitator; researcher and focus group facilitator's observations; reflections; field notes; project documentation, and researcher's project email correspondence.

The third contribution is the discovery of two relational leading practices that enhance organizational communication. These relational leading practices were evident in team member commentary where the relational leading practices of *open dialogue and accountability* allowed positive outcomes to occur across the project team.

The fourth contribution from this study supports how relational leading practices may be introduced into an organization. Two relational practices, the creation of an *environment*, and *playfulness* were discovered along with supporting operational elements. The creation of a supportive environment allowed relational practices to be implemented and performed. Having a spirit of playfulness within the environment, allowed relationships to be strengthened and to flourish.

The fifth contribution involves the creation of The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. This framework consists of the integration of all practices discovered in response to Questions 2, 3, and 4 from this study, and the practices from the literature. Each of the practices and identified supporting elements from this study were reviewed separately, and when combined with the practices from the literature, they created The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. The creation of this framework provides an opportunity to begin to operationalize relational leading practices within organizations. The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework is presented in Chapter 5.

Overview of Methodology

Through a social constructionist worldview, this study used a qualitative approach: using an auto- and duo-ethnography single case study design strategy. "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem"

(Creswell, 2014, p. 13). Patton (2015) states "Qualitative inquiry is particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic" (p. 64). In this dissertation, this is why I selected qualitative research, as the purpose of this study was to *explore* and *understand* relational leading practices, whether they emerged and were evident in the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. "Ethnography is the study of people, cultures and values" (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013, p. 196). The research of Major and Savin-Bader resonates with my intent for this study, because the unit of measure was a multi-cultural, high-technology, global project team. Gergen (2015) notes that in auto-ethnography research "the researcher is simultaneously the object of the research" (p. 78). With regards to duo-ethnography, Major and Savin-Baden state duo-ethnography is an extension of auto-ethnography and cite Ellis (2009) to note "Duo-ethnography is based on the idea that more is learned about a situation or context by discussing it" than through reflection only (p. 202). In referring to the more common single case studies, Yin (2014) notes "a study of small business can yield insights into innovations and innovative processes" (p. 52). A purposeful sample of 16 participants of the project team participated. Invitations were sent to invite participation in one-on-one semi-structured interview sessions with the participant researcher. An affirmative return confirmation email from the participant indicated participant consent. A subset of eight participants (from the 16) were also asked to participate in a focus group with their project team peers. The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim using the Rev.com transcription service. The focus group was facilitated by an independent third-party, Ernest Kahane, Ph.D. (See Appendix D), to reduce the opportunity for researcher bias. Observations and reflections from the researcher, third-party facilitator, and project team members, and project team documentation including email, meeting notes, and executive presentations were analyzed. A qualitative research approach was used as it "relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection, employs multiple methods of data collection, is both inductive and deductive, is based on participants' meanings, includes researcher reflexivity, and is holistic" (Creswell, 2014, p. 211).

Thematic analysis was the primary analysis tool. Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vi). Thematic analysis is often viewed as a bridge allowing "different qualitative methods to communicate with each other" (p. vii). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that in addition to identifying patterns within collected data "one of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility" (p. 4). Constant comparison was done in conjunction with thematic analysis as described by Kostere, Kostere, and Percy (2015). In this study, various types of qualitative data were collected at different points in the project and analyzed utilizing thematic analysis. Additional data based on researcher observation and reflections, the third-party focus group facilitator observations, and documentation used in the project process were collected and analyzed. Inductive analysis logic was used when reviewing data gathered to discover themes and patterns. The inductive process is one where the researcher begins with the raw data and moves through a process of data analysis to develop themes, and subsequently moves towards the development of a theoretical or conceptual model (Creswell, 2014). To support and further validate the researcher's (interview and focus group) findings, a computer program written in C Programming Language was created to parse (cut) the interviewee narratives into both three and five word segments. This "cutting" of the interviewee narrative allowed the researcher to view and confirm thematic patterns found in the focus group and 1:1 interview data. A thematic map was created to demonstrate relationships, experiences, and related documentation.

Limitations of the Research

There are several potential limitations to this research study. First, because it is a qualitative study associated within a particular context, a high-technology organization project team, the results may not be generalizable. Qualitative research has value, though, because data were carefully collected in the "participants' setting" (Creswell, 2014, p. 246) and honestly reflected on.

Second, the sample size of this study was limited due to the nature of the case study to be examined. Patton (2015) suggests there is no ideal sample size and provides successful examples where

n=1 and n=4. Small sample sizes allow the researcher to conduct more in-depth research. There are three types of sampling considered extremely important: sampling the phenomenon of interest, subjects, and raw materials (Boyatzis, 1998). To overcome this potential limitation based on sample size, this study used a great variety of research methods, addressing nearly all core subjects involved: requesting them to react to various aspects of the project.

A third limitation relates to the perceptions of the participants that I relied on in the research process. As the researcher participant, I had responsibility for the overall project as the program manager; in my roles as a researcher participant and program manager, participants may not have felt as free to share their perceptions with me during the 1:1 interviews as they would do with a third-party researcher.

Fourth, auto- and duo-ethnography studies are viewed by some researchers as having an "overwhelming reliance on self as the main data instrument" and "overuse of narration as the main approach to data collection, exacerbated by (un)reliability of non-corroborated personal memories, complicated by where factual recollections and interpretations begin" (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013, p. 202). An additional challenge with auto- and duo-ethnography is the perception of "poor/non-extent ethical permissions in relation to other individuals mentioned in self-narratives" (p. 203).

To curb the weight of these noted limitations, several steps were taken. First, data were collected in multiple segments. Second, an unbiased third-party was engaged to facilitate the focus group. Third, the researcher behaved as a team lead peer in receiving assignments and reporting progress results at the coffee and executive meetings. Fourth, an emphasis was placed on the collection of data from team members, and the independent third-party facilitator from 1:1 interviews, the focus group, and project documentation. Fifth, a custom software program was written to analyze and assist the researcher to compare and validate the manually processed thematic analysis results. It is hoped that this balanced approach reduced potential biased interpretations in this study.

Definition of Key Terms

Several terms and constructs are defined due to their importance to this study.

Social construction. This may be viewed "as an umbrella under which all traditions of sense making can be placed" (Gergen, 2015, p. 28). "Social constructionist ideas emerge from a process of dialogue, a dialogue that is on-going, and to which anyone…may contribute" (p. 3). Social "constructionists propose, our patterns of living originate and are sustained in our relationships" (p. 72).

Relational construction. Hosking and McNamee (2013) note that relational construction:

> Centers the processes in which person, world, and their relations are constructed. Practices that refer to – and have their meaning in relation to – a relational constructionist discourse embrace the view that they simultaneously reflect and, in the process of inquiry, actually re-construct the orienting premises and interests…as we examine the world, we change it. In so doing, we change our understanding of what we know (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), and how we might (re)produce it (methodology). (p. 99)

Relational leading. Relational leading is viewed as "an activity and not as a personal attribute… It is within relational processes that meaning is born, sustained, and transformed" (Gergen & Hersted, 2013, p. 30). "Relational leading refers to the ability of persons in relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future. It is not the single individual who is prized, but animated relations" (Gergen, 2009b, p. 333). Like relational leadership, relational leading is also imbedded in social constructionist perspectives.

Relational leadership. Relational leadership takes a "relational perspective that views leadership as a process of social construction through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 654). This perspective is different than that of an "entity perspective" as the focus is not on individual leader attributes (p. 654). Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012b) define this term as "a view that sees leadership as emerging from social processes and relationships among people" (p. 570).

> Relational leadership considers leadership to be a collective capacity (e.g., dyads, groups, teams, networks, social movements), and recognizes that leadership occurs not only in formal, managerial contexts (e.g., manager, subordinate) but also in contexts that do not involve formal authority (e.g., informal and collective leadership processes). It includes elements associated with both individuals (e.g., those who engage in leadership) and collective processes (e.g., social constructions, patterned interactions and behaviors, and discourses of leadership). (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012b, p. 571)

Organizational communication. This is defined by Conrad and Poole (2011) as "a process through which people, acting together, create, sustain, and manage meanings through the use of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context" (p. 5).

Overview of Dissertation

There are five chapters. Chapter One introduces the objective of the study, which is to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the studied core project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. Chapter Two presents the review of relevant literature. Chapter Three contains the involved research design and methodology. Chapter Four comprises the results of the study based on multiple data points. Chapter Five provides a summary of the results with a discussion and presents an integrated framework to understand better the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. Chapter Five includes a set of recommendations for practice and future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This study is made through a social constructionist lens to discover how relational leaders might facilitate and develop relational leading practices within their organizations in ways that influence and grow opportunities for increased and improved levels of organizational communication. The literature reviews theoretical concepts, empirical research, and the associated models relating to this research.

The literature review has six main sections. The first section depicts the social constructionist lens. It begins with a historical framework of social construction, as this is foundational for the key constructs of relational construction and relational leading, and is viewed as an epistemic basis for this study. The second section encompasses literature on relational construction. The third section provides summaries of relevant leadership theories. The fourth section includes socially constructed leadership theories. The fifth section comprises a review of relational leading. The sixth section reviews organizational communication. The literature is organized based on research themes found in the literature, resulting in a comingling of various types of materials within each section. A summary of the literature review concludes this chapter. A map of the literature review for this thesis is displayed in Figure 2.1.

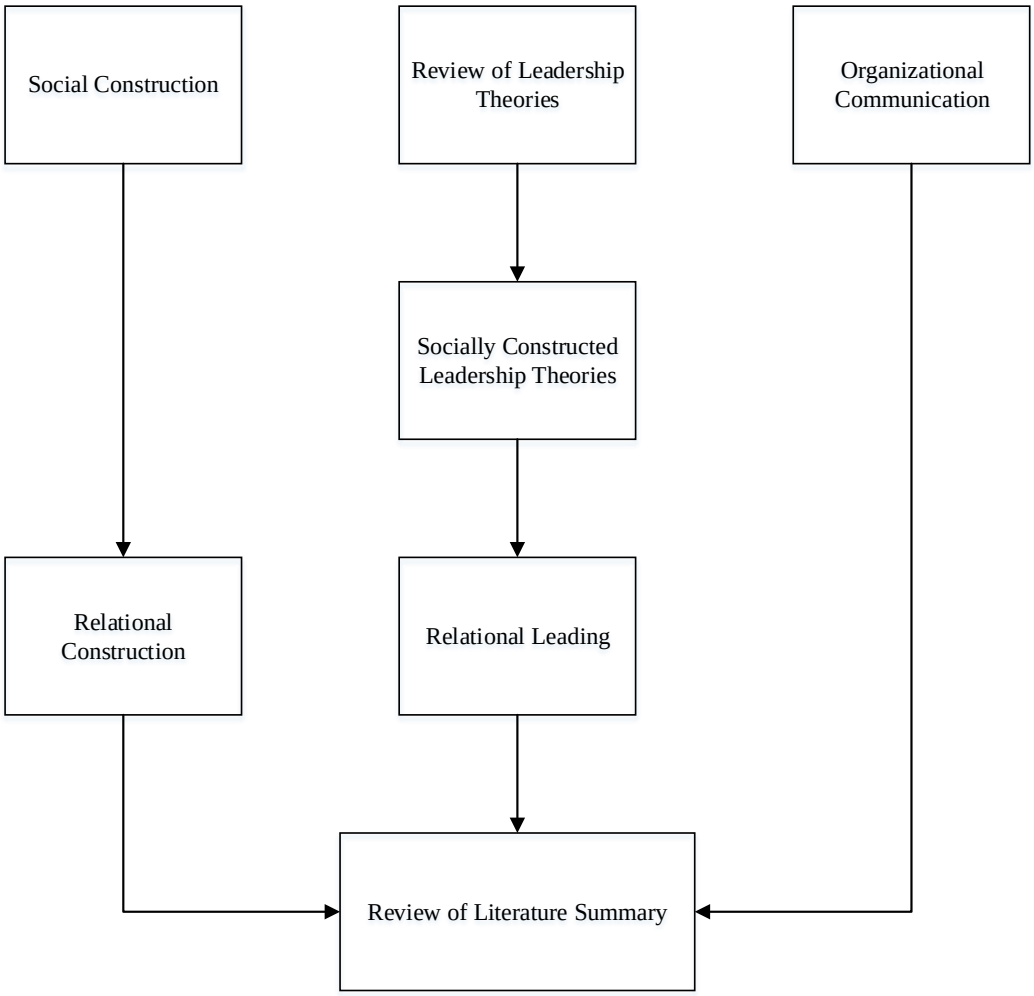

Figure 2. 1 Map of this Thesis Literature Review

The sources for the literature review were located via search engines: Academic OneFile, Clark Digital Commons (local to Clark University), Dissertations @ Clark University (local to Clark University), Gale Virtual Reference Library, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Lexis-Nexis Academic, Project Muse, ProQuest, WorldCat, and manual searching. Sources were primarily academic journals but also included business press, popular press, published dissertations, books, and theses in related fields. Among the academic journals reviewed were: *AI Practitioner, American Psychologist, Annual Review of Sociology, The British Journal of Sociology, Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, Canadian Journal of Sociology, Harvard Business Review, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Management Inquiry, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Organizational Behavior, International Journal of Business, Leadership Excellence, The Leadership Quarterly, McKinsey Quarterly, Journal of Business and Psychology, Leadership in Action, The American Journal of Psychology, and The Qualitative Report.*

Social Construction

From a historical perspective, social construction can trace its roots back to the German philosopher Max Scheler who coined the term "sociology of knowledge" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 4). In their seminal work, Berger and Luckmann noted that there have been differing thoughts over the years as to how to define the sociology of knowledge, and it is generally agreed that:

> The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises. It may thus be said that the sociology of knowledge constitutes the sociological focus of a much more general problem, that of the existential determination (Seinsgebundenheit) of thought as such. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 4)

Scheler studied how society orders human knowledge and believed that it is the experience of the individual that determined the specific order of meaning (as cited by Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Subsequent to Scheler, Marx stated, "that man's consciousness is determined by his social being," in that "human thought is founded in human activities" (as noted by Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 5). Wilhelm Dilthey (1958) added the perspective of historicism to the sociology of knowledge theory asserting that historical situations could only be understood in their own terms (as cited by Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The relationship between human thought and the social context, or environment where this activity occurs, contains foundational parallels to the relational environment which is the focus of this study.

Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) introduced the phenomenon of ideology to the sociology of knowledge and specifically focused on the particular, the total, and the general concepts of ideology believing that different perspectives add clarity. Mannheim saw ideology as a characteristic of both an opponent's thought and one's own thoughts, expanding the sociology of knowledge view beyond Scheler's work (as cited by Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Mannheim's ideology correlates directly to this dissertation in that the different perspectives he cites as important in expanding the sociology of knowledge are also present whenever individuals from different contexts and cultures participate in a dialogical process.

Other contributions to the sociology of knowledge included Theodor Geiger (1891-1952) who viewed the sociology of knowledge through a neo-positivist lens, Ernst Topitsch (1919-2003), who focused on philosophical perspectives, and Werner Stark (1909-1985) whose work differed from that of Mannheim in that his primary sociology of knowledge interest was in studying the social conditions of knowledge as truth (as referenced by Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The contributions of these researchers provide additional perspectives as to the knowledge in society as witnessed during their times.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) view the sociology of knowledge "to be part of the empirical discipline of sociology" (p. 14). Ideology has its place in the study of the sociology of knowledge; however, in and of itself does not provide a complete view. Rather: "the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with everything that passes for "knowledge" in a society" (p. 14). Relational leaders in organizations have a similar challenge with knowledge sharing in organizations. Through their opportunity to lead they too desire to communicate effectively and efficiently within their organizations

whether it be about sharing best practices or communicating general employee information. In turn, employees in a relational environment expect that relational leaders will share with them a clarity and openness of communications therefore allowing all employees an opportunity for leading.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) further argue that all members in a society contribute knowledge in one manner or another and that while theoretical interpretations of what the sociology of knowledge is are important, they do not necessarily reflect what members of a society experience and view as real.

> The sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people "know" as "reality" in their everyday non- or pre-theoretical lives. In other words, commonsense "knowledge" rather than "ideas" must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. It is precisely this knowledge that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist. The sociology of knowledge, therefore, must concern itself with the social construction of reality. (p. 15)

Berger and Luckmann discuss the social distribution of knowledge in a society as both objective and subjective in nature, as part of an ongoing dialectical process consisting of "three "moments:" externalization, objectivation, and internalization" (p. 129). The objective discussion reflects institutional views where the subjective reflects an individualistic view and ties to internalization. Externalization is perceived as an almost biological activity where man must explore outside of his known world and where habitualized actions take place in advance of institutionalization. Objectivation occurs as these habitualized actions become repetitive in that they continue to be used and become historical. A sub-tier of objectivation is legitimation, the process of explaining and justifying institutional traditions. Internalization is the third moment, and it is where the objectivation becomes part of consciousness. Objectivation and legitimation conceptually apply to this study in both the discussion of relational leading practices and the development of communication practices within organizations. Relational leading practices emphasizing repetition of best practices may be useful in leading to the building of positive processes and methods that over time may be imbedded into the fabric of the organizational culture. These best practices through repetition over time will become legitimized, strengthening processes in a way that places them in the forefront of the actor's world as a common language.

While Berger and Luckmann (1967) examined the individual primarily in relationship to society constructs, Gergen (1985) takes a more contemporary dialogical view and describes the social constructionist movement in modern psychology as being "concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live" (p. 266). Four metatheoretical level assumptions are suggested.

> What we take to be experience of the world does not in itself dictate the terms by which the world is understood…The terms in which the world is understood are social artifacts, historically situated interchanges among people…The degree to which a given form of understanding prevails or is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on the empirical validity of the perspective in question, but on the vicissitudes of social processes…Forms of negotiated understanding are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally connected with many other activities in which people engage. (Gergen, 1985, p. 266)

Social construction evolves around dialogue, and how it may be used in a transformative manner. These "dialogues represent invitations to a way of understanding…they may also transform our actions," (Gergen, 2009a, p. 29). It is through this dialogical process that one shares realities of the "real, the rational, and the good" (p. 28).

This contemporary dialogical view of people engagement and their worlds within the social construction movement espoused by Gergen is a primary influence of this study. Through the social constructionist perspective, I am hopeful that by applying a dialogical approach and process to organizational communication, the opportunity to develop transformative relational dialogue may be facilitated and commonality constructions and processes discovered.

Traditional social construction views, such as those of Berger and Luckmann (1967), primarily focus on the individual and their relationship with their world, or "symbolic universe" where "institutional processes" are built upon ordered historical context that provides meaning (p. 103). In

contemporary social construction views, as found in the writings of Gergen (2009a), there is a focus on relational processes (Hosking & McNamee 2013).

From my perspective, this contemporary view encompassing relational processes becomes a bridge from "pre-existing (individual and social) structures and their influences," and moves the focus to "relational processes," (Hosking & McNamee, 2013, p. xiv). It is here where "person, world and their relations are constructed" (p. 99). At this point in the literature review, I will continue to expand the contemporary construction perspective and review relational construction. Gergen notes that "constructionist dialogues represent invitations to a way of understanding…the constructionist message: the moment we begin to speak together, we have the potential to create new ways of being" (2009a, p. 29). In Gergen's narrative, the language we live by may be viewed as the common understanding of words or terms that are shared. This does not only refer to an ethnic dialect, but to other areas of verbal and non-verbal communication, e.g., engineers have a language that is different in many aspects from doctors, and from law enforcement agency members. While within the same ethnic language there are common threads, specific job role communication does not always translate to like understanding. "Relationships cannot become the reality by which life is lived until there is a vocabulary through which they are realized" (Gergen, 1991, p. 160).

A Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) exploratory study utilized constructive-development theory, "measurements of meaning and meaning making processes," as the research lens (Drath, Hughes, McCauley, McGuire, O'Connor, Palus, & Van Velsor, 2008, p. 1). Constructive-development theory was utilized as a way to "examine the collective phenomena of leadership cultures and practices" (p. 2). To do so, broad characterizations of independent, dependent, interdependent leadership cultures and practices were used. The researchers found evidence of interdependent leadership cultures and practices in each organization studied; however, the practices were not found to be widespread, but shared with independent and dependent practices. Independent leadership cultures and practices may be described as leadership emanating from, and shared by multiple individuals with complementary experience and skills. Dependent leadership cultures and practices are suggested to be those where leadership is more authoritarian nature and held by one, or a small number of individuals. The interdependent perspective is noted as this definition focuses on "mutual inquiry and learning," and closely parallels aspects of relational leading. It is also theorized by the researchers to be "commensurate with the rise of globalization and information networks" (p. 4). According to the researchers, the emergence of interdependent leadership cultures to support globalization is not widespread (p. 4). They further observed that interdependent leadership was the exception and not the rule; and that senior management was able to influence their organizations "towards more interdependent cultures and practices" (p. 48). These constructive-development leadership theory findings are "consistent with research by Rooke and Torbert (1998)" (p. 48) and demonstrate the importance of senior management engagement. This discovery provides additional credence for this dissertation study: the purpose of this study is to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication.

The exploratory constructive-development leadership study findings by Drath et al. (2008), demonstrate one can think of "interdependent logistics" (through cultural beliefs and leadership practices) as providing "headroom" for development of the organization" (p. 48). One example of this, referring to employees, is where the authors state "interdependent practices can act as catalysts for more independent logics in employees because they call for more individual initiative and a greater sense of ownership of work" (p. 48). The authors also mention "interdependent leadership cultures and practices are broadly characterized by the assumption that leadership is a collective activity that requires mutual inquiry and continuous learning" (p. 48). This view of leading as a collective activity construction takes focus away from the concept of unitary leadership and provides focus on the opportunities for individuals to actively engage in relational processes where meaning can be a shared activity and learning can take place. These relational practices provide opportunities for organizational members to improve existing abilities and to learn new practices.

Drath et al. (2008) cite Senge (1990), and Marsick and Watkins (1993), as additional researchers who use similar concepts to interdependent leadership cultures and practices: in their learning organization literature. While Drath et al. believe additional research is required in the area of interdependent leadership cultures and practices, there remain clear parallels to relational leading such as encouraging interaction across the enterprise, increased transparency, the comprehensive sharing of information, and flatter hierarchies, as demonstrated in their research.

In my opinion, the development and sustainability of these meaning making relationships through verbal and/or non-verbal dialogue is critical to the success of relating and communicating within organizations because it allows the act of relating to occur. One may question whether all processes and the related communications are important? Are some more important than others e.g. policy manuals containing best practices? Shotter (2012) would suggest that everyday relations refers to what initially appears to be communication that is somewhat mundane, in that general observations are communicated and commented on in exchanges between the parties. These mundane and sometimes phatic conversation exchanges are not as important in and of themselves, rather it is the dialogical process of communication and relating that is key. We are challenged to move beyond the obvious and to recognize "possible connections and relations between momentary features of our surroundings that we might otherwise have missed" (p. 24). Shotter, like Gergen, sees the process of communicating and the relating associated with it to be important in the development of understanding. Gergen (2009a) discussed "common ways of speaking" as essential to collaborative relationships (p. 64). Drath et al. (2008) examined leadership cultures and practices as they relate to interdependent logistics where individual employees are empowered and encouraged to participate in interactions to construct relationships across the enterprise.

Relational Construction

Relational construction is important to this research as it is centered on dialogical practices and processes that "construct persons and worlds" (Hosking, 1999, p. 117). Because of my project management experiences and scholarly studies, these dialogical practices are of particular interest to me and support my research as organizational communication involves the relational constructions of persons, worlds, and associated processes. This section of the literature highlights relational construction and aspects directly influencing this study.

Relational construction refers to relational processes one builds with others and where coordinated actions between the individuals develop mutual meaning (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Hosking (2006) notes that although other relations are always possible, relational construction processes "only construct the way someone or something is *here and now*" (p. 60). Hosking (1999) suggests several relational premises that support the thought that "self making" and "world (other) making are just two sides of the same coin" (p.6). These relational premises include among others, "relating is a joint action," and is "constructed in language and other forms of action," and that "acts invite *possible* supplements, some become conventional, other relations always are possible," "processes are local – social – historical," and "they may (re) construct power over or power to" (p. 6). Relating from the view of relational construction is important to this study due to the nature of global organizations and those organizations where different cultures are present, and communication occurs. Dachler and Hosking (1995) view relating as:

> A constructive, ongoing process of meaning making, through language, in multilogue…with multiloguing referring to…processes in which meanings are made in mutual relating or referencing of texts to contexts. It is in these processes of multiloguing that realities are constructed. (p. 4)

Gergen (2009b) suggests that because these realities with others intertwine, they form multiple worlds where one can exist. "It is partly the demand for predictable worlds that binds scenarios of civility…common patterns that can be used by all" (p. 153). When discussing the concept of multi-beings Gergen (2009a) states:

> As a multi-being one is able to relate with others in multi-being relations where in doing so a common reality may be found. In this common reality coordinated action and dialogue occur and the potential for conflict may arise. Through the continued process of creating agreement around what is real and what is good in a co-reflection manner via transformative dialogue, balance may be restored. (p. 118)

The concept of transformative dialogue is important for purposes of this study in that I am suggesting relational leaders have the ability to influence a (project) team's organizational communication. Iterative dialogue is part of the process where transformation can take place to positively change the overall nature of their team and/or organizations.

Transformative dialogue for the multi-being expands the opportunity for unbounded polyphonic expression that invites "the expression of multiple logics and values – reflecting multiple traditions of which people are a part" (Gergen, 2009b, p. 325). "To understand each other is to coordinate our actions within the common scenarios of our culture" (p. 165). Gergen goes on to state, "as we coordinate words and action, so do we enter a new register of relationship" (p. 172).

Gergen (2009b) refers to the understanding and respectful coordination of one's actions with that of another as "synchronic sensitivity" (p. 165), giving the perspective that coordination bridges the journey from "I," bounded co-action, to "we," coordination in a multi-being state (p. 178). A relational constructionist perspective "invites questions about the social processes by which certain understandings come about and represent the social reality with reference to certain behaviors make sense and not others" (Dachler, & Hosking, 1995, p. 10). The respectful coordination of actions and the evolution of understandings are in my opinion what project team's need today to successfully work cross-organizationally. The ability to influence cross-cultural communications through a relational constructionist perspective, with an emphasis on relational leading, is an important philosophical and praxis task.

A Review of Leadership Theories

In order to showcase the innovative significance of relational leading (Gergen, 2009b; Gergen & Hersted, 2013), there are certain leadership theories that are contrasting to relational leading, and others that provide more similar approaches. Though not the primary focus or the final scope of this research, a demonstrated progression of historically important leadership theories is believed to be essential in developing and understanding how relational leading differentiates itself. The theories highlighted in this literature review are progressive in that the review begins with historical theories that tend to focus on the individual as leader. These theories are trait (Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Bass, 1990, 2008; Kotze & Venter, 2011), leadership skills (Schein, 2010; Connelly, Gilbert, Marks, Mumford, Threlfall, & Zaccaro, 2000; Zaccaro, 2007), and leadership style (Reddin, 1967, 1970; Blake & Mouton, 1985; Blanchard Hersey, & Johnson, 2013). The literature then moves to a "middle ground" where theories recognize not only leaders but also subordinates/followers. In this dynamic, an awareness of dyadic communications begins to take place. This shift in theory away from individual-centric leaders continues with the advent of transformational leadership theory (Avolio & Bass, 1993; Bass, 1995, 1997; Burns, 2012).

In transformational leadership, a general interdependence exists and both leaders and followers share mutual interests in support of the organization. Transformational leaders often display charismatic behaviors and share their vision and values with followers. The tendency is for leaders to apply more transformational process activities in order to develop awareness and deeper follower understanding as to what is best for the group.

Situational Leaders (Blanchard, Nelson, & Zigarmi 1993; Jago & Vroom, 2007) employ both supportive and directive styles of leading in order to engage others towards the completion of selected tasks. In situational leadership, there is not only an awareness of followers; leadership begins to adapt personal styles to engage followers in given situations. This notion of leadership awareness and understanding is extended by the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) in that the focus begins to shift from purely the leader, to interactions

leaders have with others in dyadic relationships. It is in LMX research theory that one begins to see the emphasis from previous theories where the focus is solely on the leader, towards a shift where there is a greater communication exchange between actors.

Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, 1995, 2010; Fields & Hale, 2007; Hannay, 2009) moves leadership theory that much closer to relational leading theory in that the institutional power and control of leadership is no longer only found in a leadership hierarchy; it is now dispersed to those being led. In authentic leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Bass & Bass, 2008; Avolio, Gardner, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2004; Avolio & Luthans, 2003), there is a total shift from leader traits, to leader behavior that can be emulated by followers. Authentic leadership is a co-created relational process between leaders and followers, including behaviors learned from life experiences, and it is a process where a building of trust between dyads is fostered. Shared and distributed leadership theories (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007; Conger & Pearce, 2003; Manz, Pearce, & Sims, 2009) move closer to the elements of relational leadership in that shared leadership engages multiple actors and is not focused on a solitary leader. Shared leadership is reflected when a group acting as a single entity takes a leadership role to achieve goals and objectives. The coming together of actors to work in a unified manner suggests the cultivation of relationships amongst team members and groups. In distributed leadership (Gibb, 1954; Bolden, 2011; Gronn, 2000), some of the formal leadership engage to work with chosen members of the collective in order to participate in a task.

Socially constructed leadership theories included interdependent leadership (Drath, Hughes, McCauley, McGuire, O'Connor, Palus, & Van Velsor, 2008), focusing on active involvement, and the sharing of work. Constructive-development theory (Drath et al., 2008) assumes that management may influence leadership practices allowing interdependent practices to grow. Leadership and organizational culture practice occurs when authentic organizational learning environments are fostered, and behavioral expectation deemphasized. Leading organizational transformation encompasses the awareness, and subsequent development of leader and group behaviors as a collective. Co-creating leadership (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007) emphasizes leadership as a collective or shared construction, aligning leaders and followers to best practices. Leading cross-demographically (Offermann, 2012) encompasses the elements of leading, relationships, and cross-cultural communications. Leading and systemic co-construction (Barge, 2012; Barge & Fairhurst, 2008; Barge & Little, 2002, 2008) combines the elements of systemic thinking and social constructionism, focusing on the values of communication, connection, and affirmation. Constructing positive leadership environments continues the theme of the Appreciative Inquiry inspired affirmation, through the processes of multiloguing and meaning making. The last area of discussion prior to the relational leading section is that of appreciative leadership (Schiller, Holland, & Riley, 2001) where relational activities such as positive coaching is found.

The review of this progression of historic, and socially constructed leadership theories from trait to distributed leadership, and constructive development theory to appreciative leadership has two primary intents. First, it is intended to provide a historical view of key leadership theories. Secondly, to share those leadership theories and related socially constructed associations I believe to be influential to the formulation of relational leading. A review of the noted leadership theories follows.

Trait theory. Past leadership theories date back over a century with the studies of the "trait" approach theory to leadership in that it was one of the first systemic and extensively researched attempts to understand what made great leaders great, with an exclusive focus on the leader. The trait approach looked to discover traits that might be applied in a prescriptive manner in order to make or build great leaders. The theories that subsequently evolved focused on the individual as leader and the characteristics and personal qualities of those individuals who were considered at the time to be "great leaders" (Northouse, 2013 p. 19). Trait leadership research was bolstered by two empirical survey research studies conducted by Stogdill (1948; 1974), where 287 survey studies from the years 1904-1947 and 1948-1970 were conducted, and concentrated on how individual traits contributed to leadership as a "focused group of processes," (Stogdill, 1974, p. 7). Stogdill concluded that while individual leader traits were important, one also needed to include the given situation in order to explain how leadership emerges (Bass, 1990). Bass and Bass (2008) identified specific leadership traits reviewing the years 1970 - 2006 that

differentiated leaders from followers. Bass and Bass noted that traits and the associated meanings conveyed have a basis that is more enduring and longer-term. Bass and Bass further reflected, "when traits become a requirement for doing something, they are then called competencies" (p. 103).

Goldberg (1990) investigated trait terms in three comprehensive empirical studies. His goal was to determine whether the "Big-Five" factor structure of trait adjectives previously determined by the Cattell (1943) "English trait terms" studies could be replicated (p. 1216). The Big-Five factors are: "(I) Surgency (or Extraversion), (II) Agreeableness, (III) Conscientiousness (or Dependability), (IV) Emotional Stability (vs. Neuroticism), and (V) Culture" (p. 1217). It should be noted that Factor (V) Culture has also been interpreted as "Intellect" by other researchers (p. 1217). The goal of the Goldberg research was to determine if Cattell's findings based on Cattell's original 35 variables using orthogonal rotational methods were relevant beyond the initial variables. For each of his three studies, Goldberg selected subsets of the 2,800 trait terms previously classified by Norman (1967) based on a trait terms research study. Goldberg concluded, based on his three studies, that a large English trait sample based on self- or peer descriptions will likely provide results where the Big-Five factor terms or dimensions will be represented. Although more recent leadership theories have evolved, there remain researchers who continue to analyze leadership theories in relation to the Big-Five personality trait factor structures.

De Hoogh, Den Hartog, and Koopman (2005) investigated a combination of the Big-Five leadership personality traits in relation to charismatic/transformational leadership and transactional leadership behavior. The study consisted of 83 managers who were initially assessed for their management skill potential and nine months later participated in a follow-up study. Conducting a one-way analysis of variance, and calculating two-way correlation coefficients as well as multiple regression analyses, the researchers reported a "relationship between four of the Big-Five factors and both charismatic and transactional leadership" (p. 861). De Hoogh, Den Hartog, and Kalshoven (2011) investigated the Big-Five personality factors as they relate to "ethical leader behavior" (p. 349). Two multi-source studies were conducted, the first study consisted of a coded questionnaire that was returned by 91 managers and 182 subordinates who willingly agreed to take a self-assessment. The second study expanded the questionnaire items per trait and added control variables. A total of 150 questionnaires were deemed completed and subsequently used for the study. Significant relationships between the Big-Five and ethical leadership were found and the results specifically highlighted "conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability" (p. 361).

An empirical research case study conducted by Martorana, Owens, Peterson, and Smith (2003) explored and observed top management team (TMT) dynamics to better understand leader personalities in relation to organizational performance. Specifically, the interaction between leaders based on their respective personalities and how they relate to senior management. The criteria for the case studies selected included a level of data concerning "group dynamics or CEO personality to permit hypothesis-blind q-sorters to perform a q-sort…all cases had to occur within the past 25 years" (p. 799). Archived sources were used to gather personality data on 17 CEOs and "TMT group dynamics" data (p. 799). CEO source types included "published biographies, interviews…" TMT data included "memoirs and books written by financial reporters" released by major publishers that referenced corporation histories (p. 799). The Big-Five factor traits studied were conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness. CEO personality data were collected from archive sources and reviewed as to whether they contained discussions of TMT dynamics. Those sources were included in the study and a Group Dynamic q-sort was conducted. The researchers then tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha and tested "CEO personality and TMT dynamics" variables via canonical correlation calculation (p. 801). The interpretation of the research analysis results suggested strong correlation between "CEO personality characteristics and TMT group dynamics" (p. 801). The researchers suggested that some caution or consideration be given to the study in that all CEOs represented American companies; however, the results of the study provide support for the "general hypothesis that CEO personality affects TMT group dynamics and that TMT group dynamics are related to organizational performance" (p. 802).

Bono, Gerhardt, Ilies, and Judge (2002) in a qualitative and quantitative review of personality and leadership, studied the Big-Five five-factor model as an organizing framework and conducted a meta-

analysis of 73 samples containing 222 correlations. The examples collected canvased students, business, and military personnel. The results indicated that the leadership trait perspective had a strong correlation of .48 when traits were organized according to the Big-Five framework. However, the author's conceded that trait theories held "a curious history in leadership research" and that their study was unable to discern "whether the traits of leadership emergence or effectiveness are the same as those that cause a leader's group to be effective" (p. 775).

Researchers Kotze and Venter (2011) examined leadership effectiveness as it relates to emotional intelligence. The researchers pondered whether emotional intelligence might be one of several competencies that influence "promotion criterion for future leaders" (p. 397). The South African study reviewed 114 leaders in a public sector institution across six different geographical areas. Individual ratings of themselves as well as by four subordinates were conducted raising the number of participants to 570. The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory model of emotional intelligence was used as the measuring instrument. A multivariate analysis of variance via an SPSS program was used to differentiate between effective and ineffective leaders regarding emotional intelligence. The "Leadership Behavior Inventory (LBI) was used" based on Cronbach alpha values to measure leadership effectiveness (p. 407). The results of the study indicated effective leaders scored higher than ineffective leaders in the areas of emotional intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and stress management intelligence. The researchers concluded "the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness seems to warrant organizational consideration …as a selection and promotion criterion for future leaders" (p. 417).

These collective studies indicate leadership trait theory; specifically, the Big-Five trait adjectives may have renewed relevance with researchers when used in tandem with other leadership models. However, one must take into account that studies focusing on traits remain primarily focused on the individual as leader and do not reflect a collective leadership process of engagements via dyads and groups.

Leadership skills approach theory. Also focusing on the individual as leader is the "skills approach" where individual skills of leaders were assessed in a manner to understand the "nature of effective leadership" in a descriptive manner (Northouse, 2013, p. 57). The research referenced in this leadership skills portion of the literature review consists of both empirical and theoretical studies examining leadership skills. With the exception of Schein (2010), it is interesting to note that leadership skills to assist one in working and communicating cross-culturally were not found in the studies represented.

Connelly, Gilbert, Marks, Mumford, Threlfall, and Zaccaro (2000) explored the relationship of "complex leader skills and knowledge" to leader performance (p. 69). Research skills in their hypothesis consisted of "complex problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge" amongst a subset group of military officers (p. 69). The objective of the hypothesis was to analyze the variance of two measurements, the quality of problem solutions, and the level of achievement by leaders. The results of the study provided additional validity to the hypothesis that complex problem-solving skills, social judgment, and leader knowledge may be used as predictors for "two leadership criteria – leader achievement, and the quality of problem solutions" (p. 81). The researchers determined that this type of leadership model was important because it provides indications as to why leaders may perform well when faced with challenging circumstances.

Zaccaro (2007) discussed "how leader attributes influence indicators of leader performance" (p.11). In his discussion, Zaccaro reviews *A Model of Leader Attributes and Leader Performance* (2004) created by Bader, Kemp, and Zaccaro, where problem-solving skills, social judgment, and leader knowledge are seen as proximal attributes within the leader operating environment and influential to leader processes which in-turn are precursors to leader outcomes.

In a controlled analysis study supported by the U.S. Army research Institute, Marks, Mumford, Reiter-Palmon, and Zaccaro (2000) examined the process of skill acquisition over "the course of people's careers" beginning at the novice stage through senior leaders (p. 3). In their study, the researchers studied leadership amongst U.S. Army officers where participants completed standardized tests to measure key leadership skills. In addition, key achievements, problem resolution, and participant written "best

performance" narratives were obtained (p. 9). Three groups totaling 1,790 participants were reviewed and mean differences were conducted via a series of ANOVA's contrasting each group. The study concluded that "simpler, structured exercises illustrating key principles will prove the most beneficial" when "carefully tailored to current developmental needs if they are to have optimal effects on the acquisition of requisite skills and expertise" (p. 19).

In an empirical research study, Gilley, Gilley, and McMillan (2009) investigated specific leadership skills necessary to influence the management of organizational change. The primary questions were two-fold. First, from an employee perspective they examined whether managers "effectively implement change in their organizations" (p. 41). "Second, the frequency with which leaders exhibit skills and behaviors associated with successful organizational change" were reviewed (p. 41). The six skills consisted of "coaching, communicating, engaging and involving others, motivating, rewarding, and building teams" (p. 42). The 36-question survey instrument included demographic, organization, and manager specific questions and was distributed to 507 potential respondents yielding a 92.7 response rate, 470 actual responses. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis using a "stepwise method of independent variable inclusion" were used (p. 42). The five possible responses to each of the survey questions were "never," "rarely," "sometimes," "usually," and "always." Respondents indicated that management "were 'never' or 'rarely' effective in implementing change 36.1% of the time, as compared with 25.6% for 'usually' or 'always' effective" (p. 42). Interpreting the survey results the researchers concluded that in order to predict if leaders had the ability to effectively lead change, top skills are in the areas of motivating others, communicating effectively, and in building teams. Skills the researchers found to be of "lesser significance are, in descending order, the abilities to coach, involve others, and reward appropriately" (p. 43). The key findings of Gilley, Gilley, and McMillan resonate with this study as the main research question was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether it emerged and was evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. Gilley, Gilley, and McMillan suggest leaders will be most effective leading change when they are able to motivate, communicate, and build teams. Leading relationally encourages dialogue within and across organizations, and may provide additional opportunities to motivate individuals and teams, and for teams to coalesce.

In an empirical study focusing on leadership skills and how skills varied across organizational levels, Campion, Morgeson, and Mumford (2007) researched "four categories of leadership skill requirements: Cognitive skills, Interpersonal skills, Business skills, and Strategic skills" (p. 154). Professional employees (n=1023), working in U.S. government international agencies, in 156 countries were surveyed. The researchers refer to a leadership skills "strataplex" where the multiple skills categories are layered and combined with the organizational level of leaders i.e., "junior, mid, and senior" (p. 155). Of the four categories researched, cognitive was considered to be those skills which are foundational in nature to leadership as these are the types of skills that allow one the ability to "learn and adapt" (p. 156). According to the researchers, the leadership skills examined can be "theoretically and empirically grouped" into the four categories examined (p. 163). Second, depth of leadership skills is interconnected to the hierarchical level one achieves as a leader within the organization. Third, leaders drew upon cognitive skills more than interpersonal skills, and interpersonal skills more than business and strategic skills. Fourth, the need for strategic and business skills is greater as one climbs the leadership hierarchy to higher leadership positions.

In a theoretical essay discussing learning cultures and the learning leader, Schein (2010) notes that we cannot predict what the world will be like tomorrow despite the many predictions surrounding globalism. Schein does suggest a flexible learning organization may be necessary to meet the demands of future change. To do this, he proposes ten learning dimensions or skill sets for future global leaders to consider, Table 2.1.

Table 2. 1 *Dimensions of Learning*

Dimensions/Skills	Description
Proactivity	The ability to be proactive problem solvers and learners
Commitment to learning to learn	Leadership teams must agree that learning is good thing worth investing in, and that learning to learn is itself a skill to be mastered
Positive assumptions about human nature (Theory Y)	Developing trust and dependency on others, faith in people believing human nature is basically good, and malleable
Belief the environment can be managed	Leadership must not be afraid to demonstrate levels of management when greater environmental challenges exist
Truth through pragmatism and inquiry	Solutions to problems derive from a deep belief in inquiry and a pragmatic search for truth
Positive future orientation	Leaders should employ a longer-term view and weigh the potential course(s) of action based on changes impacting their environment
Commitment to full and open task-relevant communication	A true learning culture must be built on the assumption that communication and information are central to organizational well-being
Cultural diversity commitment	Leadership's commitment to coordinating and developing an appreciation and understanding of diverse cultural values
Systemic thinking commitment	The understanding by leaders as to the holistic impact of their decisions both inside and outside of the organization
Continuous analysis and reflection	Belief that cultural analysis is a valid set of lenses for understanding and improving the world, or continuous analysis and reflection of the organizational culture and structure to understand how tasks are completed and how the organization evolves

Note. From *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (p. 366-371), by E. H. Schein, 2010, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright (2010) by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Schein takes a more relational approach in his learning culture skill dimensions essay in that there is more interest towards the organization, and how the influence of leaders who have a learning mindset and vision or what Schein refers to as a "learning culture" might bring stability to organizations during turbulent times (p. 383). As part of a longer-term leadership view, Schein suggests that to increase cultural knowledge and to become "more sensitive to culture" allows one to "learn about cultural variation and develop cultural humility" (p. 369). Schein's relational approach in the development of learning skills is of particular interest because it aligns to research question three of this dissertation, "What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?"

Skills leadership approach theory provides insight to the awareness and progressive development of skills surrounding the individual as leader. While individual development is a positive activity the focus remains on the individual as leader and not the collective group.

Leadership style approach. Continuing with the theme of the individual as leader, the "style approach" is more concerned with what leaders did, i.e., a study of behavior, rather than personal traits reflecting whom the leader(s) are. The style approach emanated based on research from "the Ohio State studies, University of Michigan studies, and the work of Blake and Mouton on the Managerial Grid" (Northouse, 2013, p. 95). An important note regarding the style approach is that the model developed by Blake and Mouton also considered "concern for people" in addition to "concern for results" (p. 95). This consideration for people lifts away some of the focus on the individual as leader and begins to suggest the potential of an unbounded leadership model. Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid III (1985) highlighted five areas of management and placed them across an "x" axis of "concern for production" and a "y" axis of "concern for people" (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 512). Both the "x and y" axis were contained scales of 1-9. The five areas included:

> Impoverished management (minimum effort to get work and sustain organizational membership), authority-obedience (operational efficiency based on conditions that limit the interference with human elements), organization man management (the balance of organization performance and the morale of people), country club management (creating a friendly organization environment by paying attention to peoples' needs), and team management (a common organization purpose drives commitment of people and leads to trusted organizational relationships). (p. 512)

Reddin's taxonomy of leadership styles expanded the model of Blake and Mouton focusing on: "the type of leadership, relationship orientation, task orientation, and effectiveness" (p. 42). Though this model focuses on the individual as leader, the identifier of "relationship orientation" is introduced as a reflection of a type of leadership. It is Reddin's (1967, 1970) model, specifically his approach to leadership styles that he termed may be effective or ineffective that inspired Blanchard and Hersey to develop their model of situational leadership (Blanchard, Hersey, & Johnson, 2013, p. 92).

Sauer (2011) conducted quantitative research examining the styles of low-status and high-status leaders in relation to the effects on team performance. The study investigated how a "newly assigned leader's status moderates subordinates' reactions to different leadership styles to affect assessments of leader's self-confidence and effectiveness, and how this impacts team performance" (p. 574). Two experimental studies revealed a directive style was more effective as a tool for low-status leaders. In contrast, high-status leaders were found to be more effective when a participative style was used. Study I consisted of 68 participants who were reflective of 20 different job functions. Participants viewed online content consisting of scenario descriptions and video segments before completing an online survey where "perceptions of the leader and other team members" were captured (p. 577). "A 2 x 2 design was used with manipulations of the incoming leader's status (high vs. low) and leadership style (directive vs. participative)" (p. 577). Leader's effectiveness was captured using a three item scale and the "items were combined to form one average score (Cronbach's alpha = .82);" a "2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)" was used to review perceptions of leader status and effectiveness (p. 578).

In the second study, Sauer engaged 216 participants from a university in the northeastern United States. This study divided participants into four-person teams with the task of completing a complex computer game. Prior to beginning the task training on how to play, the game was provided to the team members and team leaders. Leaders also received coaching on the use of "directive and participative style" in managing the team process (p. 579). Because of the nature of teams' data were collected based on team structures, "hierarchical linear models (HLM's)" were used for team assignment and "revealed that participants in the high-status condition perceived the new team leader as having higher status" (p. 580). The study concluded that a leadership style that appears to work well for one leader may not work well for another, and that directive style seems more favorable when used by low-status leaders and participative style works best for high-status leaders.

In a study similar to Sauer's, Madlock (2008) examined task and relational leadership styles and measured them from the perspective of "supervisor communicator competence and leadership style on employee job and communication satisfaction" (p. 61). The research included 220 full-time working adult participants living in the mid-west United States. The 12-item "Leadership Style Questionnaire" developed by Northouse (2001) was used, as was the 19-item "Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction

Inventory (ICSI)" developed by Hecht (1978), and the 12-item "Communicator Competence Questionnaire" developed by Backman, Dillard, Eisenburg and Monge (1982), (p. 67). Madlock utilized a "quantitative methodological approach…in an effort to maximize the generalizability of the findings based on the size and diversity of the sample" (p. 67). Communicator competence yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .90; job satisfaction a Cronbach's alpha of .92; communication satisfaction a Cronbach's alpha of .94, and total leadership style a Cronbach's alpha of .93. While interpreting the data, it was found that employee communication satisfaction was strongly related to supervisor communication competence and supervisor relational leadership style. It was also stated, "that supervisors' communication competence was found to be the greatest predictor of employee job and communication satisfaction" (p. 72). The researcher noted that one limitation of this study was that it was primarily "correlational" in nature in that associations were only between stated variables (p. 73). Despite the limitation noted, the results of this study are encouraging to this dissertation research because it is focused on how relational leaders might influence organizational communication through the development of relational leading practices. The connection revealed between relational leadership style and supervisor communication competence as they relate to employee job satisfaction is promising.

A Dutch empirical study conducted by Bakker-Pieper, Oostenveld, and De Vries (2010) focused on communication styles in relation to leadership styles. "Charismatic, human-oriented (leader's consideration) and task-oriented leadership (leader's initiating structure)" were reviewed with regards to leadership outcomes (p. 367). Participants (n=279) completed a computerized survey consisting of 138 questions each based on a "five-point (disagree-agree) scale" (p. 371). The questions were selected from existing questionnaires including the "Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (SBDQ)" developed by Fleishman (1953), Bass' (1985) "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire," and "task and human-oriented leadership styles" developed by Syroit (1979) and De Vries, Roe, and Taillieu (2002) (p. 371). "Seven main communication dimensions" created by Bakker-Pieper, De Vries, Siberg, Van Gameren, and Vlug (2009), measuring the interpersonal communication style of the leader were identified via the outcome of a lexical study (p. 371). To measure the study dimensions, 87 items were written to represent each of the seven poles.

From this analysis six factors were identified "which explained a total of 56.3% of the variance;" the factors are: "verbal aggressiveness," "expressiveness," "preciseness," "assuredness," "supportiveness," and "argumentativeness" (p. 371). The researchers discovered:

> human-oriented leadership represented by different communication style profiles with human-oriented strongly associated with the communication style supportiveness. Additionally, the researchers discovered task-oriented leadership less related to communication styles than human-oriented or charismatic leadership. It was found via multiple regression analysis and meditational analysis of the data that "leader's supportiveness seems to be the most important communication style variable. (Bakker-Pieper et al., 2009, p. 377)

The research connection between leadership styles and communication as presented by Bakker-Pieper, Oostenveld, and De Vries (2010) tends to reinforce the findings of Madlock (2008) and provides support to this dissertation research with regards to relational leading styles and communication.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is defined as "a process that changes and transforms people" (Northouse, 2013, p. 185). In his seminal work, Burns (2012) identifies what he refers to as "two basic types of leadership: the *transactional* and the *transforming"* (p. 4). Burns describes transforming leadership as a terminal goal or "end values such as liberty, justice, and equality" (p. 425). The view is one of "collective purpose and change" where the commonalities and differentiators of both leaders and followers are examined, with the hope of collaborative achievement (p. 426). When commenting on transforming leaders, Bass (1995) stated that these leader types transform followers into believers, and subsequently into leaders. What Bass views as important for a transformational leader is that they elevate "awareness and consciousness" as to what is genuinely important (p. 467). In Bass' research questioning, whether transformational leadership has the ability to transcend organizational and national cultural boundaries, Bass echoed his earlier work noting that as part of the "new leadership" role,

transformational leaders have responsibility to expand "followers' motivation, understanding, maturity, and self worth" (Bass, 1997, p. 130).

In an essay synthesizing transformational leadership research, Bass (1999) indicated that during the transformation process, followers tend to shed their self-interests in their progression to that of leader, and in the process move through stages of "self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration" (p. 11). This elevation towards self-actualization leads to concern for "the well-being of others, the organization, and society" (p. 11). This relational growth of individual maturity towards others, the organization, and society strongly parallels concepts of relational construction and relational leading.

Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) explored the influence of charismatic, visionary, or transformational leadership on followers. Their theoretical study focused on finding an explanation of the follower self-concept motivation process where charismatic leadership is most impactful. The theory concentrates on leader behavior and the resulting effects on followers. Shamir, House, and Arthur suggest follower self-concepts such as "self-expression, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-consistency" are positively stimulated by charismatic leadership actions and that the effect of charismatic leaders should not be dismissed (p. 590). Wilderom, De Hoogh, Den Hartog, Koopman, Thierry, Van den Berg, and Van der Weide (2005) conducted an empirical multi-method study including CEO interviews and direct report questionnaires on follower i.e., subordinate work attitude based on charismatic leader behavior. The sample sizes consisted of "73 CEOs of small and medium size organizations" in both the profit and non-profit sectors (p. 17). CEO charismatic behavior by direct reports (n=125) was measured using motive imagery coding; work attitudes of the subordinates (n=262) were measured via survey responses. Positive subordinate work attitudes positively correlated to "CEO charismatic leader behavior" in the findings (p. 17). While Wilderom et al. acknowledge the sample size of their research was fairly small, and the participating subordinates were selected by the CEO's, the results do extend the evidence found by Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993), and reflects charismatic leader impact on followers.

In their research simulation model study of charismatic leaders, House and Jacobsen (2001) applied integrated theory strategy to profile six leaders whom they believed exemplified the qualities of a charismatic leader. House and Jacobsen noted charisma to be one element of transformational leadership found in complex formal organizations. The charismatic leader must be a person that can be identified with, have an understanding of the social situation, and the ability to dynamically communicate with constituents. House and Jacobsen's theory of charismatic leadership dynamics was loaded into the simulation model to be empirically tested. Sixteen data sets containing pertinent information reflecting each leader's career was produced and averaged "76.7% of the variance in the data and attesting to the empirical adequacy of the theoretical integration" (p. 75).

House and Jacobsen identified six phases to the overall process. Phase I is "identification," and it is where persons with the skills noted above recognize a challenging situation and provide a vision to followers that resonates with their values (p. 78). Phase II is known as "activity arousal," in this phase followers connect with the vision and provide positive feedback to the leader (p. 79). Phase III is "commitment" and this is where the charismatic powers of the transformational leader are at their peak (p. 79). Success in this phase strongly relates to whether the vision of the transformational leader is primarily personalized or socialized i.e., authoritarian versus egalitarian. These differences are powerful determinates as to how the transformational leader will relate to her/his followers.

Phase IV is termed "disenchantment," referring to the point when the change vision created by the charismatic transformational leader becomes ritualistic and routine, causing some (or all) followers to become disenchanted with the situation (p. 80). Following disenchantment is "depersonalization" (Phase V) where bureaucratic processes begin to become established, resulting in previously active followers to withdraw from active participation and move toward more "passive identification" (p. 81). Phase VI, the final phase in the process, is "Alienation" (p. 81). It is in this phase where efforts used in advancing the initial vision are exchanged in order to maintain the organization. Followers may become disillusioned with the vision, as well as with the charismatic transformational leader. Following Phase VI, the opportunity to begin a new vision or cause may be developed thus starting the cycle over.

The third phase in particular resonates with this dissertation research as those leaders with "socialized power motivation" willingly share "power and responsibility with others" (p. 80). This dyadic interchange of power and responsibility sharing contain a relational aspect found in relational leading. As the primary research question for this paper focused on the influence of relational leading practices on the project team's organizational communication, the willingness to share power and responsibility is a key factor in expanding relational leading.

In their quest to understand transformational leadership as it relates to employees, Hartnell and Walumbwa (2011) examined "the role of relational identification" between followers and self-efficacy as they relate to "transformational leadership and supervisor-rated performance" (p. 153). The hypothesis proposed "that the effect of transformational leadership on follower performance is realized through two mechanisms: employee perceptions of relational identification with the supervisor and self-efficacy" (p. 154). The study included 75 supervisors and 426 employees from a "large automobile dealership located in the south-western United States" (p.150). Data for the study were collected multiple times, "four waves," focusing on "transformational leadership…relational identification…self-efficacy…and …supervisory-rated performance" (p. 160). There were three-week separations between each collection.

The results of the study displayed positive correlations between transformational leadership, self-efficacy, and supervisor-rated performance. The researchers suggested "perhaps by expressing confidence and trust in their followers, transformational leaders are seen by their followers as providing an important cognitive, emotional, and moral connection/identification that promotes self-efficacy, subsequently enhancing their performance" (p. 166). This recognition by the researchers that a level of trust and positive exchange between transformational leaders and followers is developed and exists reflects supporting practices of relational leadership. As the primary dissertation research question is based on how relational leading influences organizational communication within a global organization, the practices of trust and positive exchange are viewed as critical to open dyadic communication, and in the constructing of relationships.

Byron, Myrowitz, Peterson, and Walumbwa (2009) conducted an empirical study examining the performance of 49 start-ups, and 56 established high-technology firms as they relate to CEO positive psychological traits and transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was measured using "20 items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)" (p.357), developed in 2004 by Avolio and Bass. Positive psychological traits attributed to transformational leaders, hope, optimism, and resiliency were measured. The relationship of positive psychological traits to the performance of the firm was measured in a second hypothesis. The volunteer research survey sample initially consisted of "121 CEO's of technology firms in the southwestern United States" with 115 or 87% completing (p. 355). The researchers utilized "structural equation modeling (SEM)" and a "model comparison procedure" to test their hypothesis with the "AMOS maximum likelihood procedure," created in 1999 by Arbuckle and Wothke to evaluate the models created (p. 358).

Their statistically significant research findings indicated that managers should "seek to cultivate positive psychological capacities such as hope, optimism, and resiliency" (p. 365). The researchers further concluded that companies, whether start-up's or established, might "improve their performance by seeking to increase the transformational leadership behaviors of their leaders" (p. 365). As this dissertation is focused on the influence of relational leading on organizational communication, establishing processes emphasizing positive psychological capacities to assist the transformation capabilities, and behaviors of leaders, may provide the opportunity to create an environment that facilitates and enables the development of relational practices.

In a random sample empirical study of private sector managers of the Australian Institute of Management, Cooper, Santora, and Sarros (2008) studied organization innovation, and in particular, the type of leadership required to influence such an environment. The researchers measured the six factors of transformational leadership as developed in 1990 by Fetter, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Podsakoff. The factors being: "articulates vision, provides appropriate role model, fosters the acceptance of goals, sets high performance expectations, provides individual support, and provides intellectual stimulation" (p. 146). "Cronbach's alpha coefficients…ranged from .62 to .70 and were considered acceptable based on

the test conducted" (p. 149). The data were analyzed using "latent variable structural equation modeling (SEM) to estimate the parameters of the models" (p. 150).

The researchers found the factors "articulates a vision," and "sets high performance expectations," and "providing individual support," to resonate with previous studies, with "articulates a vision" to be the strongest factor (p. 154). The authors acknowledged that organizational culture might influence some leadership behaviors but that the study suggests transformational leadership and organizational culture are related and connected via the three factors noted. This study by Cooper, Santora, and Sarros connects and identifies a relationship between organizational culture and a leadership form – transformational leadership, where the focus on an individual as leader shifts to more expanded dyadic and collective relationships, provides supporting data to this dissertation study. By influencing and engaging in organizational culture transformation, and allowing for fact sharing and interdependence, transformational leadership theory holds strong parallels to the meaning making and generative dialogue aspects found in relational leading.

In describing and categorizing successful business leaders via a series of vignette's, Bass (2007), summarizes that "they need to be both directive and participative as well as concerned for task and relationships" (p. 45). When discussing transformational leadership, Avolio and Bass (1993) posit "leaders and followers share mutual interests and a sense of shared facts and interdependence" (p. 116).

Avolio and Bass (1993) examined transformational leadership as it relates to organizational culture, and proposed there is a strong relationship between culture and leadership:

> In highly innovative and satisfying organizational culture we are likely to see transformational leaders who build on assumptions such as: people are trustworthy and purposeful; everyone has a unique contribution to make; and complex problems are handled at the lowest level possible. (p. 113)

Organizational transformation. Rooke and Torbert (1998) investigated organizational transformation as a function of the CEO ego development stage. In their research study, developmental action inquiry, encompassing and understanding the dynamics of the awareness of the individual, the immediate group, and the institution were used to investigate analogies between personal and organizational stages of development. This research is important to this dissertation study because it reveals the need for organizational transformation beginning with the personal behaviors (not traits) of hierarchical leaders. For purposes of this study, these findings are impactful because it is my belief that in order to leverage relational leading within organizations, an environment conducive to support collaboration and generative dialogue must be established. The focus of the Rooke and Torbert study was on "stage six" where personal development is at the "strategist leader" level and organizational development is at the "collaborative inquiry" level (p. 3). The importance of stage six is based on previous developmental theory and workplace research conducted by Fisher and Torbert (as noted by Rooke & Torbert, 1998). Stage six of the eight stages is important because it is at this point where a leader can initiate personal and organizational "double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978)," (as cited by Rooke & Torbert, 1998). It is at this stage where "genuine personal and organizational transformation" takes place (Rooke & Torbert, 1998, p. 3). In the study of over 500 manager samples, only ten percent scored at the strategist/leader stage. Conclusions derived from the study are:

> Only power exercised in a mutually-enhancing, awareness-enhancing, empowering manner can generate wholehearted transformation. In other words, only power exercised in such a way as to make oneself as well as the other potentially vulnerable to transformation rather than mere external conformity and compliance, or resistance. (Rooke & Torbert, 1998, p. 4)

The researchers also commented, "although we are using a well-validated psychometric measure for CEO's developmental stage, there is no such measure or comparable history of thought with regard to organizational transformation" (p. 7). The findings of the Rooke and Torbert study parallel areas of relational leadership in that there is note of "mutual" activities where more than one party is engaged in meaning sharing. The findings also reinforce this study in that I was looking to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project

team, and it's influence on the project team's organizational communication. Rooke and Torbert's results exposed the need for transformation to occur beyond an individual, and in that of a collective.

Bass (2000), when discussing transformational leadership attributes of next generation learning leader's, emphasized the importance of communication skills and the development of communication competence. Avolio (2010) states that the most effective leaders are those "who can balance transactional and transformational leadership across time, situations, and challenges" (p. 50). Avolio refers to transformational leadership as a process comprised by leaders to "develop followers into leaders" (p. 51). He further states that transformational leaders should do nothing that compromises "the basic ethical and moral values of the organization" (p. 51.) Because discussion of servant leadership is forthcoming in this literature review, it should be noted that the value sentiments stated by Avolio are very similar to what Greenleaf (2002) describes when discussing the responsibilities of a servant leader. Studies by Patterson, Russell, and Stone (2004) and Kuzmenko, Montagno, and Smith (2004) concluded similarly, that the focus of transformational leaders is concentrated on the objectives of the organization, whereas servant leaders focus on the personal growth of their followers. The researchers view transformational leadership and servant leadership as complementary ideologies.

Situational leadership model. Blanchard, Nelson, and Zigarmi (1993) note that Hersey and Blanchard coined the term "situational leadership" in the publication of their 1972 edition of *Management of Organizational Behavior* text (p. 24). Their initial work was based on Fiedler's (1967) situational approach, and Reddin's (1967) 3-D Management Style Theory. Blanchard, Hersey, and Johnson (2013) note the situational leadership model is based on "task behavior," or the level of duties and responsibilities a leader provides, "relationship behavior," and the "performance readiness level that individuals or teams (followers) exhibit in performing a specific activity, task, or job" (p. 114). The extent of "two-way" or "multi-party" communication the leader engages in determines the level of relational behavior (p. 115). The actual situational leadership model consists of four quadrants identifying task and relationship levels: "high task and low relationship, high task and high relationship, high relationship and low task, and low relationship and low task" (p. 116). Performance readiness is also a consideration in the situational leadership model. It refers to "the extent to which a follower demonstrates the ability and willingness to accomplish a specific task" (p. 117). Ability focuses on "skills," "experience," and "knowledge" whereas willingness focuses on "confidence", "commitment", and "motivation" of the follower (p. 117). There are four levels of follower performance readiness that correlate to four effective situational leadership styles: "telling, selling, participating, and delegating" (p. 124). As followers develop and expand their skills, experience, and knowledge, the leader, using the situational leadership model is able to adjust and adapt her/his style accordingly.

Jago and Vroom (2007) identified three distinct roles where situations have impact on the leadership process: "organizational effectiveness," "leader behavior," and how "situations influence the consequences of leader behavior" (p. 22). Jago and Vroom view leadership "as a process of motivating people to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things" (p. 18). By referring to leadership as a process, Jago and Vroom are making the same admonition noted by Northouse (2013) in that leadership as process is not a trait or characteristic, rather, it is a "transactional event that occurs between leaders and followers" (p. 5). However, Jago and Vroom also state that "one thing all leaders have in common is one or more followers" (p. 17), suggesting leadership is primarily leader-centric.

The situational leadership model framework is interesting because there is an increased separation from earlier theories such as trait, skills, and style, where the leader is the primary research focus. The model of situational leadership expands previous theories in that both leader and follower are the focus and dyadic communication and interaction is encouraged and exchanged.

Leader member exchange theory. Leader Member Exchange (LMX) theory, earlier known as vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), differs from trait, skills, and style leadership theories in that those primarily maintain a focus on the individual as the leader and hold limited focus on the follower or subordinate. LMX theory changes past models in that it reflects leadership as a process, where the focus is dyadic and based on the "interaction between leaders and followers" (Northouse, 2013, p. 182). Although somewhat by definition, LMX takes a view of leadership

beginning with the (L) leader. That being said, there are areas of LMX that parallel relational leading; they are both process-based on, and revolve around dyadic relationships, and not just the individual as the leader acting as the central figure.

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) presented a new taxonomy that integrated leader, follower, and "the dyadic relationship between the leader and follower" (p. 223). As shown in Table 2.2, this three-domain approach consists of leader-based, relationship-based, and follower-based domains. It provides definitions for leadership, associated leader behaviors, the advantages and disadvantages, appropriate use, and where each may be the most effective.

Table 2. 2 *Three Domain Approaches to Leadership*

	Leader-based	Relationship-based	Follower-based
What is leadership?	Appropriate behavior of the person in the leader role	Trust, respect, and mutual obligation that generates influence between parties	Ability and motivation to manage one's own performance
What behaviors constitute leadership?	Establishing and communicating vision; inspiring, instilling pride	Building strong relationships with followers; mutual learning and accommodation	Empowering, coaching, facilitating, giving up control
Advantages	Leader as rallying point for organization; common understanding of mission and values; can initiate wholesale change	Accommodates differing needs of subordinates; can elicit superior work from different types of people	Makes the most of follower capabilities; frees up leaders for other responsibilities
Disadvantages	Highly dependent on leader; problem if leader changes or is pursuing inappropriate vision	Time-consuming; relies on long-term relationships between specific leaders and members	Highly dependent on follower initiative and ability
When appropriate?	Fundamental change; charismatic leader in place; limited diversity among followers	Continuous improvement teamwork; substantial diversity and stability among followers; Network building	Highly capable and task committed followers
Where most effective?	Structured tasks; strong leader position power; member acceptance of leader	Situation favorability for leader between two extremes	Unstructured tasks; weak position power; member non-acceptance of leader

Note. From "Relationship-Based Approach to Leadership: Development of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory of Leadership over 25 Years: Applying a Multi-Level Multi-Domain Perspective" by G. B. Graen & M. Uhl-Bien, 1995, *Management Department Faculty Publications, 57*, p. 219-247. Copyright 1995 by JAI Press, Inc. Used with permission.

Graen and Uhl-Bien note from a leader-based perspective, the focus is on the leaders' behaviors, and personal characteristics the leader will need to balance to achieve optimum results for a given situation. A relationship-based outlook emphasizes the building of strong relationships between leader and followers through the process of mutual learning. As a result, development of mutual respect and trust begins to take hold allowing for accommodation between parties. A relationship-based approach is appropriate when significant diversity exists amongst a team, and leaders are strategically looking to

improve levels of teamwork. This relationship-based approach is extremely relevant to this study as a primary research question is to explore and understand how the practices of relational leading emerge and were evident within the project team, and it's influence on the project team's organizational communication?" This question suggests communication within and/or outside of the organization may be cross-cultural and therefore somewhat diverse by nature.

A follower-based view targets follower issues needing attention in the way of behaviors to "promote desired outcomes" including how leadership relationships might be continuously developed (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 223). The researcher's purpose in creating the three-domain LMX approach is to "stimulate new conceptualizations and empirical approaches within leadership research" (p. 224). Graen and Uhl-Bien view the dyadic partner relationship noted above as stage three of the LMX theory development timeline. In this third stage, "leadership as a partnership among dyadic members" takes place and it is where leaders work with each subordinate "one-on-one" (p. 229). Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL), where "differentiation within work units" was validated is considered Stage one (p. 226). Stage two LMX focuses on the implications of relationships for organizational outcomes," and stage four expands the dyad of leader and subordinate to group and network partnerships, as "aggregations of dyads" (p. 233). When asked to clarify LMX theory in relation to whether it is transactional or transformational, the researchers state there are transactional elements but that "LMX is clearly not limited to transactional leadership. Rather, LMX is both transactional and transformational: it begins as a transactional social exchange and evolves into transformational social exchange" (p. 238).

Christensen, Mayer, Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, and Workman (2011) studied social exchange as a process within LMX. In their empirical study, the researchers investigated the connection between ethical leadership and performance. Data were collected from the Peoples Republic of China on "LMX, self-efficacy, and organizational identification, as mediators of ethical leadership to performance relationship" (p. 204). The study included 273 participants (72 supervisors and 201 direct reports) with 78% of invited supervisors participating and 100% of direct reports participating. The 10-item Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) created by Brown, Harrison, and Trevino (2005) was used to measure ethical leadership; the LMX-7 scale developed by Graen and Scandura (1984) was used to assess LMX. Self-efficacy was measured via Spreitzer's (1995) three-item self-efficacy measure, and organizational identification was measured using Pruyn, Smidts, and Van Riel (2001) social identity theory scale. The researchers also measured employee task performance using 11 items from Pearce, Porter, Tripoli, and Tsui (1997). All scales were translated, and then reverse translated using multiple translators to ensure proper interpretations. The researchers found ethical leadership and LMX positively related. Self-efficacy and organizational identification were positively related to employee performance. Christensen et al. suggest managers exhibiting ethical behaviors, may influence employee performance by developing positive relationships with direct reports, resulting in the building employee confidence levels.

Maslyn and Uhl-Bien (2001) examined the effects of self-efforts on the quality of leader and follower relationships in the LMX process based on expectations. The empirical study consisted of "232 matched manager-subordinate dyads" (p. 700). The measurements for subordinates included LMX quality, own and other's effort from the perspective of relationship development, and whether the anticipated level of relationship quality was achieved. LMX quality was measured using the "LMX-7" (created by Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and the "multi-dimensional leader-member exchange scale" (LMX-MDM) (created by Liden & Maslyn, 1998), (p. 700). Multiple regression analysis and hierarchical regression were used to test the interaction hypotheses.

The findings of Maslyn and Uhl-Bien (2001) with regards to the "effects of self-effort and other's effort on relationship quality" are relevant to this dissertation research because they demonstrate that effort made by members of the relational dyad not only relates to the quality of relationship development, it is also integral to formulating higher-level relationships (p. 696). As this dissertation research explored how relational leading practices might influence organizational communication, studies involving the formulating of high-level dyad relationships are relevant. In the findings of lower-level LMX relationships, participants each believed they made an effort to formulate higher-level relationships even

though they did not work. The authors suggest individuals on each side of the dyad equation may believe it is the other party that failed in the LMX relationship.

In an experimental laboratory study expanding upon dyad relationships, Baker and Omilion-Hodges (2013) argue there are other relationships within organizations outside of dyads such as coworker LMX and peer exchange. The researchers further argue that without inclusion of these additional elements, LMX studies are incomplete. The study examines LMX and distributive justice as they relate to coworker exchange (CWX) relationships; those relationships where two peers report to the same manager. Participants earned a nominal amount of extra credit for their participation in the research. They were comprised of 160 men and 176 women, a total of 336 student participants from a large urban Midwestern university. Participants were told the study was to better understand the performance of long-distance workgroups using Skype™ software. Participant's viewed video manipulations messaging of managers speaking of participant follower's annual reviews, and subsequently address their workgroup peer. Participant fairness, coworker fairness, participant LMX, and coworker LMX were part of the factorial design 16 conditions. The researchers advise, "if managers value the collective performance of their workgroup they must reflect on their relational and behavioral tendencies" (p. 946). They further suggest resources, relationships, and perceptions all must be managed for the individuals as well as the collective relationships. This extension of LMX from that of a dyad, to encompassing coworkers and workgroups into the dialogue, is important in expanding leader relational behaviors throughout the collective.

LMX theory has evolved from the initial studies where focus was on differences between in-groups and out-groups, with in-groups referring to those where a leader and his or her subordinates developed "mutual trust, respect," and where each are able to share in "reciprocal influence" and where out-groups refers those not with the in-group and where communication tends to be more "formal" and based on organizational roles (Northouse, 2013, p.164). Later studies relate LMX theory to "organizational effectiveness" (p. 164). The recognition of dyadic relational interaction between leaders, followers, and coworkers, and workgroups, and the emphasis on overall organizational effectiveness through mutual trust, respect, and high-level relationship achievement are relevant to this research on relational leading practices, whether they emerged and are evident within the project team, and it's influence on organizational communications is a key construct.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership was developed by Greenleaf (2002) and was influenced and initially created following Greenleaf's reading of "Herman Hesse's novel, *The Journey to the East*" (p. 21). Greenleaf stated that in reflecting on Hesse's novel it was clear that "*the great leader is seen as servant first*, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness" (p. 21). Greenleaf notes that servant leadership "begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*"…then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 27). In discussing what gives "leaders their lead," Greenleaf suggests that a leader needs to have "*a sense for the* unknowable and be able to foresee the unforeseeable" (p.35). He advises that leaders do not always have all of the information needed to make decisions. It is a level of intuitiveness or foresight that sometimes guides the decision making process. Intuition according to Greenleaf is a *"feel* for patterns" based on previous experience, and or knowledge that is supported by trust (p. 37). For a leader who is engaged this process is continuous and allows the leader foresight, or "prescience" to make "a better than average guess about *what* is going to happen and *when* in the future" (p. 38).

Greenleaf's intent was that of "a leadership approach, rather than a theory" (Northouse, 2013, p. 223). The practitioner approach taken by Greenleaf focuses on the shifting of the "institutional power and control" possessed by the leader, to the leader "shifting authority to those who are being led" (p. 221). As a practitioner in a business environment, Greenleaf (2002) views business as "a serving institution – serving those who produce and those who use" (p. 155). Greenleaf separates the economics of business from business ethics, and consumer ethics, noting "business exists as much to provide meaningful work to the person as it exists to provide a product or service to the customer" (p. 155).

Spears (1995, 2010) cited and reviewed his expanded definition of servant leadership through identification of ten characteristics within Greenleaf's writings that focus on the leader as practitioner.

Those characteristics being: "listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment, and building community" (Spears, 2010, p. 27). These characteristics recognize the uniqueness and importance of others as well as emphasize the commitment to caring for and the engagement of others in leadership actions and in the development of organizational frameworks in order to maintain the "greater good of society" (p. 29). This approach of shifting institutional power and control from hierarchical leader to others in the organization intimates the existence of both shared leadership and trusted organizational communications. These elements are reflective of those found in relational leading. The servant leadership approach moves further from the traditional "great leaders" theory and closer towards that of relational leading.

In two separate studies, Fields and Hale (2007) and Hannay (2009) explored servant leadership outside of the United States culture. Hannay theoretically applied Hofstede's (1983, 1993) dimensions of culture to explore whether characteristics of servant leaders, as introduced by Greenleaf (2002), would function as well in a cross-cultural model. Hannay concluded, "servant theory is one approach designed to encourage a more relationship-oriented workplace" (p. 9). Hannay also suggests implementation of a servant leadership theory model may be somewhat dependent on cultural characteristics, as designated by Hofstede's dimensions of culture.

The Fields and Hale empirical study examined "three servant leader dimensions in a work situation" of followers in Ghana and the United States (p. 397.) The leader work situation dimensions are "service, humility, and vision" (p. 399). Participants were working adults who were students in Christian seminaries located in Ghana and the United States. The Ghanaian participants totaled 60; the USA participant sample was 97. To measure leader effectiveness, the Ehrhart and Klein (2001) six-item scale was utilized. Participants measured their perceived performance levels under designated leaders' styles, whether they enjoyed working for the leader, and how strong their relationship was. A Likert scale rating of 1-5 for participants to choose from was provided. The Ghanaian sub-sample scored a coefficient alpha of ".92" while the United States sub-sample scored ".93" (p. 405). Servant leader levels were measured via a 1-7 Likert scale. The results indicate a strong correlation in both sub-samples, especially in the areas of service and humility. The relationship between vision and leader effectiveness was "significantly stronger" in the Ghanaian sample (p. 410). Fields and Hale indicate, based on the Hofstede (2001) cultural dimension definition of power distance, and the higher power distance rating level for Ghanaians, that the expectation of leaders to provide vision is higher than that of the United States study group. Fields and Hale also suggest consideration for the "multiple aspects of contexts in which followers find themselves imbedded is necessary when hoping to understand leadership preferences and assessments" (p. 413).

The overall results of the Hannay study and Fields and Hale study imply the characteristics of servant leadership will function in culturally different environments based on the research groups examined, and with the understanding that local cultural values may potentially have significant influence. As this dissertation was focused on the influence of relational leading practices on the project team's organizational communication, the ability of leaders to recognize different cultural values and norms, may improve their relational practices, and overall leadership effectiveness when working with individuals from, or within, culturally different environments.

Authentic leadership. Authentic leadership is closely tied to transformational leadership in that leaders transform their followers by increasing "awareness of what is right, good, important, and beautiful" (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 191). An inauthentic leader may display concern for organizational issues when they arise, "but is personally uninterested in doing something about them" (p. 191). However, as the theories continue to evolve, there are key viewpoints contributing to the definition as to what authentic leadership may be. These multiple perspectives target the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and development viewpoints. The intrapersonal focuses on the leader, and "what goes on within the leader" (Northouse, 2013, p. 254). An interpersonal focus of authentic leadership defines leadership as a co-created relational process between leaders and followers. The developmental perspective presents authentic leadership not "as a fixed trait" but as behavior that can be "nurtured," and is often realized by "major life events" such as "severe illness or a new career," and is accompanied by a

leader with strong ethics and positive psychological qualities (p. 254). The behavior of authentic leaders is such that their interests are aligned with others. These leaders are more group dependent in that they may refocus their personal interests for the betterment of the group. Authentic leaders are trusted members of the group and concerned with the well being of others, Bass (2008).

In an essay discussing ethics and transformational leader behavior, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) convey that authentic leaders set high standards for themselves, and in conducting themselves accordingly; they provide standards for followers to emulate. Bass and Steidlmeier identify four primary components authentic transformational leaders exhibit: "idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration" (p. 187). Authentic leaders act morally, and Bass and Steidlmeier suggest their behaviors may be influenced by cultural values. When supporting the interests of followers and organizational demands, authentic leaders may use participative or directive skills as the situation demands.

Avolio, Gardner, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2004) conducted a theoretical study to provide guidance to future studies looking to understand the framework "that allow authentic leaders to exert their influence on followers" (p. 802). The research focused specifically on how "follower attitudes, behaviors, and performance" might be influenced by authentic leaders (p. 801). Similar to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999), Avolio et al. refer to authentic leaders as those who lead by example and demonstrate significant moral values through the "honesty and integrity" they display when relating with followers (p. 807).

Extending authentic leadership theory, Avolio, Gardner, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) developed a theoretical model focusing on leader self-awareness and self-regulation as methods for one to achieve authenticity. The researchers noted that classifications of "more or less authentic, or inauthentic" may be assigned to people (p. 345). The conceptual development model includes authentic leadership and authentic followership, each mirroring the other to include self-awareness and self-regulation elements. The model engages positive modeling as the mechanism where authentic leaders transfer "positive behaviors, values, psychological states, and self-development" (p. 358). Also taken into account are personal history and what the researchers refer to as "trigger events" (p. 347). Trigger events being those internal or external challenges for leaders that require them to think and respond in a non-standard manner to seek resolution. The organizational climate plays a role in the model and it is stated "that a supportive organizational climate provides greater opportunities for authentic leadership and followership to be sustained…" (p. 367). The researchers also note that the creation of such an organizational climate encouraging fair practices, opportunities to learn, and to establish supporting processes takes time to build and sustain.

To validate a theory-based measure of authentic leadership, Avolio, Gardner, Peterson, Wernsing, and Walumbwa (2008) conducted research collecting and using "five separate samples from China, Kenya, and the United States" (p. 89). The intent of Avolio et al. was to conduct their three studies to develop a case for "a higher-order multi-dimensional theory-based questionnaire…demonstrate the utility of a four-factor authentic construct…and to empirically examine the extent authentic leadership contributes to individual follower job satisfaction and performance" (p. 91). For the first study the researchers utilized the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) developed by Avolio, Gardner, and Walumbwa (2007), with authentic leadership concepts in order to establish preliminary data for the validity of the construct. The second study involved demonstrating if a four-factor model could "predict relevant organizational outcomes" attributed to "ethical and transformational leadership" (p. 91). The third study was an empirical examination designed to assist in understanding the depth of contribution "authentic leadership contributes to individual follower job satisfaction and performance" (p. 91).

"The finding that higher order authentic leadership measure was positively related" to some follower outcomes, such as "supervisor-rated follower performance" and the ability for authentic leaders "to enhance follower commitment and citizenship behaviors," encouraged the researchers (p. 121). Avolio et al. suggest that designing training regimens to include "authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership" may positively impact longer-term employee motivation, and increase performance (p. 121).

The developmental and interpersonal aspects of authentic leadership are of particular interest to me in this research because the developmental authenticity viewpoint is not static, but fluid based on

life's experiences, and knowledge gained as one matures. The intrapersonal viewpoint provides strong parallels to relational leading, as there is a process of co-creation through the relationships that are developed and cultivated. While the emphasis on authentic leadership retains a primary focus on the individual as leader, one can find relational constructionist perspectives such as the co-created relational processes between leaders and followers, underlying the theory and future direction of the research. The discussion by Avolio et al. regarding the development of a supportive organizational environment, allowing positive relational transfer between leadership and followership in a transparent and trusting manner to allow individuals to grow is relevant to this study. Because this dissertation was focused on the influence of relational leading practices on the project team's organizational communication, fostering a positive organizational learning environment built on trust and transparency may allow for improved communications and expanded learning amongst organizational members.

Shared leadership. A recent leadership theory with parallels to relational leading is shared leadership. Manz, Pearce, and Sims (2009) view shared leadership as non-traditional because it is not entity based. Sharing leadership involves engaging one within the collective considered the expert for a given task or project to be the leader. As different projects and programs evolve, other experts are subsequently engaged. Conger and Pearce (2003) define shared leadership "as a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both" (p. 1).

Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff (2007) refer to Lambert-Olsen (2004) and Sally (2002) when noting that shared leadership is not a new concept in the Western world in that ancient Rome had shared leadership with two consuls. The author's further mention the United States as having a successful government that does not rely on only one individual as it has a shared power government (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007). In their empirical study on shared leadership, Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff examined the collective construction of leadership via a narrative approach, through individuals' stories about processes of leadership across four organizations (p. 51).

The four organizations were studied "as examples of new leadership practices in emerging industries in Sweden" (p. 52). These empirical organizational case studies represented two independent schools, one private theater company, and one small music corporation that found its beginnings as a rock concert festival. All organizations studied were in the infancy stages with their founders in leadership roles. The study consisted of employees (n= 247) and included 30 freelancers representing all four businesses. The smallest group of employees numbered 37, the largest 100. A common theme discovered across all four companies was leadership, as a collectively constructed shared task, as defined by the employees. This notion of employees collectively working to construct leadership identifiers suggests generative processes to assist in the exchange of shared meanings. These concepts of generative practices and shared meaning parallel those found within relational leading practices and suggest potential opportunities to positively influence organizational transformation.

Pearce and Sims (2002) empirically researched the effectiveness of shared leadership practices amongst change management teams (CMT's). Seventy-one cross-functional CMT's from a large automotive manufacturing facility located in the United States were engaged. Questionnaire data included categories of leader effectiveness, team size, and team effectiveness, including "aversive, directive, transactional, transformational, and empowering leader behaviors," and were based (excluding team size) on a 5-point scale was confidentially collected via an onsite researcher (p. 172). Internal consistency was assessed utilizing the Cronbach alpha procedure. Data was collected in two time intervals, six months apart. The first interval received 197 completed questionnaires from a distribution of 236, yielding an 83% response rate. The second interval received 69 of 71 questionnaires yielding a 97% response rate. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the data relationships between "vertical" (heroic) and "shared" (p. 180). The most important finding from the research was "that shared leadership was found to be an important predictor of team effectiveness" (p. 183). The findings above are important to this dissertation research as the primary research question explored relational leading practices, whether they emerged and are evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication.

Distributed leadership. Bolden (2011) cites Gibb (1954) and Gronn (2000) as the pioneers who first penned and expanded "the concept of 'distributed leadership' (DL) (p. 251). Distributive leadership focuses not on the separate contributions of individuals, but a broader, more distributed system. Bolden (2011) notes that much of the research is centered in the area education and academic systems, more in the UK than the United States. The terms distributed and shared leadership are often used interchangeably, however, there are "theoretical differences" (Denyer, Fitzsimons & James, 2011, p. 313). Shared leadership has been defined as a "collaborative process" across a team (p. 316). Distributed leadership is a practice that includes leaders in formal roles as well as selected individuals within an organization. Spillane (2006) describes distributed leadership as "the collective interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation that are paramount" (p. 4). Spillane believes leadership is comprised of more than individual acts. The mention of collective dealings across an organization imitates the engagement of relational practices and reflects aspects of socially constructed leadership theories.

This section of the literature review focused on historical leadership theories derived from an entity-based perspective. An entity-based perspective is defined by Uhl-Bien (2006) as a "perspective that focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships" (p. 654). Trait theory, leadership skills approach, transformational leadership, situational leadership, leader member exchange (LMX), servant leadership, authentic leadership, shared leadership, and distributed leadership are the historical leadership theories examined because I believe it is important to understand the evolution of leadership theories as a pathway progression to relational leading. A summary of historical leadership theories is found in Table 2.3 and are organized beginning with early leadership theories emphasizing the individual as leader and progress primarily in chronological order of development to leadership theories reflecting leadership as more of a process. Historical theories containing one or more relational characteristics are noted accordingly.

Table 2. 3 *Historic Leadership Research Summary*

Leadership Theory	Theory Summary	Authors(s)/Year	Relational Leading Characteristics
Trait Theory	Focus on individual leader characteristics and personal qualities to discover traits of those considered to be "great' leaders so that a prescriptive approach might be applied to all.	Bass, 1990, Bass & Bass, 2008, Bono et al, 2002, De Hoogh et al, 2005, 2011, Goldberg, 1990, Kotze & Venter, 2011, Martorana et al, 2003, Northouse 2013, Stogdill, 1948, 1974	No
Leadership Skills Approach	Emphasis on individual leader skill sets to better understand the nature of effective leadership.	Bader, Kemp & Zaccaro, 2004, Campion, Morgeson, & Mumford, 2007, Connelly et al, 2000, Gilley, Gilley & McMillian, 2009, Marks et al, 2000, Northouse, 2013, Schein, 2010, Zaccaro, 2007	No
Leadership Style Approach	Focus on individual leader behaviors vs. personality traits.	Bakker-Pieper, Oostenveld, & De Vries, 2010, Bass & Bass, 2008, Blanchard, Hersey, &	No

		Johnson, 2013, Madlock, 2008, Northouse, 2013, Sauer, 2011	
Transformational Leadership	Leadership as a process that changes and transforms people and influences strategy changes to organizational culture.	Avolio, 2010, Avolio & Bass, 1993, Bass, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2007, Burns, 2012, Byron et al, 2009, Cooper, Santora, & Sarros, 2008, Greenleaf, 2002, Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011, House & Jacobsen, 2001, Kuzmenko, Montagno, & Smith, 2004, Northouse, 2013, Patterson, Russell, & Stone, 2004, Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993, Wilderom et al., 2005	Yes
Situational Leadership	Leaders match style to the competence and commitment of subordinates. Leadership is referred to as a process based on transactional events.	Blanchard, Hersey, & Johnson, 2013, Blanchard, Nelson, & Zigarmi, 1993, Jago & Vroom, 2007, Northouse, 2013	Yes
Leader Member Exchange (LMX)	Leadership as a process that begins with the leader and includes dyadic relationship exchanges to enhance organizational effectiveness.	Baker & Omilion, 2013, Christensen et al, 2011, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001, Northouse, 2013	Yes
Servant Leadership	Leadership as practitioner approach that recognizes the importance and uniqueness of others and shifts power from the leader to those being led.	Fields & Hale, 2007, Greenleaf, 2002, Hannay, 2009, Northouse, 2013, Spears, 1995, 2010	Yes
Authentic Leadership	Leadership that creates awareness of what is ethically right and good for followers to emulate.	Avolio et al., 2004, 2005, Bass, 2008, Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, Northouse, 2013,	Yes
Shared Leadership	Leadership is a collectively constructed shared task with subject matter experts assuming a leadership role based on knowledge for a given project or task.	Conger & Pearce, 2003, Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007, Lambert-Olsen, 2004, Manz, Pearce, & Sims, 2009, Sally 2002	Yes
Distributed Leadership	Leadership is a practice that engages formal leaders and chosen members of the organization.	Bolden, 2011, Denyer, Fitzsimons & James, 2011, Gibb, 1954, Gronn, 2000, Spillane, 2006	Yes

The next section of leadership theories to be reviewed moves beyond historical entity-based leadership theories and focuses on socially constructed concepts and theories. These socially constructed concepts and theories include: interdependent leadership, co-creating leadership, leading cross-demographically, leading and systemic co-construction, and appreciative leadership. This section culminates with a review of relational leading, a key construct of this dissertation research.

Socially Constructed Leadership Concepts and Theories

This portion of the leadership section highlights socially constructed leadership concepts and theories and acts as a bridge from historical leadership theories to relational leading. The concepts and theories in this section continue the progression of leadership theories to socially constructed leadership concepts and theories. These differ from historically constructed theories in that they are not entity based because they emerge from social processes and relationships amongst people.

The section begins with interdependent leadership that is seen as a social process producing direction, alignment, and commitment within groups in a collaborative work setting. Co-creating leadership is a theory where both leaders and followers share leadership practices. Leading cross-demographically focuses on when leaders and followers from differing demographic backgrounds including gender, race, and/or ethnicities are found in a group. Leading and systemic co-construction brings systemic thinking theories and social construction processes together in a unified leadership approach. Appreciative leadership is where a conscious effort is made by leaders to develop and bring forth the best qualities in all people through relational activities and positive change processes such as coaching. Lastly, relational leading where leading is not entity-based but viewed as emerging from social processes and the relationships developed by individuals is reviewed. A summary of socially constructed leadership theories appears in Table 2.5, and over time, these theories have also been developed into individual styles of leaders.

Interdependent leadership. Interdependent leadership theory reflects the actions and routines intentionally used within the collective to produce direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC). Drath, Hughes, McCauley, McGuire, O'Connor, Palus, and Van Velsor (2008) engaged a collaborative process in their empirical study focusing on interdependent leadership. Their intent was to "design and implement a case study research project to better understand 'interdependent' leadership…leadership was viewed as a social process that produces direction, alignment, and commitment in collectives with shared work…" (p. 1). The approach used was an exploratory multiple case study strategy that was viewed through a constructive developmental lens i.e., the development of meaning and meaning making processes. In this study, the emphasis was on leadership cultures and practices of the collective. The research methods included informant interviews, story-based interviews, journaling, an organizational survey, and use of an ethnographic walk about culture tool. Additionally, organization documents were collected and analyzed to enable researchers to learn more about the organizational contexts. Researchers utilized three theory-based frames, "intersystemic framing" to view the organization and its environment, "dialectical" framing to observe beliefs and values, and "transformational framing", the openness of the organization to change (p. 9). The study itself focused on three specific areas of social process:

- Leaders: the individuals actively involved in the process of producing direction, alignment, and commitment
- Leadership practices: the actions and routines intentionally used in the collective to produce direction, alignment, and commitment
- Leadership culture: the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and values widely shared in the collective that determine and justify the leadership practices. (Drath et al., 2008, p. 1)

The case study targeted six organizations and was published as a report by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). A project team was assembled to better understand "interdependent leadership" in organizations (p. 12). The findings of Drath et al. may be applied to this study as interdependent leadership shares many parallel traits to relational leading in that:

> Interdependent leadership cultures and practices are broadly characterized by the assumption that leadership is a collective activity that requires mutual inquiry and learning. This assumption may lead to patterns of working in an organization that make use of (a) collaboration, mutual influence, and maximization of system effectiveness in making decisions and solving problems, (b) dialogue to explore differences and manage conflicts, and (c) experimentation and change processes that maximize individual and collective learning. Other characteristics associated with interdependent systems and processes that include leveling of status and authority, valuing differences, engaging organizational tensions, working latterly across boundaries, co-construction of solutions with multiple stakeholder groups, and use of whole and open-system perspectives. (Drath et al., 2008, p. 48)

These characteristics parallel those found in relational leadership theory such as "a collective capacity (e.g., dyads, groups, teams, networks, social movements)" (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012b, p. 571). Gergen and Hersted (2013) also provide parallel relational leading characteristics including "effective practices of collaboration, empowerment, horizontal decision-making, information sharing, networking, continuous learning, appreciation, and connectivity" (p. 30). The relational leading parallels to interdependent leadership as explored in the CCL empirical case study provides sufficient similarities to explore additional research in this area in support of advancing this dissertation research.

Co-creating leadership. In another empirical study containing parallels to relational leading, Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff (2007) researched post-heroic leadership as a collective construction. The study took a narrative approach reviewing four case organizations. Empirical data were extracted based on eight discursive themes centered on leadership. The four organizations all practiced leadership as a "shared task that is constructed collectively" by insiders and outsiders alike (p. 52). Their view of leadership involved "collaboration between two or more persons" (p. 40). The author's state that:

> New leadership ideals must include more reflecting issues where leaders themselves find it possible to go on with their current way of living despite vast responsibilities and where leaders and followers share a view of leadership practices as legitimate both in terms of effectiveness and morality. (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007, p. 41)

The authors restate that traditional literature has focused on the single person, i.e., unitary command. Beginning with Taylor's principles of scientific command (1911), Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff state that this theory was "dominate in the management and leadership field" (p. 42). Research by Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff reveals that co-creating leadership activities and meaning is an acceptable practice. These findings are supportive of this dissertation study where relational leading is a key construct.

Leading cross-demographically. Offermann (2012) conducted a study examining the unique challenges and limitations of cross-demographic relationships that occur for leaders when they and the followership have "differing demographic backgrounds" (p. 361). The quantitative study encompassed over 200 service sector worksite locations and included thousands of worker respondents. The study was conducted with a "U.S. workforce" of different demographic backgrounds, including differences in "race, ethnicities, genders, and nationalities," and notes "many in the position of leadership are underprepared to face the challenges of working with diverse followers, and all of us, leader, or follower may need to overcome the tendency to gravitate towards those more similar to ourselves" (p. 361). "From a constructionist perspective, dissimilarity may disrupt the process of forming the kind of positive communities and shared agreements that would be most associated with successful leadership" (p. 365). The suggestion that positive communities and shared agreements may be difficult to form intimates less opportunity for the dialogical process to take hold, which would in turn result in a negative impact to the organizational communication process. Offermann submitted that "empirical evidence lends support to the idea that demographic similarity between leaders and followers would lead to more positive organizational outcomes" (p. 365). Following the quantitative study, a qualitative approach was engaged. Interviews and focus groups targeting service sector workers in three different states were conducted. Findings were transcribed and two areas of concern were noted. Language barriers between supervisors

and staff, and among staff members were discovered. Leader behaviors appeared to be more important than only stating diversity values. When addressing the challenges of leading diverse organizations:

> from an entity perspective, there is evidence that attributes of individuals as they engage with their leaders can be affected by cultural background…the culturally-unaware leader may then assume that a lesser-quality relationship is the best that can emerge with this follower, and that the follower is not interested in sharing leadership. (Offermann, 2012, p. 366)

With regards to the quantitative and qualitative research findings of the study, Offermann stated while "the numbers reveal patterns of significance…the words provided richness and context" (p. 377). The nature Offermann's research and findings are of interest to this study because they encompass the constructs of leadership, relationships, and cross-cultural communications, and examine both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to explore and interpret the data.

Leading and systemic co-construction. Barge (2012) references a series of theoretical essays (Barge, 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Barge & Fairhurst, 2008; Barge & Little, 2002, 2008) where Barge begins "outlining how a systemic constructionist framework could be used as a theoretical and research lens for articulating leadership" (p. 108). Barge discusses systemic constructionism as two combined elements, "systemic thinking" and "social constructionism" (p. 110). Systemic thinking surrounds leadership theories and the ability to analyze them in a way that helps describe meaning making. The second element, social construction, focuses on how language is used in the coordination of patterns that may be inviting or discouraging. Both of these themes resonate with the exploratory questions in this research study as the main research question was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether it emerged within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. Systemic thinking takes a holistic approach to the process of meaning making and ties to the inclusive approach I wish to develop in improving organizational communication through the practice of relational leading development.

Relational leading as a social construction is a practice where individuals invite and encourage the engagement of all members within an organization, and associated organizations, to make meaning by participating in meaningful dialogue. Barge takes a discursive approach and sees language as an important thread within the construct of social construction. Barge views leadership as a "joint action between or among people…involves meaning making and creating contexts" (p. 112). Barge suggests how language is used creates one's understanding of leadership and also provides others with insight into our "identities, relationships, and cultures" (p. 107). Positioning his view from an individual first person perspective and not a third person viewpoint, Barge further comments "social constructions of leadership are local, as the unique configuration of people, time, and place may move the individuals to construct leadership in particular ways but not others" (p. 107).

Barge's goal is to "develop ways of working that assist leaders in developing their linguistic capacity to anticipate, to be present, and to reflect on the conversational experience" (p. 138). This approach is not specifically targeted towards formally designated hierarchical organizational leaders but is open to all individuals in an organization. Barge notes "people who wish to construct lead positions within teams, organizations, and societies need to learn to work with within the flow of the conversation and develop practices that allow then to make sense of it and create new potentials for meaning making and action that can shape its direction" (p. 107). The concept of systemic thinking complements the primary research question of this study, to explore and understand the practices of relational leading and its influence on a project team's organizational communication. Systemic thinking provides a holistic view in that the intention is to invite all members of the organization to participate and share in the process. The social construction element focuses on how language is constructed. This discussion is relevant to this study because constructing language in a way that invites members of all cultures within organizations to relationally lead and develop positive relationships, where sharing of meanings and understanding is present in communications, is a desirable outcome.

In their theoretical approach of systemic constructionism, Barge and Fairhurst (2008) offered a conceptualization of what they refer to as "a practical theory of leadership grounded in systemic thinking and social constructionism" (p. 227). The approach "grounds the development of a practical theory of

leadership in the lived experience and social practices of persons in conversation" (p. 230). There are "three interrelated questions" to the theory (p. 230): "(1) How is leadership performed? (2) What counts as leadership? (3) What are the consequences of particular leadership constructions?" (p. 230).

Seen as supporting the discursive practices of sensemaking, positioning, and play, Barge and Fairhurst note "there are at least five important values that inform a systemic constructionist approach to leadership: *communication, connection, uniqueness, emergence,* and *affirmation*" (p. 233). These values are intended to "provide some guidance to leadership scholars as to the focus and values informing a practical theory of leadership from a systemic constructionist perspective" (p. 232). The work of Fairhurst (2007) is cited by the researchers when defining their view of leadership as "a co-created, performative, contextual, and attributional process where the ideas articulated in talk or action are recognized by others as progressing tasks that are important to them" (p. 232). This definition of leadership, and the value commitments, relate to my research as they tie to relational leading in that as a practitioner, I am looking to enhance shared meaning making, and expand new patterns of discursive organizational communications. The value commitments and respective definitions put forth by Barge and Fairhurst are presented in Table 2.4.

Table 2. 4 *Systemic Constructionist Value Commitments*

Value	Definition
Communication:	Leadership actors co-create identities, relationships, and cultures through linguistic performances. This means leaders need to take into account the way that language creates the social worlds they inhabit.
Connection:	Understanding leadership within a human system depends on articulating the connections among persons-in-conversation, action, meaning, and context. This means that leaders need to think systemically and work with the ecology of relationships that are created and sustained through talk and action.
Uniqueness:	Leadership actors operate within unique contests defined by time, place, people, and topic. Leaders need to talk and act in ways that appreciate the novel complexity of the way the distinctive qualities of situations, events, and people connect within particular conversation at a particular moment.
Emergence:	Leaders need to focus attention on the possibilities for new patterns of meaning making and action that emerge within the unfolding conversation. Leaders should develop ways of working that give attention to the openings and conversational moments that are created through talk and action which are ripe for developing new meaning making and action potentials.
Affirmation:	Leadership actors are encouraged to connect with each other's moral orders and grammars in order to affirm others lived experiences. Leaders need to find ways through their talk and action to connect with what is good, valuable, and excellent in order to elaborate it further in the conversation.

Note: From "Systemic constructionist leadership and working from within the present moment," by J. K. Barge & G. Fairhurst, 2008, *Advancing relational leadership: A dialogue among*

Appreciative leadership. Barge (2012) indicates that *affirmation* is partially inspired by the literature on "Appreciative Inquiry which emphasizes the importance of identifying what gives life to people's activity in organizations – typically in the form of core values, best practices, strengths, assets, and other positive elements of people's experience" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; as cited by Barge, 2012).

In their seminal work, Schiller, Holland, and Riley, (2001) took a qualitative approach and investigated appreciative leadership through a series of solicited submissions. Selected researchers submitted manuscripts based on interviews conducted with individuals who they believed to be appreciative leaders. Twenty-eight leaders were interviewed from a potential pool of 110. Editors Schiller, Holland, and Riley, were searching to expand their "knowledge of the competencies and attributes of appreciative leaders"…and…"to understand what differentiates appreciative leaders' thoughts, feelings and actions" (p. 157).

Following a review of the documented interviews the editors designed a rating form of attributes and competencies gleaned from the readings. Interviewers were then asked to complete a form containing the demographic information of the interviewee and to rate the leader attributes and competencies based on a scale of one through five for the attributes and competencies provided. Interviewers were asked to add any attributes or competencies that may have been omitted. Finally, two questions regarding additional information as to why the specific leader was chosen and any comments to be noted.

The editors found a pattern where all responses could be categorized in one of three clusters: "World View, Practices, and Values" (p. 158). Responses in the World View cluster tended to relate to the "conceptual frame and operating philosophy of leaders" (p. 158). Practices focused on activities the leader engaged in on a daily basis such as "challenge, encourage, enable, coach, inquire, and dialogue" (p. 158). The Values cluster represents the "values and beliefs" of the leaders that came through during the interview process (p. 158). Some attributes and competencies were found to be suitable for more than one cluster. "Catalyst" and "relational" were two attributes specifically noted by the editors. Based on the research findings a model of appreciative leadership was crafted (see Figure 2.2).

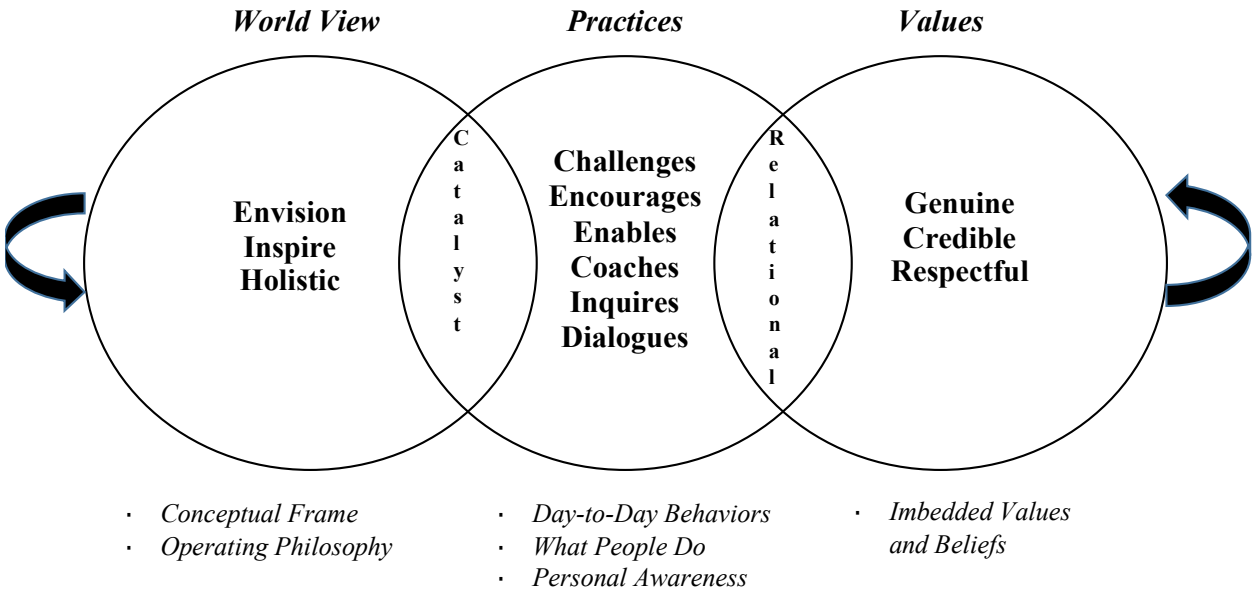

Figure 2. 2 Model of Appreciative Leadership.
From *Appreciative Leaders: In the Eye of the Beholder* (p. 159), by M. Schiller, B. M. Holland, and D. Riley, 2001, United States of America: The Taos Institute. Copyright 2001 by Marjorie Schiller, Bea Mah Holland, and Deanna Riley. Reprinted with permission.

Analyzing the interview narratives and the survey data Schiller, Holland, and Riley identified five themes running through the data.

- Appreciative leaders are belief-based, with an explicit spiritual orientation and practice.
- Leadership lives in the group and not in any one person.
- Multiple truths exist in ways of thinking, doing, and being.
- Appreciative leaders have an unwavering commitment to bringing out the best in themselves and others.
- Appreciative leaders find generative forces in their many circumstances and multiple systems. (Schiller, Holland, & Riley, 2001, p. 162)

The themes identified by Schiller, Holland, and Riley are also reflected in the appreciative leadership work of Trosten-Bloom and Whitney.

Trosten-Bloom and Whitney (2010) refer to appreciative leadership as "a relational process for bringing out the best of people, organizations, and communities…" (p. 231). To reinforce their point, Trosten-Bloom and Whitney present a case study of manufacturer Hunter Douglas and describe how appreciative leadership through the appreciative inquiry process provided inspiration to change the direction of the company in a positive way.

In their conceptual article on innovation-inspired positive organization development (IPOD), Cooperrider and Godwin (2012) cite Avital and Cooperrider (2003), and Gergen (1994) reinforcing these appreciative concepts noting:

> Appreciative inquiry posits that human systems move in the direction of the questions they most frequently and authentically ask; knowledge and organizational destiny are

> intimately interwoven; what we know and how we study it has a direct impact on where we end up. (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2012, p. 740)

These perspectives are relevant to this research study in that my desire was to explore and understand the influence of relational leading practices within organizations to improve communications. Leaders and organization members engaging in positive communications through the creation of positive relationships, developing understanding of the uniqueness of meanings to create positive relational connections, encouraging the emergence of generative communications, and affirming what is good, valuable, and excellent to continue generative conversations, are all important value commitments and complement this dissertation research.

The section began with a review of interdependent leadership where leadership is viewed as a social process producing direction, alignment, and commitment within groups in a collaborative work setting. Following interdependent leadership the theory of co-creating leadership where both leaders and followers share leadership practices. The leading cross-demographically section focused on when leaders and followers from differing demographic backgrounds including gender, race, and/or ethnicities are part of the same or interacting groups. Leading and systemic co-construction was reviewed noting systemic thinking theories and social construction processes combine into a unified leadership approach. Appreciative leadership followed noting leading as a conscious effort made by leaders to develop and bring forth the best qualities in all people. Appreciative leadership is accomplished through relational activities and positive change processes such as coaching and is found to live in the group and not with any one person. Lastly, the relational leading section notes that leading is not entity based but viewed as emerging from social processes and the relationships developed by individuals.

These leadership theories are significant because they move away from historical leadership theories that are primarily entity-based to theories that reflect and contain social construction characteristics such as shared dialogue, collaboration, multiloguing, and positive relationships between people. The social constructionist characteristics noted exist to equip leaders at all levels of the organization with the ability to advance organizational communication processes and share leading across the collective. A summary of socially constructed leadership theories with relational leading characteristics, including theory summaries and researcher names appears in Table 2.5.

Table 2. 5 *Socially Constructed Leadership Summary*

Leadership Theory	Theory Summary	Authors(s)/Year	Relational Leading Characteristics
Interdependent Leadership	Leadership is a collective activity that requires mutual inquiry and learning, and includes collaboration, dialogue, and experimentation and change processes.	Drath et al. 2008	Yes
Co-creating Leadership	Leaders and followers share a view of leadership practices as legitimate both in terms of effectiveness and morality.	Crevani, Lindgren, and Packendorff, 2007	Yes
Leading Cross-demographically	Demographic similarity between leaders and followers leads to more positive organizational outcomes	Offermann, 2012	Yes
Leading and Systemic Co-construction	The combination of systemic thinking and social	Barge, 2012, Barge, 2004a, 2004b, 2007;	Yes

	constructionism with a focus on language and inviting all to participate in the leadership process as a joint action.	Barge & Fairhurst, 2008; Barge & Little, 2002, 2008	
Appreciative Leadership	Leading involves relating as a constructive, ongoing process of meaning making, through language, in multilogue. Leadership lives in the group and not with any one person.	Avital & Cooperrider, 2003, Barge, 2012, Cooperrider & Godwin, 2012, Dachler & Hosking, 1995, Gergen, 1994, Schiller, Holland, & Riley, 2001, Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 2010	Yes
Relational Leading / Leadership	A process founded in social construction and created within the relationships between people, not entity based; a collective effort providing the ability of persons in relationship (not the individual as leader), to move with engagement and efficacy into the future.	Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2012, Ballinger & Schoorman, 2007, Barge, 2012, Barge & Fairhurst, 2008, Binns, 2008, Carmeli, Edmonson, & Tishler, 2011, Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2007, Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, Dachler & Hosking, 1995, Drath, 2001, Drath et al., 2008, Fletcher, 2001, Gergen, 1994, 2009b, Gergen & Hersted, 2013, Hosking, 2006, Moore, 2014, Offermann, 2012, Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012a, 2012b, Rooke & Torbert, 1998, Schein, 2010	Yes

Relational Leading

In this study, relational leading is a key construct in that my goal was to explore and understand relational leading practices, whether they emerged and were evident within the project team, and it's influence on the project team's organizational communication. Gergen (2009b) defines relational leading as "the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future. It is not the single individual who is prized, but animated relations" (p. 333). Relational leading is an action-oriented dialogical expansion of the concept of relational leadership and focuses on dialogue versus monologue. Like relational leadership, relational leading is also imbedded in social constructionist perspectives. This section reviews eight theoretical literature perspectives and four empirical studies.

Gergen (2009b) prefers, "relational leading," versus relational leadership, using the verb "*leading"* to represent a continuous state that is future oriented, and not one that only refers to an individual as the leader (p. 333). Like Gergen, Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011), and Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012a) also suggest the term relational leading as it indicates a process of dialogue versus monologue.

I believe that this future looking expansion to a continuous state is indicative of what is needed in developing relational leading practices in global organizational communications, where "generative interchange among participants," can take place (p. 333). Gergen suggests that relational leading is not an

individual activity, but one that occurs and emerges in daily interaction amongst leaders and followers. To emphasize this perspective, Gergen (2009a) addresses three "daily practices" of relational leading he considers "top candidates" (p. 149). These areas of practices are: "positive sharing, adding value, and image building" (p. 149).

Positive sharing involves establishing environments allowing for the "broad sharing of visions, values, and insights" (p. 149). This encouragement for many to contribute, and be heard, is seen by Gergen as a means to attain a more desirable end state. Adding value continues along the theme of collaboration and also intimates the need for respect amongst actors in conversation through "injecting value," "affirmation," and "positive elaboration" (p. 149). In image building one leverages the forms of narrative and metaphor to change and look towards the future by "integrating diverse ideas" focusing on "the lure of a new direction" (p. 150). In doing so, organizations are figuratively and literally extending an invitation for all to engage in the process of leading.

These concepts resonate appreciably to the research questions of this dissertation research in that creating an environment where collaboration amongst actors is allowed to thrive via encouragement and affirmation provides framework for communication exchange to germinate. Engaging in such practices may influence organizational communication and in the process construct an environment where organizational members are allowed to embrace the activity of relational leading.

Gergen (2009b) suggests that relational leading is a post-modernist social construction-related construct that breaks from the traditional notion of leadership where one solely focuses on personal traits, e.g., visionary or charismatic skills and where one does not take into account supporting relationships. Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012) contend that the common understanding of what leadership is should be redefined away from leader-centric and more towards "the constructions people make about themselves, their relations, tasks, and objectives" (p. 221). These views from Gergen and Alvesson and Sveningsson support this dissertation in that the primary research question was structured to further explore and understand the influence of relational leading practices on organizational communication, where ethically supportive relationships, and the constructions made amongst people, facilitate the exchange and understandings of meanings.

This section includes theoretical, essay, and empirical research materials on relational leading. Five areas that support relational leading practices are reviewed. These are: relational integrity; trust; dialogue; relational leadership; and ethics.

Relational integrity involves leadership valuing the ideas of others and where moments of difference may challenge a leader to do what is right and good. In one empirical study participants identified relationships, the need to listen, and to value the ideas of others as important in everyday work situations is reviewed. Trust and relational leadership are examined via two theoretical articles and one empirical study. One theoretical study examining the reactions of individuals in workgroups with regards to leadership succession and one theoretical article emphasizing the building of trust in organizations are included. An empirical study on top leadership teams and trust is examined. Dialogue and relational leadership are reviewed from theoretical and empirical perspectives. An empirical study on dialogue where researchers examined how participants created meaning and value is reviewed.

Relational leadership is theoretically examined and viewed in this study as a precursor to relational leading theory. Relational leadership takes a "relational perspective that views leadership as a process of social construction through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology" (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 654). This perspective is different than that of an "entity perspective" as the focus is not on individual leader attributes (p. 654). Lastly, ethics as a reflexive practice through which relational leaders become self-aware is reviewed via a qualitative empirical study. A summary of relational leading concludes this section.

Relational integrity. Relational integrity is defined as a leader's social attunement and ability to respond to moments of difference. One multi-year empirical ethnographic research study engaging narrative analysis is reviewed. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) recorded interviews and examined relational leading within an everyday work model of "Federal Security Directors (FSD's)" (p. 1425). The initial research question was "How do leaders make sense of their surroundings and construct an organizational

landscape within which people can act? (p. 1431)." Following a review of the earlier recorded responses Cunliffe and Eriksen noticed that "objects and networks" were not the focus of the responses. Cunliffe and Eriksen found that respondents "spoke of relationships" with people (p.1431). This difference caused Cunliffe and Eriksen to reframe their primary research question to "How do FSD's talk about their relationships and what do they see as being important in those relationships?" (p. 1431). Limited training was provided, and in many instances, the FSD's had little or no experience with the aviation industry. This lack of training and industry experience caused the FSD's to rely on their relationship building practices and continuous dialogue with peers.

During the analysis of researcher interviews, it was observed that the term "relationships" was frequently used (p. 1431). Interviewees also spoke of "needing to listen, to understand different perspectives, value ideas, and establish relationships" (p. 1434). Each morning FSD's conducted roll call to collectively discuss the workday ahead. At 5:00PM, the FSD's gathered again to review the day and what was on the schedule for tomorrow. Referring to the FSD's, Cunliffe and Eriksen note a passage from Fairhurst, (2009), "They acted from a form of knowing that seemed to embrace shared meaning-making within specific circumstances, dialogue about the issues, what could be learned, and what could be taken forward to help deal with future problems and situations" (p. 1441). This reinforces Cunliffe and Eriksen's perspective "that leaders need to be sensitive, attuned and responsive to moments of difference, and feel responsible for working with those differences" (p. 1438). Cunliffe and Eriksen refer to this practice as "relational integrity" (p. 1438). This ability to be sensitive and to respond to moments of differences may create an environment for leaders to build trust between and within the collective. Having relational integrity within organizations may also allow for generative dialogue and increased meaning sharing through organizational communication, which are elements of this study.

Trust. Trust is defined as a set of informal or formal common values or rules that assist in establishing accepted behaviors of the collective. Gergen (2009b) states: "We trust that others will follow the rules we have developed. As widely recognized, without the sense of trust there is little room intimacy, family, organization, or community" (p. 152). Two theoretical articles and one empirical study supporting trust and relational leading are reviewed in this section.

Trust is a key relational leading component in a study presented by Ballinger and Schoorman (2007). The study was influenced from "cognitive appraisal theories of emotion" (p. 118) and was designed to examine the reactions of individuals in workgroups with regards to leadership succession. Ballinger and Schoorman's stage-based model was created to examine how succession in workgroups might be disruptive. Relational leading was viewed important to individuals in the areas of "exchange and trust" and as dimensions that matter from an individual protection perspective (p. 122).

Ballinger and Schoorman noted another important element in the relationship was "trust in the leader" (p. 122), based on perception of an existing leader, or exchange with a new leader. Expanding this theory beyond the leader, Kahane (2006) noted in a theoretical article that building trust within an organization is a socialization process that communicates common values, and relies on the ability for all participants to share honest and open information amongst all levels of the organization via dialogical processes.

Carmeli, Edmonson, and Tishler (2011) conducted an empirical study on how relational leaders might "improve the quality of strategic decisions of their top management teams (TMTs) by creating psychological conditions of trust and facilitating learning from failures in their teams" (p. 31). Seventy-seven TMTs were surveyed and an analysis was conducted using "structural equation modeling (SEM)" (p. 31). Carmeli et al. suggest that if teams engage and share in learning about failed experiences, perceived responsibility for the failure might be distributed across the membership, and not hold any individual solely accountable. The engagement then becomes a learning process where dialogue is encouraged. For dialogue to naturally take place, a level of trust must exist amongst the members. "Trust within TMTs is a key psychological state that enables members to engage in learning from failures" (p. 35).

Carmeli et al. sent requests to "500 alumni of executive MBA programs in Israel" (p. 37) to complete a questionnaire. To entice recipients to complete the questionnaire, research findings were

offered for submissions. Useable questionnaires totaled 237, consisting of returns from "77 CEO's and 160 executives" (p. 37). The questionnaires were translated to Hebrew and then back to English to ensure proper the Hebrew items were accurately represented. TMT members were asked to complete a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale and covering, communication, collaboration, and the work environment. "The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .75, similar to the reliability reported in Carmeli et al.'s (2009) study" (p. 38). Reflexivity was viewed as a key part of the CEO's relational leadership practices when analyzing and developing improved understanding of failures as it provides the opportunity for generative dialogue and increased trust.

To expand their knowledge beyond the questionnaire data, Carmeli et al. "conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of two TMT's" (p. 41). It was found that "CEO relational leadership was positively related to team trust, which, in turn, increased team learning from failures" (p. 45). Based on the theoretical and empirical research examined, trust may be viewed as an important element in improving engagement and encouraging dialogue. In each of these studies trust, collaboration, and enhanced dialogue provide opportunities for increases in organizational communication engagement and are relevant to this study.

Dialogue. Dialogue is a process that enables individuals to connect and to develop their view of the world. Gergen and Hersted (2013) provide a social constructionist definition of dialogue:

> Dialogue about what is real, rational, and good is essential in creating those common understandings by which we lead our lives. Without dialogue we have nothing to rely on in the way of understanding, we have no reasons for our actions, and there is little in the sense of right and wrong, good and bad. In effect, to be organized at all depends on collectively coordinating words and actions. (p. 20)

This section contains one theoretical and one mixed-methods empirical study on dialogue and relational leading. In his seminal work, The Deep Blue Sea: Rethinking the Source of Leadership, which is based on theoretical concepts derived from years of experience, Drath (2001) credits Kenneth Gergen (1994) for providing him with "the fundamental relational idea" (p. xv). Drath views relational leading as a "framework…paying attention to the whole systems of relations (the deep blue sea) as a creative ground for leadership, while personal leadership pays attention to the character and skill of the leader (the waves and the whitecaps)" (p. xv). Drath refers to relational leadership as "relational dialogue" and views communities and organizations as interconnected locally and globally (xvii). Relational dialogue is the third leadership principle Drath explores, the first being personal dominance, and the second being interpersonal influence. With regards to relational dialogue, Drath proposes four "truths-in-the-making" (p.135) that to Drath represent relational leadership.

First, "people make sense of reality through relational processes" (p. 135), meaning that reality is constructed through the interactions of people based on their view of the world. Second, "leadership across worldviews requires relational dialogue" (p. 139), suggesting that reality is created through relational processes. Third, "leadership happens when a conversation across worldviews make sense of a new subject" (p. 144), meaning a subject change can only be brought forth by one inside the conversation with others working in a relational context. Fourth, "all leadership is a process of shared meaning-making," denoting all leadership, including heroic, is tied in some way to a "relational community" (p. 149). This relational community view is supportive of this research in that creating generative relational dialogue across organizations facilitates relational processes. Drath's relational dialogue principle and the proposed four-truths in the making resonate deeply with this relational leading dissertation research.

Moore (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study where he examined leadership as a relational practice. Through personal observations and interviews Moore studied 29 action learning groups and > 225 individual participants in the practice of relational leadership (p. 95). Moore took a "constructionist stance of leadership as a relational practice" to better understand how participants in the study created meaning and value (p. 97). Moore was interested in not only learning the types of leadership practices, but how these practices evolved.

> Teams that held very shallow reflection dialog or permitted only few voices in dialogue were most likely the teams that later experienced more issues in unresolved conflict and blocked

> processes. Conversely, teams that put more time, effort, and multiple voices into their dialogs were more successful in both their performance and their learning goals. (Moore, 2014, p. 111)

These findings reinforce Drath's emphasis and support this study on relational dialogue and the importance of cultivating relational leading practices.

Relational leadership. Relational leadership is viewed in this study as a precursor to relational leading theory. Relational leadership is defined as leadership where leading is not entity-based but a "perspective that focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships," Uhl-Bien (2006, p. 654). Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012b) describe relational leadership as "a view that sees leadership as emerging from social processes and relationships among people. A key assumption of relational leadership is that leadership is co-constructed in social/historical context" (p. 570). Ospina and Uhl-Bien "propose that relational leadership serve as a 'umbrella' term for research that studies leadership as generated in social processes and relationships among people" (p. 571). Relational leadership is viewed as a collective effort in that it involves more than the individual as leader, it may involve "dyads, groups, teams, networks, social movements" (p. 571).

The construct of relational leadership belongs to the same interpretative family as social construction. I am interested in relational leadership because it is a precursor to relational leading theory which is a nascent area of exploration that recognizes leadership as something other than that of one central leadership character exhibiting individual traits, such as charisma. Rather, relational leading "is an activity, not a personal attribute" (Gergen & Hersted, 2013, p. 30).

Ethics. Ethics is defined in this review of literature as a reflexive practice through which relational leaders become self-aware. One theoretical article and one empirical study are reviewed. Maak and Pless (2006) theoretically examined responsible leadership in a stakeholder society. Maak and Pless reference Cording, Freeman, Martin, Parmar, and Werhane (2006) and state "responsible leadership is a relational and ethical phenomenon, which occurs in social processes of interaction with those who affect or are affected by leadership and have a stake in the purpose and vision of the leadership relationship" (p. 103). Maak and Pless view ethical intelligence to be an important quality of responsible leaders in that "ethical intelligence fosters moral awareness and reflection and provides for imagination and orientation" (p. 106).

Maak and Pless hold leaders accountable for developing relational practices across the relationships with all stakeholders and that leaders are "responsible for the quality of these relationships – that they are inclusive and based on ethically sound values that the interaction partners respect and act according to these values and that the leader-follower's relationship serves a common and good purpose" (p. 104). Maak and Pless also note that leaders who follow the rules set forth for the collective are recognized for doing so and their behavior positively assists in cultivating the relational process. The building of a positive mutually accepted environment by leadership and the collective may promote positive organizational communication, which is of interest to this study.

Binns (2008) conducted a qualitative empirical research study of leaders (n=16) based in Perth, Australia. The research focus was "concerned with the ethical implications of conceptualizing and enacting leadership as a relational practice" (p.601). Selections for the sample group were based on "Fletcher's (2001) model of relational practice" (p. 606). The sample involved women in operational leadership roles similar to those of female engineers. Binns utilized a process consisting of a series of three semi-structured interviews for each leader. The time span between each interview varied between two and three weeks. The first round of interviews focused on the individuals' perspective of leadership in their business practice. Interview set two concentrated on the working relationships of the leader, and interview round three "explored emotions, learning and gender" (p. 606).

As a relational leading practice, Binns views the subject of ethics "as a critical reflexive practice through which leaders come to understand effects of their conduct and are able to transform or restyle themselves" (p. 600). Binns argues that using the terms heroic or relational when speaking of leadership, one is prone to setting up a "gendered dichotomy" (p. 601). In conducting her research, Binns incorporated her view of "gender and leading as ambiguous and unfinished processes," and Binns makes every attempt not to stereotype gender and leadership roles (p. 601).

In reading Binns' research study it is clear she views the practice of relational leading to be one that provides the framework for leaders to be reflective and self-aware, and that it is through the process of reflexivity that leaders are able to move towards self-transformation. Binns cites Foucault to reinforce her argument: 'free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently' (Foucault, 1985, p. 8).

Summary of relational leading. Relational leading is based in social construction processes where leadership is not viewed as an entity but created within the socially constructed relationships between people. Relational leading included a review of social processes where leadership is co-constructed. In this research section relational leading was explored through several dynamic associations. The first dynamic association reviewed was relational integrity, where leaders in moments of difference are able to quickly grasp the situation at hand and respond. Trust was reviewed as a component of the socialization process amongst workgroups and between workgroups and leaders. Dialogue as a process of meaning making amongst actors was presented. Relational leadership where leading is viewed not as an entity but created within the socially constructed relationships between people. Ethics was reviewed as a reflexive practice where leaders develop self-awareness. Leaders are viewed as responsible parties in the building of quality relationships with both internal and external stakeholders.

Leadership research summaries were presented in Tables 2.3 and 2.5 representing the empirical and theoretical research presented in the historical leadership and socially constructed leadership literature. The findings from the empirical leadership literature indicate that many managers may not be equipped to successfully manage diverse multicultural teams. Researchers acknowledge referenced leader behaviors and abilities such as power sharing, collaboration, and interdependence, as well as overcoming language barriers to be key areas in the successful exchange of meanings within a discursive communication process.

These literature findings emphasizing the potential inability for managers and leaders to successfully manage multicultural teams are important to this research study. The ability for managers to lead relationally and to generatively communicate organizationally when leading project teams are major foci of this research.

Unlike entity-based leadership practices centered on monologue, relational leaders provide the socially constructed framework necessary to facilitate and encourage the collective to engage and focus on generative dialogic processes. It is through social interactions that leaders can positively influence organizational communication that is nurtured and allowed to flourish amongst individuals irrespective of gender, cultural ethnicity, or role within the organization. The studies reviewed do not address relational leading and project team organizational communication, which was the basis of this study.

Organizational Communication

Organizational communication is defined in many ways. Conrad and Poole (2011) define organizational communication as "a process through which people, acting together, create, sustain, and manage meanings through the use of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context" (p. 5). Byers (1997) defines organizational communication as "both behaviors and symbols, generated whether intentionally or unintentionally, occurring between and among people who assign meaning to them, within an organizational setting" (p. 34). Bryant and Heath (2000) define the study of organizational communication as one that "centers on the means by which people gain information, shape opinions, make decisions, coordinate efforts, voice expectations, assimilate into the organization, leave the organization, and create rapport with one another" (p. 297). When referring to organizational communication, Van Riel (2000) notes there are significant benefits that allow for dialogue, and the creation of "awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the firm's strategic goals" (p. 157).

For this research, the definition of organizational communication put forth by Conrad and Poole was adopted. The Conrad and Poole definition strongly resonates because it relates organizational communication to social processes where meaning is managed amongst people acting together. The

relationality of this definition fits nicely into the relational leading framework of this research where dialogue is favored over monologue.

This section includes an overview of four organizational communication areas: organizational dialogue, upward communication, communication style, and conflict management. Organizational dialogue is defined as a process on how individuals within an organization learn how to communicate with each other. Two theoretical articles and one essay are noted, and one empirical study is reviewed. Upward communication is defined as communication originating within the collective and then directed toward senior team members. One theoretical narrative and two empirical research studies are reviewed. Communication and leadership style reviews the communication approach taken by task and relational leaders and encompasses communication competence; communication satisfaction, and job satisfaction. One empirical study is reviewed. Conflict management is defined as a situation or interaction where another stymies one's intentions and the original intentions are unable to be achieved in the manner originally conceived. One theoretical narrative is noted and one empirical study reviewed. A summary of organizational communication concludes this section.

Organizational dialogue. Organizational dialogue is defined by Hosking and McNamee (2006) as "dialogue, talk, and debate" within organizations and that "dialoging can be viewed as a collective discipline of learning how to have this special kind of conversation; some call this learning how to learn – and some say this is what organizational learning is about" (p. 279). Organizational learning takes place through collective dialogues within the organizational communication framework. Gergen and Hersted (2013) view dialogue from a social constructionist perspective and note:

> Dialogue about what is real, rational, and good is essential in creating those common understandings by which we lead our lives. Without dialogue we have nothing to rely on in the way of understanding, we have no reasons for our actions, and there is little in the sense of right and wrong, good and bad. In effect, to be organized at all depends on collectively coordinating words and actions. (p. 20)

In an essay written as part of an organizational discourse collection, Barrett, Gergen, and Gergen (2004) take a relational process perspective discussing organizations and the importance of dialogue noting, "If we understand the process of relational coordination, it is immediately clear that certain forms of dialogue are essential to the process of building organizations" (p. 45). When discussing leadership and innovation, and referencing social process in groups Barrett (2012) states, "Relational exchanges precede cognitive growth" (p. 97). This concept parallels one by Hosking (2011) where she notes, "I developed a view of organizing and leadership as a relational process that is simultaneously social, cognitive and political" (p. 456). Leadership and organizing as a relational process to facilitate organizational dialogue resonates strongly with this dissertation research as it is through relational processes that leaders can positively influence organizational communication amongst the collective irrespective of roles, gender, cultural ethnicity and the direction of communication routing.

Carmeli and Tishler (2004) found improving dialogue via organizational communication to be a possible benefit to strategic goals. Carmeli and Tishler conducted a multivariate empirical study of resources and capabilities within industrial firms that would "produce a sustainable competitive advantage" (p. 300). The use of a multivariate analysis allowed for "several organizational resources and capabilities to be examined simultaneously" (p. 300). Carmeli and Tishler applied a resource-based view (RBV) and analyzed four key performance indicators: "return on sales, return on equity, market share change, and customer satisfaction" (p. 299). These were based on six core organizational resources: "managerial skills, organizational culture, organizational communication, perceived organizational reputation, human capital, and internal auditing" (p. 299).

The research was conducted across 95 industrial enterprises located in Israel. A paper survey was distributed to senior management recipients, and 93 surveys were returned completed. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity and promised copies of the compiled survey results reflecting all respondent data upon completion of the analysis. The researchers determined organizational communication to be the fourth highest critical identifier when evaluating industrial enterprise performance. Organizational reputation was the most critical followed by managerial skills and organizational culture. Carmeli and

Tishler acknowledged "an effective communication system makes employees feel more involved in the overall process" (p.305). Carmeli and Tishler reference Van Riel (2000) in noting "effective organizational communication may generate significant benefits; it 'enables an organization to begin a dialogue to create awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the firm's strategic goals'" (p. 304). The result of Carmeli and Tishler's research suggesting the importance of organizational communication to foster dialogue is supportive of this literature research.

Upward communication. Upward communication may be defined as activity that takes place when employees or members of a collective freely engage with members of the organization who hold more senior roles. This type of organizational communication is important because it expands the dialogical process beyond like roles and subordinate roles to include those in senior roles and subsequently encompasses all members in the organizational communication process. In this section, one theoretical perspective and two empirical studies were reviewed.

Gergen and Hersted (2013) discuss leading teams and the importance of team meetings where all levels of the organization are able to participate, build relationships, and "develop a common understanding of who is doing what, and how it all fits together" (p. 73). Gergen and Hersted remind us that we are all "multi-beings" who bring with us experiences and knowledge from other relationships that will enrich the process via "multi-vocal potential" (p. 73). Gergen and Hersted state, "Some leaders may actively suppress these potentials, as they make for chaos and conflict. However, in a world of multiple and ever shifting realities and values, the leader can scarcely afford the tunnel vision of tidy plans and solutions" (p. 73).

Taking a phenomenological case study approach, Adelman (2012) studied relational leading behavior in top healthcare organizations and the "CEO behavior and actions that promote employee voice and upward communication…" (p. 2). The study consisted of an examination of award submissions and semi-structured interviews of 20 individuals across four organizations. The primary question was: "How do CEOs of performance excellence award-winning healthcare organizations foster employee voice and upward communication of both positive and negative information in their organization?" (p. 134). A secondary question was "How do CEOs of performance excellence award-winning healthcare organizations approach communication?" (p. 135). The number of employees in each organization ranged from slightly over 2,000 in the smallest organization to 14,000 employees in the largest. In all four cases there was a clear "culture of continuous improvement, guided by the organization's mission, vision, values, and established employee behavior standards" (p. 5). All four CEO's embraced open two-way dialogue between employees and themselves and included the practice in their organizational strategies. With CEO's and management embracing open two-way dialogue amongst the collective they are influencing cultural organizational communication norms. This allows for the social process of multiloguing to occur across organizational member roles, gender, and cultural ethnicity.

The participants interviewed who discussed the fourth CEO (Case 4) stressed more of a personal connection with the CEO noting his "genuine concern for their well-being" (p. 5). The participants also emphasized the CEO in Case 4's willingness to engage with them beyond work topics, in areas such as family discussions. Additionally, the CEO in Case 4 extended and strongly encouraged these relational practices to all members of his senior team for them to emulate. Adelman concluded key factors in successful upward communication are a direct result of CEO availability and approachability, and by the CEO being "physically present" (p. 10). These factors along with management support and encouragement for employees to voice both positive and negative information expands the dialogical process and provides the opportunity for a positive organizational communication climate. It is this type of positive climate that allows for increased employee engagement to occur. When relational leaders are able to create a positive environment for organizational communication to thrive, generative dialogue is able to occur throughout the organization.

In an exploratory empirical study Muchinsky (1977) examined organizational communication, organizational climate, and job satisfaction. Specifically, Muchinsky looked to discover "the relationships of organizational communication to job satisfaction on the one hand and to organizational climate on the other" (p. 594). The random sample of respondents (n=695) was taken from a potential

pool of 8,000 employees who worked in various roles at a large public utility in the United States. The respondents were notified the study was not being sponsored by their employer but by Iowa State University. Three surveys were sent to each respondent.

Organizational climate was measured by a questionnaire developed by Litwin and Stringer (1968). Job satisfaction was measured via the "Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Hulin, Kendall, and Smith (1969)" (p. 595). Organizational communication was measured utilizing a questionnaire developed by O'Reilly and Roberts (1974a). This questionnaire measures "36 items and 16 dimensions of organizational communication" (p. 594). A Likert format was used to measure "trust," "influence," "mobility," "desire for interaction," "accuracy," "summarization," "gatekeeping," and "overload" (p. 594). The measurements of "directionality-upward," directionality-downward," and "directionality-lateral" were measured based on a "frequency" or percentage of time that was entered by the respondent (p. 594). The degree respondents were satisfied with communication within the organization was measured via a Likert scale. The survey data results for directionality-upward "was significant and positively correlated with satisfaction and supervision (.12, $p < .001$)" (p. 603).

These results suggest that when employees are comfortable in communicating to individuals in more senior positions employee job satisfaction and satisfaction with supervisors is greater. Muchinsky advises the directionality-upward scale correlations have "relatively low reliability" (p. 603). However, in commenting on this research Muchinsky stated, "consistent and ostensibly logical correlations did emerge between these variables and job satisfaction" (p. 603). Muchinsky's research supports this study in that when management adopts a relational leading style where dialoging across the collective regardless of role, cultural ethnicity, or gender is encouraged the overall health of organizational communication, employee job and supervisor satisfaction increases. The findings of Muchinsky as well as those of Adelman in promoting voice, and the narrative of Gergen and Hersted where dialogue is part of the process to create mutual understanding positively reflect the themes of this study.

Communication and leadership style. Leadership style may be defined in terms of relational or task based. In a relational leading style dialogue amongst the collective is constructed within social processes. Task based leadership is derived from a command and control model as found in entity based leadership. In a study similar to Madlock (2008) where task and relational leading styles were examined and measured from the perspective of "supervisor communicator competence and leadership style on employee job and communication satisfaction" (p. 61), Mehrganrad, Mohammadzade, and Nasserinejad (2014) explored relational leadership style and the relationship between "communication competence, communication satisfaction, and job satisfaction" (p. 2243).

There are four hypotheses Mehrganrad, Mohammadzade, and Nasserinejad investigated. First, "There will be a significant and positive relationship between supervisor communication competence and employee communication satisfaction" (P. 2545). Second, "There will be significant and positive relationship between supervisor communication competence and employee job satisfaction" (p. 2545). Third, "Supervisor's relational leadership style will moderate the relationship between supervisor communication competence and employee communication satisfaction" (p. 2545). Fourth, "Supervisor's relational leadership style will moderate the relationship between supervisor communication competence and employee job satisfaction" (p. 2545).

In the Mehrganrad, Mohammadzade, and Nasserinejad empirical study 103 participants working at several universities in Iran were measured on "the effect of supervisor competence and relational leadership style on the subordinates' job and communication satisfaction" (p. 2544). In addition, "the moderating effect of supervisor relational leadership style in the relationship between supervisor communication competence and employee job and communication satisfaction" was measured (p. 2545).

Measurement of task and relational leadership styles was via the Leadership Style Questionnaire, Northouse (2001). Communication satisfaction was measured via the Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (ICSI) developed by Hecht (1978), (p. 2545). The job satisfaction measurement leveraged the "8-item Abridged Job in General scale (AJIG)" developed by Ironson, Lin, Russell, Smith, Spitzmüller, and Stanton (2004). Descriptive and inferential statistical processes were used for central tendency measures, correlation coefficients, and hierarchical regression models respectively.

An analysis of the results returned a "significant and positive relationship between supervisor relational leadership style in the relationship between supervisor communication competence and employee job and communication satisfaction" (p. 2546). The researchers concluded when top management engages in a relational leading style, communication and job satisfaction increases amongst employees. Increased employee job and communication satisfaction may lessen the opportunity for organizational communication disruption due to misunderstandings and potential conflict situations amongst employees. When relational leaders are able to encourage and promote relational leading practices within organizations the opportunities for positive organizational communication via generative dialogue exists.

Conflict management. Conflict management is defined as a situation or interaction where another stymies one's intentions and the original intentions are unable to be achieved in the manner originally conceived. One theoretical narrative is noted and one empirical study reviewed. Jambrek and Penić (as cited in Spaho, 2013) define conflict as "a process of social interaction and a social situation, where interests and activities of participants (individuals or groups) actually, or apparently, confront, block, and disable the realization of one party's objectives" (p. 106). Proper management of conflict within organizations is critical to employee job satisfaction and the efficiency of organizational communication in developing relational practices.

In an empirical study, Madlock researched the relationship between "a supervisor's leadership, conflict management, and communication competence and how these behaviors influence the job satisfaction of employees" (p. 122). The purpose of the study was to further understanding of "the association between leadership, conflict management, and communication competence" (p. 132). The research goal was to:

> Determine what form of leadership style (task and relational), conflict management style, or communication competence of supervisors would elicit the greatest level of employee job satisfaction. Second, was to better understand the role communication competence plays in the presentation of leadership and conflict management by supervisors. (Madlock, 2009, p. 132)

The study involved 245 full-time working adult volunteer participants from "brick and mortar organizations located in the United States" (p. 127). The number of male participants was slightly higher than female participants, 130 and 115 respectively. The researchers consisted of the author and communication students enrolled at a Mid-Western University.

Leadership style was measured by the "20-item Leadership Style Questionnaire developed by Northouse (2001)," (p. 128). Researchers utilized a five-point Likert scale in the collection of data regarding the employees' immediate supervisor. Cronbach's alpha was .93 overall with task leadership style .89 and relational leadership style .91. The "12-item Communicator Competence Questionnaire developed by Backman, Dillard, Eisenburg, and Monge (1982)" was used to measure communication competence (p. 128). Cronbach's alpha for the data gathered was .90. Conflict management style was measured via the "30-item Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (Form B)" developed by Putnam and Wilson (1982), (p. 128). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the employees' supervisor style of conflict management. Job satisfaction of the employees "was measured by the eight-item Abridged Job In General Scale (AJIG) developed by Ironson, Lin, Russell, Smith, Spitzmüller, and Stanton (2004)," (p. 128). Cronbach's alpha for the study was .87 for non-confrontational supervisors, .83 for collaboration and solutions oriented strategies, compromise strategies was .81, and use of control strategies by supervisors was .86. These Cronbach alpha results are significant as any result greater than .8 is considered positive and reliable.

Following an analysis of the data, "significant positive relationships were found between the relational leadership style of supervisors and their conflict management styles of collaboration" (p. 129). "Task oriented leadership" was present within organizations' represented in the study however; employees preferred "relational oriented leadership" (p. 132). Based on the study results the predictors of employee satisfaction in order of significance are: "communication competence, collaborative conflict management, and relational oriented leadership" (p. 132). All data results exceeded a Cronbach alpha > 80 and should therefore be considered significant. Madlock's findings are of interest because the data

analysis of task-oriented leadership versus relational oriented leadership was compared and employees preferred relational oriented leadership practices in the work place. Relational leading practices allow generative dialogue to occur within and across an organization. These findings significant as relational leading practices in support of organizational communication are relevant to this study.

Summary of organizational communication. This section included an overview of organizational communication definitions and empirical and theoretical research in the areas of dialogue, upward communication, communication and leadership style, and conflict management. Organizational communication as a relational process allows actors within an organization to create and manage meanings across all corners of the organization including senior management. Through open relatedness senior managers are provided the opportunity to understand was is happening within the organization and to encourage and promote positive dialogue amongst and between employees and themselves. One of the organizational benefits of relational communications is increased employee satisfaction with communications, supervisor relationships and the organization. Through a relational communication process instances of conflict may be addressed through collaborative communications amongst project team members.

Organizational communication is the process where dialogue takes place within global organizations to allow individuals and groups the ability to assign and share meaning, and exchange information. This process is relevant to project teams in global organizations and local organizations as it allows positive dyadic communication to develop and take place.

Summary of the Literature Review

In support of the study's purpose to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication, this chapter presented a review of the literature related to relevant constructs. The literature review has six sections organized based on research themes found in the literature. Because relational leading is founded in social construction processes this literature review began with both a historical and modern view of social construction. Relational construction was reviewed as it is centered on socially constructed dialogical practices and processes. Historical and socially constructed leadership theories were reviewed beginning with entity theories such as trait, skills and style approaches. Socially constructed leadership theories such as transformational, situational, leader member exchange, and shared leadership were reviewed. Leadership theories with relational characteristics such as interdependent, appreciative leadership, and relational leadership were also reviewed. All leadership theories were consolidated and placed into two tables. Tables 2.3 and 2.5 focused on historic and socially constructed leadership theories, emphasizing relational leading. Summaries of the respective theories with author, publication date, and socially constructed designation are included in each table.

Organizational communication was reviewed as a relational process where actors create and manage meanings throughout the organization. This is done within a safe environment where actors hold themselves and others accountable for commitments. They demonstrate personal ownership in their tasks, and are comfortable having open and meaningful dialogue without fear of retribution.

Based on the findings from the literature review, there appears to be opportunities to contribute to both scholars and practitioners by (1) exploring how do relational leaders influence a project team's organizational communication, (2) understanding the practices of relational leading, and (3) how relational leaders might influence a project team's organizational communication through relational leading practices. These findings may also be of interest to leadership scholars and practitioners who are primarily focused on traditional leadership theories. Specifically, the dialogical element of relational leading where collective communications foster learning and promote coordinated actions, and the project framework.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Introduction

Patton (2015) states, "the first step in a research process is getting clear about purpose" (p. 248). Patton identifies five types of research: basic research, applied research, summative evaluation, formative evaluation, and action research. This study focuses on how relational leading practices influence a project team's organizational communication. This research is both basic and applied research because this is a case study that contributes to theory and will be useful in problem-solving (Table 3.1).

Basic and applied research. Basic research seeks to "contribute to fundamental knowledge and theory" of one's interest (Patton, 2015, p. 248). Applied research is used to "illuminate a societal concern or problem in the search for solutions (p. 248). Patton notes "basic and applied researchers publish in scholarly journals, where their audience is other researchers who will judge their contributions using disciplinary standards of rigor, validity, and theoretical support" (p. 248). This study used basic research to understand what is the meaning of relational leading and what are the practices. Applied research was used to contribute to relational leading and organizational communication research and how relational leading practices may influence the project team's organizational communication. Table 3.1 explains the alignment of basic and applied research to this study.

Table 3. 1 *Alignment of the Study to Basic and Applied Research*

	Characteristics of Basic Research	Characteristics of Applied Research	Purpose of this Study	To be Included in this Study?
Purpose of Research	Knowledge as an end in itself: discover truth	Understand the nature and sources of human and societal problems	To explore and understand the practices of relational leading and its influence on the project team's organizational communication	Yes
Focus of Research	Questions deemed important by one's discipline or personal intellectual interest	Questions deemed important by society	Topic is important to scholars and practitioners interested in relational leading and organizational communication	Yes
Desired Results	Contribution to Theory	Contributions to theories that can be used to formulate problem-solving programs and interventions	Contributes to relational leading research and organizational communication research through the understanding of relational leading practices and how organizational communication may be positively influenced	Yes
Key Assumptions	The world is patterned: those patterns are knowable and explainable	Human and societal problems can be understood and solved with knowledge	Explaining the practices of relational leading and using relational leading to help influence project team organizational communication	Yes
Publication Mode	Major referred scholarly journals in one's discipline,	Specialized academic journals, applied research journals within	Target publications include conference papers, book chapters and applied research	Yes

	scholarly books	disciplines, interdisciplinary problem-focused journals	journals	
Standard for Judging	Rigor of research, universality, and verifiability of theory	Rigor and theoretical insight into the problem	In-depth auto- and duo-ethnography case study combined with thematic analysis will ensure rigorous research is conducted	Yes

Note. Adapted from *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, by M. Patton, 2015, p. 249.

Research Design and Rationale

Decisions about research design should be considered and chosen carefully with the understanding there may likely be trade-offs as a project unfolds. These trade-offs may be due to limited resources, time, and the researcher's perspective of the environment Patton (2015). Patton states, "there are no perfect research designs" (p. 256). According to Creswell (2014), "research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design" (p. 273). Part of the decision making process as to research design selection is consideration of the "research problem" being addressed, report recipients, and personal experiences of the researcher (p. 19). The research questions for this study, the organizational problem to be addressed, and the researcher's position within the organization being studied influenced the researcher to choose a qualitative approach to incorporate an auto- and duo-ethnography single case study strategy. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis.

The research perspective for this study adopted a phenomenological perspective in that the researcher was seeking out the experiences of the participants during this study in order to document the meaning of these experiences. Patton (2015) states "phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences…anything that presents itself to consciousness is potentially of interest to phenomenology, whether the object is real or imagined, empirically measurable or subjectively felt" (p. 115).

A phenomenological perspective was suitable for this study because it is a strategy that follows a constructionist tradition within qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). I was looking to explore how relational leading practices can influence the project team's organizational communication. This exploration took place with the intent to understand the experiences of individuals in their day-to-day activities as they worked on a significant project at a high-technology enterprise.

The different data types were collected in phases using a multiple-methods approach. This variety of data points and phases of data collection and analysis are presented in Chapter 4. Creswell (2014) notes a qualitative research approach "relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection, employs multiple methods of data collection, is both inductive and deductive, is based on participants' meanings, includes researcher reflexivity, and is holistic" (p. 211).

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach using an auto- and duo-ethnography single case study design strategy was applied to this study. Thematic analysis was the primary analysis tool.

Qualitative methodology overview. A qualitative research approach takes a "constructionist worldview…the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views for the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 19). Through inquiry, qualitative research is a vehicle to assist in interpreting the meaning-making process (Patton, 2015). Patton goes on to state, "qualitative inquiry is personal" and "the researcher is the instrument of inquiry" (p. 3). Patton notes that every facet of the researcher's background and philosophy comes into play when qualitative research is conducted.

Creswell views qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). "Qualitative research is best suited to promoting a deep understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 27). Creswell (2014) views qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4).

Auto-ethnography. Gergen (2015) notes that in auto-ethnography research "the researcher is simultaneously the object of the research" (p. 78). Gergen advises that in auto-ethnography it is through life experiences that the researcher often shares personal life changing events. Major and Savin-Baden (2013) note auto-ethnography explores the researchers own life and is a "form of autobiographical narrative" (p. 201). It is through these life experiences the researcher is able to understand and relate with the "social context" (p. 201). Throughout this project as both the researcher and project manager, I found myself actively living in both worlds. As the researcher, my goal was to be as objective as possible in capturing the relational leading activities of the project team through observations and team member communications. As the project manager, I provided general direction and guidance to the team and coached individual team members. These activities were all based on the relational leading framework I adopted. The adoption of a relational leading project team framework within what was historically and predominantly a command and control environment came with risk and certain pressures. Project success within the guidelines provided was an expectation of senior management regardless of the project team management approach taken

Duo-ethnography. Major and Savin-Baden (2013) state duo-ethnography is an extension of auto-ethnography and cite Ellis (2009) to note "Duo-ethnography is based on the idea that more is learned about a situation or context by discussing it" than through reflection only (p. 202). "Duo-ethnography, like auto-ethnography, seeks to explore the autobiographical and cultural influences that have shaped beliefs, decisions, and so on…focus is on reflexivity through sharing the story with another" (p. 202). In both duo-ethnography and auto-ethnography, data collection includes "chronicling the past, taking an inventory of the self, using approaches that enable visualizing the self, undertaking self-observation, collecting self-reflective data" (p. 201). "Duo-ethnography requires one or sometimes two conversation partners and focuses on personal topics and stories" (p. 202). This was done through conversations I had with Dr. Kahane the focus group facilitator, and Dr. Stavros my dissertation advisor. Dr. Kahane and I discussed the interplay of team members and their insightful comments made during the focus group session. We had subsequent discussions reflecting on our observations of the focus group and what they meant to my research. Dr. Stavros and I discussed the meaning of the research findings in relation to the research questions and the literature review.

Case study. Yin (2014) states case study as the preferred research method "when main research questions are 'how' or 'why' questions" (p. 2). Yin adds that "some types of "what" questions are exploratory such as "What can be learned from a startup business?" (p. 9). Yin further states "The second type of "what" question is actually a form of a "how many" or "how much" line of inquiry – for example, "What have been the ways that communities have assimilated new immigrants?" (p. 10).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the meaning of relational leading?
2. What are the practices of relational leading?
3. What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?
4. How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?

Yin argues case study research to be useful in "contemporary" studies where a researcher has little or no control over "behavioral events" (p. 2). In particular, case study research is appropriate and "has been a common research method in psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, social

work, business, education, nursing, and community planning" (p. 4). This single case research study took place in a business environment and explored the influence of relational leading within the project team, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project team, and it's influence on organizational communication.

Yin suggests that one strength of the case study approach is that it allows for a "full variety of evidence" (p. 12). In addition to historical materials as evidence, Yin mentions "documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations" (p. 12). These types of evidence are important to this study, as the focus was on a major software conversion project where presentations, meeting agendas, communications, direct observations, interviews, and corporate guidelines were present. It is further noted that case studies have application in a variety of scenarios where there is a "desire to understand complex social phenomena" (p. 4).

Yin advises there are various types of case study designs such as single-case (holistic), single-case (embedded), and multiple-case design that may be holistic or embedded. Single-case may have one of five rationales, "critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal" (p. 50). Yin (2014) discusses and provides examples of the three types of case studies: "explanatory or causal, descriptive, and exploratory" (p.8). This research used a descriptive common holistic single-case design. Descriptive because this study traced and documented a sequence of events and interactions over the course of the project. A common case perspective was adopted in this research study as the objective of the common case "is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation – again because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (p. 52).

In this research case, a high-technology project team consisting of participants from multiple cultures was studied. What makes this case significant and of interest is the researcher acted as the program manager/facilitator, constructed and implemented relational leading practices within the project team environment, all while beneath a strong entity-based organizational management framework and hierarchy.

Thematic analysis. "Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Thematic analysis is often viewed as a bridge allowing "different qualitative methods to communicate with each other" (p. vii). The process of thematic analysis allows one to compare content at the both the manifest and latent levels. Manifest-content analysis emphasizes those items that are the readily visible content of something. Latent-content analysis is tied to the deeper meanings or "underlying aspects" of the content being viewed (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 16). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that in addition to identifying patterns within collected data "one of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility" (p. 4). In this study, various types of qualitative data were collected and analyzed utilizing thematic analysis. Additional data based on semi-structured interviews, a focus group facilitated by an independent third-party, focus group facilitator observations and reflections, researcher observation and reflections, participant reflections, and documentation used in the project process were included in the analysis. Inductive analysis logic was used when reviewing data gathered to detect themes and patterns. Thematic maps were created to demonstrate relationships, experiences, and related documentation. Thematic analysis is applicable to this study to compare and contrast the practices of relational leading, whether they emerged and were evident within the project team, how they were applied in the project team, their meaning based on project team member perspectives, and their influence on organizational communication.

Unit of Analysis and Population

The unit of analysis was a high-technology organization project team. The team consisted of 23 technical and business professionals and was chartered with responsibility to support a global corporate program to convert all finance, manufacturing, sales, and related global infrastructure to a new vendor platform. Specific responsibility of the case study participants is the support of a 650-person global business division to ensure no losses in productivity and/or system functionality occurs. This support included changes to the global systems, associated processes, tools, and best practices.

This selection was made for several reasons. First, I was an employee of this organization and held a vested interest in the outcome of this study. I worked at the company for 35 years and within the specific organization for 15 years successfully leading several strategic organizational change and transformational initiatives. The organization was implementing a significant global systems software conversion initiative. I was directly responsible for the initiative analysis, planning, development, implementation, and communication within a global organization of 650 individuals. In addition, I was the organization representative to the enterprise systems conversion team with responsibility for executive expectation setting and program status update communications.

The initiative was accelerated in that some organizations within the enterprise began investigating and planning 12-24 months prior to this researcher's organization start. As a result, my project team had nine months to complete all defined tasks. To meet the deadlines, a master plan was created with compartmentalization of nine work streams including representation from finance, program management office (PMO), legal, systems feeds, reporting, sales, technology, testing and communications. Each work stream was assigned a team lead and the PMO work stream had two co-program managers. My responsibility was to work with the team to develop a project structure that included detailed organizational plans with strategy and executables, associated personnel roles, and the overall communication plan.

Second, the project team for this study consisted of 23 individuals from varying cultures, American, Columbian, Indian, and Venezuelan. The team was physically located in both the United States and India. The United States team was situated in the East and Midwest. The India team was located in Bangalore. The majority of team members were full-time enterprise employees and some were college interns and contractors for hire. In some instances, team members had not worked together in the past, certainly not on such a highly visible program initiative. It should be noted that no members of the project team including the researcher were dedicated solely to this project initiative. This effort was in addition to standard workloads.

Purposeful sampling. The study used purposeful sampling. "The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). In this study, the participants were all part of a software conversion organizational initiative that impacted the enterprise globally. A core team of 23 individuals was selected based on their skill sets and expertise to represent corporate interests (three individuals) and organizational work streams (20 individuals) that supported an organization of approximately 650 individuals directly impacted by the implementation of the initiative. It should be noted that core project team members periodically engaged others outside of the core project team to assist them. These "non-core" individuals were designated within this project beginning with TM24 and above, when information they provided was in support of the project. A similar methodology was applied to corporate contacts where non-core corporate personnel were designated with "Corp (numeric)" and above.

The core project team of 23 individuals was responsible for the nine identified project work streams within the organization. Each of these work streams was classified as critical to a successful implementation. The work stream leads were asked to participate in this study, as they had information-rich detail of the initiative/phenomena being studied. From the 23 core project team participants, 16 project team members agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews and a focus group to answer this study's questions. The seven individuals who did not wish to participate in the interviews or focus group was due to three leaving the company, and three who did not feel they could adequately contribute to the dialogue based on the timing when they joined or left the team. One other individual initially voiced interest to participate; however, when the email invitation was sent, he did not reply. Multiple attempts were made to contact him without success.

The three individuals who left the company included one person who caused conflict within the software conversion project team. Following the software conversation project, this individual was assigned to a new project that included several software conversion project team members. Over the course of this second project, conflict arose again and the barriers faced were significant. These

challenges were raised by the team to senior management who engaged to assist in remediating the conflict. Following several unsuccessful attempts to resolve the conflict, and with additional direction from senior management, the individual decided to resign from the company. The two other individuals who left the company returned to India and began work in different sectors.

The final count of individual interviewees totaled 16, with eight of these 16 also participating in the focus group. Patton (2015) notes "the purpose of a purposeful sample is to focus case selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry's purpose, primary questions, and data being collected" (p. 264).

Snowball sampling. This study also used snowball sampling. Snowball sampling, also known as "chain sampling" involves "asking each interviewee for suggestions about individuals who have a similar or different perspective" (Patton, 2015, p. 297). A selection criteria for participants was created as noted in Bloomberg and Volpe (2012, p. 119). The criterion for selection for this research was that snowball interviewees attended the weekly coffee meetings with regular frequency, had a definitive investment in the outcome of the project, and interfaced with one or more of the project work stream team members on a frequent basis in relation to the project. Initially, the three team members representing corporate interests were not considered by me to participate in the research. This is because I was more focused on considering the team members in my immediate organization. Early in the 1:1 interview process one of the team members asked if I was including the three corporate team members who actively participated in the weekly coffee meetings, and interfaced with team members during the project. It was at this point when I realized this was an option that should be considered.

This referral from an interviewee allowed me to expand the richness of the data collection through the process of additional interviews and data gathering. In this study, three additional interviews resulted from the snowball sampling process. The addition of these individuals brought the total number of team member interviews to 16. The additional three interviews were conducted within one week of the other team member interviews.

Data Collection

Data were collected using observations, field notes, reflections from participants and the researcher, project documentation including proposal, scope, project structure, project plan, meeting schedules and minutes, and project email. Data from semi-structured interviews and a focus group session were also collected. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 team members and a subset of eight individuals also participated in the focus group. The focus group was facilitated by an independent third-party facilitator to reduce perception of researcher bias.

Data were gathered in phases due to the nature of the project and the timing of the data collections. Multiple data sources were used to triangulate data points. Patton (2015) notes that "you include triangulation of data sources and analytical perspectives to increase the accuracy and credibility of findings" (p. 106). This variety of data points collected in phases were analyzed and are presented in Chapter 4. For the semi-structured and focus group interviews, a formal invitation via email requesting participation in the research study semi-structured interviews and the focus group was sent (see Appendix B). Participant consent was requested via an affirmative reply to the invitation email and returned electronically to the researcher (see Appendix C).

The focus group and semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded with permission of the interviewees using a Tascam DR-05 Linear PCM recorder. An Apple iPhone 5S was used as a digital recorder backup device in the event of a problem with the primary digital recorder. The researcher and independent focus group facilitator also took brief notes during the interview sessions they were engaged in to record thoughts and points of interest. The focus group session was held in advance of all 1:1 semi-structured interviews and was conducted as a Skype audio session due to geographic limitations and personnel schedules. The focus group was facilitated by an independent third-party (see Appendix D). The 1:1 semi-structured interview sessions were conducted face-to-face whenever possible. Where geographic limitations existed, Skype audio conference call technology was used.

Following each interview the Tascam micro SD digital recorder computer chip was removed from the recorder, loaded into a laptop computer, and the respective files subsequently uploaded to the Rev.com online password protected transcription service. Each interview was transcribed verbatim using the Rev.com online transcription service. In between interview sessions, the digital recorder containing the micro SD computer chip was secured in a fireproof safe. Transcripts returned from the Rev.com transcription service were stored on the researchers password protected computer as well as a portable storage (flash drive) device. The portable storage device was secured in a fireproof safe when not in use.

Transcripts from the focus group and 1:1 semi-structured interviews were immediately reviewed by the researcher upon notification from Rev.com that a transcript was available. The researcher compared the transcript word for word to the digital recording. This process step was conducted to correct (where possible) inaudible words and phrases to aid the interviewee in the review of their transcript. In four instances, the researcher went back to team members to ask questions that were modified based on the recommended changes received from eight doctorally qualified researchers. The researcher sent each interviewee and each focus group participant their respective researcher reviewed transcripts. Interviewees were requested to review the transcript, identify any noted corrections according to their recollection, and if no corrections, their approval of the transcribed document was requested in the form of an email (see Appendix E). The researcher initially listened to each interview three to five times prior to coding and analysis. This was done to develop understanding and to obtain clarity and meanings as not all interviewees were native English speakers. Recorded interviews and transcripts were additionally accessed from secure storage as needed throughout the process.

In preparation for coding, the data were initially reviewed so the researcher could develop understanding and meanings of the data. This review was in addition to the initial reviews following the interviews. The data were reviewed a second time with the researcher writing initial notes and general thoughts. During the third review, the researcher began capturing relevant text excerpts related to the research questions and subsequently developed codes. Throughout the coding process the researcher constantly compared previous text and codes to new data. Once the code was written and a numeric code identifier applied, the researcher created a primary (candidate) theme and secondary themes relating to the code and text excerpt. Themes received an alpha code designation. The text excerpts, codes, and themes were manually entered into a Microsoft Excel Workbook.

Following the focus group session, the researcher interviewed the third-party independent facilitator to obtain his perspective of the session. The independent third-party facilitator interview was digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed by the researcher in the same manner as all other interviews in order to maintain consistency of data collection. The total number of interviews including semi-structured interviews, the focus group, and the third-party facilitator 1:1 was 18. The 18 interviews generated 196 raw pages of transcript that were captured in 8.25 hours of digital recordings. Subsequent to the initial researcher review for interviewee validation, all interview transcripts were saved under the team member names on the researchers' password protected computer as well as a portable storage device.

Copies of each interview transcript were subsequently renamed to disguise team member names and corporate references. The files were saved as Microsoft Word files holding randomly applied "team member" designations of TM1 through TM16. The independent third-party facilitator interview was saved under the designation of "FG1." The files were saved on the researcher computer and a portable storage device. Once the transcripts were disguised and saved, electronic copies of the transcripts were sent to a C Programming Language programmer. To ensure all themes were captured and to reaffirm the captured themes, a C program was written to parse (cut) the interviewee narrative into three-word and five-word segments. The C programmer was supplied direction by the researcher to parse (cut) the interviews, including the focus group transcript, into three-word and five-word segments. The programmer removed interviewer questions, comments, and narrative. This allowed conversion of the interviewee narrative in the Microsoft Word interview source documents to be placed into separate "text" files in preparation for the C program processing. Using C Programming Language tools the programmer designed a program to accept the text files and parse the interviewee narrative into three and five word

segments. Except for the cutting of three words versus five words the logic for the cutting was identical regardless of sentence length. The program was coded to ignore end of sentence punctuation to maintain a continuous flow.

The program was coded to take the first three words of a sentence and place them into a file. The program next began with word two of the same sentence and pulled word three and word four to comprise the second cut line. The third line began with word three of the same sentence and included words four and five placing them into a third cut line. The program continued in this manner until all words in the designated transcript were "read" and placed into their assigned file. Each three-word and five-word parsed transcript file was manually exported into a Microsoft Excel Workbook containing separate tabs designated by team member designation code with a parse code of three or five. Each parse code of three words and five words were listed two ways within the spreadsheet tabs. First alphabetically, then in the chronological order as the words were spoken and recorded. The programmer sent the files as they were successfully completed to the researcher. Upon receipt of the cut data from the programmer, the researcher conducted a review of the data against the transcripts to ensure data integrity was maintained. The cutting process was conducted to assist the researcher during the thematic analysis constant comparison process so that the original transcript data could be double checked for themes that were found through the manual process and to uncover any themes that may have been missed. It should be noted that the researcher found the chronological cut files to be more useful than the alphabetical cut file listing. The three-word cutting segments generated 46,700 lines and the five-word segments generated 42,917 lines. The Microsoft Excel Workbook containing all cut files was revision controlled by the programmer and the researcher whenever new files were distilled. The files sent from the programmer to the researcher were stored on the researcher's password protected computer, backed-up to a secure network, and also saved on portable storage. The portable storage when not in use was stored in a fireproof safe.

The identity of team member naming designations was not shared by the researcher so as to maintain confidentiality. References within all of the documentation collected including notes and observations to specific team members, the company name, and the corporate project code name were removed and replaced with designations of "TM(numeric)" for each unique team member, "high-technology company," for the company name, and "software conversion project" for the corporate project code name. These steps were required and implemented based on communications and agreement between corporate Human Resources and the researcher to protect individuals, the corporation, and the corporation project initiative.

Project email correspondence was stored in a separate Microsoft Outlook file folder located on the researchers password protected computer. The computer was automatically backed up multiple times per day, and the backup information was securely stored on a corporate email server. All researcher project emails consisting of correspondence, project plan and field notes, personal memos, correspondence and instructions, project minutes, and executive presentations were manually reviewed and analyzed. This resulted in 1,036 project emails that were subsequently divided into six categories and exported to a Microsoft Excel workbook to allow for in-depth review, constant comparison of data, and data categorization. Project email correspondence generated 39 text extracts. Consolidated researcher field notes and observations were manually analyzed and summarized, generating 43 text extracts. Project presentations, project plan, agendas, and meeting minutes represented 94 documents that were reviewed, analyzed and compared to existing coding and themes.

Project documentation included the project proposal, scope, project structure, project plan, meeting schedules, and minutes. These were stored in separate Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel file folders based on content type. The project proposal, scope, structure, and meeting minutes were created and maintained as Microsoft Word documents. Meeting agendas and schedules for the weekly coffee meetings and executive meetings were created and maintained as Microsoft PowerPoint documents. The project plan was created and maintained in a separate Microsoft Excel Workbook and contained 146 line items representing key milestones and associated high-level tasks. The project plan was sectioned into nine segments reflecting the nine unique work streams. The project plan file was

located on the researchers password protected computer as well as the password protected computers of the co-project managers. The computers were automatically backed up multiple times per day and the backup information was securely stored on a corporate email server. To maintain data congruity the researcher and co-project managers synchronized any additions, changes, and deletes to the master project plan during their weekly project management meeting.

Researcher and focus group facilitator field notes and researcher observations were reviewed multiple times to develop understanding and in-depth clarity of meanings. The field notes and observations were categorized into topic areas and subsequently summarized into 43 individual data extracts. These extracts were manually entered into a Microsoft Excel Workbook in preparation for the thematic analysis constant comparison coding process. In total, 386 text extracts generated 97 codes, resulting in 31 candidate themes. The manual process utilizing a Microsoft Excel Workbook allowed the researcher to easily access the data and sort in order to identify patterns. Table 3.2 displays the data sources used to answer the research questions.

Table 3. 2 *Data Sources to be Used to Answer Research Questions*

Research Question	Data Sources: Literature and Qualitative Data
1. What is the meaning of relational leading?	Literature Review In-depth interviews Focus Group Researcher Notes/Memos
2. What are the practices of relational leading?	Literature Review In-depth interviews Focus Group Researcher Notes/Memos
3. What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?	Literature Review In-depth interviews Focus Group Project documentation Researcher Notes/Memos
4. How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?	Literature Review In-depth interviews Focus Group Project documentation Researcher Notes/Memos

Interview Guide

The interview guide was created to answer the research questions in the study. The intent of the interview questions was to be flexible in nature so as to promote dialogue between the interviewee and the researcher, and to allow for expanded discussion and follow-up questions based on participant responses. Prior to asking questions from the interview guide, 1:1 interviewees were asked to tell or summarize their role in the project. This was done for two reasons, first, to provide each with reflection time with regards to their project role, and second, to provide opportunity for casual dialogue between the interviewee and the researcher so as to place the interviewee at ease with the process.

Eight doctorally qualified researchers were asked to review the alignment of the interview questions in relation to the research questions and to provide feedback. The researchers were Virginia

Belden-Charles, John Coppola, Sally St. George, Ernest Kahane, Keith Kinsella, Leo Mallette, Naomi Rather, and Robert J, Reidy Jr. Feedback from the doctorally qualified researchers regarding question alignment and any other suggestions provided were reviewed by the researcher and considered for adoption. One area noted by several qualified researchers was the closed nature of some of the interview questions. Their suggestions were to write and ask the interview questions in a more open-ended manner. Based on the timing and collection of the qualified researcher feedback, and the adjustment of the interview questions, the researcher went back to four interviewees and presented the restated questions. In three instances, there was no significant change to the interviewee's perception of the question or the responses they provided. In one instance, the interviewee through dialogue with the researcher suggested the names of three additional persons to interview. This suggestion prompted the researcher to approach the three individuals and subsequently allowed the researcher to conduct three additional interviews. Table 3.3 displays how interview and research questions were aligned.

Table 3. 3 *Research and Interview Questions*

Research Question	Interview Question Guide
What is the meaning of relational leading?	During the project when you engaged in shared tasks with team members, what interactions were the most meaningful to you? Were you able to have meaningful conversations with members of the team about the project in addition to the shared tasks you were working on? Can you provide an example? While working on the project how did you and your team members make decisions? How did you balance the needs of the team with the needs of the company? Was there a sense of autonomy amongst you and your team members when decisions were required? What happened when information was needed from a team member outside of regularly scheduled meetings? Was it easy to engage project team members? Based on your experience on this project, how would you describe the leadership processes that took place during the project?
What are the practices of relational leading?	During the course of the project when you communicated with project team members (including members of the PMO) outside of the coffee meeting or at the coffee meeting, can you describe what the conversations were like? How you perceive/feel your contributions were viewed and received during this project? Can you tell me more, perhaps elaborate on this?

What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?	Regarding your participation in the coffee meetings, can you describe some parts of the meetings that seemed to help? How did you experience the co-PM roles? Can you provide an example? How did PMO work in a complementary way with you? How would you describe your experiences on this project? Are you aware of any pre-conceived notions you had upon learning about this assignment? How do you think they contributed to your experiences? What feelings did you experience upon completion of the project? How do you imagine that will impact your participation in future projects? What types of project team activities do you think happened between the start of the project and end of the project that provided you with the experience you noted?
How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?	If tomorrow, you were asked to manage a large project like this one, how would you manage it? If you could influence a leadership team with no fears of repercussion/retaliation, what would you want them to understand? Are there specific activities that occurred during this project that worked well for you and that you would consider repeating in a future project? Why?
	Is there anything you would like to say about the project that has not been discussed? *Thank you for participating in this interview!*

Data Analysis

Data were manually extracted from semi-structured interviews, a focus group, project documentation including project email correspondence, project plan, researcher field notes, personal memos, correspondence and instructions, project minutes, and executive presentations (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 displays the qualitative data sources and volumes.

Table 3. 4 *Qualitative Data Sources and Volumes*

Data Source	Volumes
Semi-structured interviews, focus group, and focus group facilitator	• 18 recorded interviews • 8.25 hours digital recording • 196 raw pages of narrative data • 304 text extracts
Semi-structured interviews & focus group extract parsed via C Program	• Three-word line segments = 46,700 • Five-word line segments = 42,917
Researcher project email correspondence	• 1036 total • 6 categories • 39 summarized text extracts
Consolidated researcher field notes and observations	• 43 summarized text extracts
Project documents (presentations, project plan, agendas & meeting minutes)	• 94 documents analyzed
Codes and candidate themes generated from 386 text extracts	• 97 codes • 31 candidate themes

Semi-structured interviews and the focus group were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim using the "Rev.com" online transcription service. Project documentation consisting of project email correspondence, project plan and field notes, personal memos, correspondence and instructions, project minutes, and executive presentations were manually cross-referenced for relationships and patterns using thematic analysis and the constant comparative method. The thematic analysis steps put forth by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) were used in tandem with the thematic analysis containing constant comparison guidelines provided by Kostere, Kostere, and Percy (2015). Specifically, subsequent to interview document reviews for understanding and clarity, and prior to coding, data were again reviewed so the researcher could develop further understanding and meanings of the data. The data were reviewed a second time with the researcher writing initial notes and general thoughts. During the third review, the researcher began capturing relevant text excerpts related to the research questions and developed codes. Throughout the coding process, the researcher constantly compared previous text and codes. Once the code was written and numerically coded, the researcher created a primary (candidate) theme and secondary themes. A Microsoft Excel Workbook was manually created to facilitate the manual thematic analysis and constant compare processes. The Excel spread sheet contained data extracts, summarized researcher and focus group facilitator field notes and reflections from notes and emails. All data extracts contained team member designations and page numbers to note where the extract originated. The data extracts were reviewed in-depth and numerically coded manually in a separate column of the spreadsheet. Primary candidate themes were identified, color coded and overarching themes, sub themes, and miscellaneous themes were entered into separate columns and coded via alpha designations (see Table 3.5).

Microsoft Excel was chosen as the primary tool to support the thematic analysis constant comparison process because the Excel software is designed to anticipate entries to cells located in the same column based on previous entries in the column being edited. The "coded for" column below

displays "1. Well defined structure." When entering a subsequent cell entry in the same "coded for" column the researcher needed to only enter the numeric e.g. "1" to display all codes beginning with the numeric "1." This allowed the researcher to quickly view previous entries so that text extracts could be constantly compared. This functionality was the same for the theme columns which were coded via alpha designations (see Table 3.6). The data extracts were processed manually. The extracts were reviewed and constantly compared by the researcher and categorized into codes. The codes were then reviewed and constantly compared to establish primary and secondary themes. Where codes or themes did not exist, the researcher through review and reflection created sequentially designated new codes and or themes. In preparation for presenting the research results, the researcher manually applied an intelligent editing process to the text extracts to remove repeated words and utterances (ahs and ums). This was done to improve readability in a way as to not change the meaning or intent of the interviewee narrative.

Table 3.5 displays the column headings and a sample data extract from the Microsoft Excel Workbook containing data extracts, codes, and themes. Column one displays data extracts from the interviews and the researcher field notes, email correspondence, and observations, which totaled 304, 39, and 43 respectively. Based on the data extracts, the researcher initially created 96 codes, resulting in 31 themes. Column two displays the codes that were manually created, "coded for," based on phrases created by the researcher to reflect the researchers' interpretation of the data extract. Within the Microsoft Excel Workbook, each data extract was assigned a unique numeric to maintain identity. Column three represents the primary theme category and is a result of one or more codes that were combined to form a higher-level theme. Columns four, five, and six contain the secondary theme categories created by the researcher based on code interpretation, and are in support of the primary theme(s). Primary and secondary themes were manually created by the researcher, entered into the Workbook, and uniquely identified using alpha designations. Codes and themes were applied to data extracts by the researcher as appropriate per the guidelines put forth by Braun and Clarke (2006 & 2013).

Table 3. 5 *Microsoft Excel Workbook Containing Data Extracts, Codes, and Themes*

	Data Extract	Coded For	Primary Theme	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
1.	I feel like we were pretty well structured in terms of the schedule and we knew that our coffee meetings were going to be each week (TM1, p. 1)	1. Well defined structure	A. Project design	B. Consistent checkpoints	K. Safe place	I. Candid dialogue

Table 3.6 provides a partial example of the display functionality available within a Microsoft Excel Workbook, once the data are entered into the workbook. Column one displays data extracts from the interviews and the researcher field notes, email correspondence, and observations. Column two displays the codes that were manually created, "coded for," based on phrases created by the researcher to reflect the researchers' interpretation of the data extract. Within the Microsoft Excel Workbook, each data extract was assigned a unique numeric to maintain identity. Column three represents the primary theme category and is a result of one or more codes that were combined to form a higher-level theme. The display functionality within the Microsoft Excel Workbook uses the first entry, the numeric or alpha, as the "key" to display all items in a column beginning with that designation. For example, the researcher created unique codes beginning with the number "1." Subsequent codes created were "2 – 97." When the researcher wished to display all codes beginning with the numeric "1," a screen display such as the one in the "Coded For" column in Table 3.6 was visible once the numeric "1" was entered. When the researcher

wished to display all themes beginning with the alpha "A," a screen display like the one in the "Primary Theme" column in Table 3.6 was visible once the alpha "A" was entered. This display functionality allowed the researcher to search previously entered data and to constantly compare codes and primary themes by entering a numeric or alpha character. This ability allowed the researcher to easily assign codes and themes to data extracts, and also engage in the constant comparison process when selecting and sorting codes and themes.

Table 3. 6 *Column Coding Options and Theme Coding Options from Microsoft Excel Workbook Display Functionality*

	Data Extract	Coded For	Primary Theme
1.	I feel like we were pretty well structured in terms of the schedule and we knew that our coffee meetings were going to be each week (TM1, p. 1)	1. (Numeric "1" entered, returned results below) 1. Well defined structure 10. Desire to be positively viewed by peers and not slow progress 11. Playfulness contributed to relationship building 12. Team members shared candid and honest information 13. Disagreements and conflicts were discussed in separate targeted meetings 14. Open dialogue was natural, the norm 15. Curiosity was welcomed 16. Environment allowed for shared learning 17. Direct open questions at coffee meeting were used to uncover hidden or perceived hidden issues 18. Team members felt obligation to maintain honesty in communications 19. Decisions and actions were documented and became part of the	A. (Alpha "A" entered, returned the results below) A. Project design AA. Environment AB. Caring AC. Resource alignment AD. Skilled team members AE. Command and control environment AF. Team member dysfunction AG. Ability to be vulnerable AH. Cross-functional communication important AI. Team members were respectful AJ. Once must consider relationships to be of key importance AK. Have fun AL. Unexpected system or process issues AM. Authenticity valued AN. Formally informal AO. Collaboration AP. Focused on deliverables AQ. Flexibility AR. Secure AS. Personal development AT. Commitment to organization goals AU. Team cohesiveness

		structure	

The constant comparative method "is an ongoing analysis of similarities and differences" (Patton, 2015, p. 658). The process involves checking for "consistency and accuracy" of code application and "differences and variations in the activities, experiences, actions" that are coded (p. 657). Thematic analysis and content analysis of the documents collected were used. Inductive thematic analysis was utilized to develop themes discovered in the interviews, correspondence, and project documentation by interpreting raw data meaning and to subsequently "construct a theory after the discovery of results" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 30).

Validation, Reliability, and Researcher Bias

When discussing case study quality in social science research, Yin (2014) notes four commonly used design tests: "construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability" (p. 26). Table 3.7 reflects the case study four design tests. Construct validity was used in order to identify proper framework measures. Internal validity was not used because it is "not for descriptive or exploratory studies" (p. 45). External validity was not used as this study was an auto- and duo-ethnography single-case study and not related to any domain findings. Reliability was used because the project structure and data collection process are documented for future replication.

Table 3. 7 *Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests*

Tests	Case Study Tactic	Place of Research in which Tactic Occurs	In this Study?
Construct validity	- use multiple sources of evidence - establish chain of evidence - have key informants review draft case study report	data collection data collection composition	Yes
Internal validity	- do pattern matching - do explanation building - address rival explanations - use logic models	data analysis data analysis data analysis data analysis	No
External validity	- use theory and single-case studies - use replication logic in multiple-case studies	research design research design	No
Reliability	- use case study protocol - develop case study database	data collection data collection	Yes

Note. Adapted from *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* by R. Yin, 2014, p. 45.

Verification of this research data used a triangulation of data methodology. "Triangulation within a qualitative inquiry strategy can be attained by combining both interviewing and observations, mixing different types of purposeful samples…or examining how competing theoretical perspectives inform a particular analysis" (Patton 2015, p. 317). Because a multiple-methods approach was taken, there were "multiple sources to include interviews, observations and document analysis" (Creswell, 2014, p. 210). Although multiple sources were utilized, with the exception of the third-party facilitator, all data came from within the organization, specifically the project team (see Table 3.8).

Table 3. 8 *Validity Strategies for Qualitative Research*

Validity Strategy	Definition	To be used in this Study?	Method Employed in the Study
Triangulation	Using different sources of data to build themes and to understand inconsistencies in the data	Yes	• Literature review • Interview data • Focus group data • Third-party Focus Group Facilitator* • Researcher memos, notes, and observations
Member checking	Using participants to validate the data	Yes	• Participants were asked to review transcribed interviews and focus group documentation
Rich, thick description	Detailed descriptions that are robust	Yes	• Through in-depth interviews. Taped and transcribed verbatim
Clarify bias	Researcher addresses how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their experiences	Yes	• Addressed in Chapter 3
Present negative or discrepant information	Discuss evidence that contradicts a theme adds credibility of the data	Yes	• Addressed in the literature review, study findings, and presented in Chapter 5
Prolonged time in the field	Spending time at the participants site and observing the phenomena being studied	Yes	• Researcher was active member of project team
Peer review and debriefing	Reviewing results with peers to reduce bias and ensure results are clear	Yes	• Advisor review • Third-party Focus Group Facilitator review • Team member review * The third-party facilitator was known to nine of the sixteen project team members based on prior work experiences.

Note. Adapted from "An Exploration of Organizational Collective Motivation and the Influence of the SOAR Framework to Build Organizational Collective Motivation," by J. Hitchcock, 2014, *(Doctoral dissertation)*, p. 153.

Researcher bias. The researcher acknowledges a number of potential biases may have existed during the research process when conducting this study. First, the researcher has over 30 years experience in the high-technology sector with a majority of this time managing high-visibility projects. To balance this bias, I took steps not to review and compare past project experiences to the project we were undertaking. I purposely did not reach out to previous project team members and peers to discuss the new project. Second, in addition to the learning experience of managing projects, researcher skills were formally developed through inventor patent and ownership processes, Six Sigma Green Belt certification, ISO Auditor certification, project management and change management coursework, and master's level work in completing master's degrees in business administration and professional

communication. For the new project, basic project management tools such as a project task plan, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes were used. I made every effort not to have the team utilize overly restrictive formal documents but to work with basic tools so as to increase time for dialogue. Third, the researcher has significant experience in managing and participating in global operations programs and initiatives. The work experience and formal learning skill development likely contributed to certain researcher perspectives and behaviors being brought forth into this project. These perspectives possibly influenced the analysis insofar as thematic analysis coding and theme development. To deter potential bias during the thematic coding process, a custom software program was written by a third-party to analyze the research data. Results from the software program were then compared to the manual results from the researcher. It should be noted that with the exceptions of the third-party software programmer, and the independent third-party to facilitate the focus group to reduce the perception of researcher bias, the researcher perspectives were not suggested or shared with the project team members. The project design and workflows were purposely created to be unique from other projects I participated in. Two co-project managers with limited work experience were the primary interfaces to the project team work stream leads. Although I was the overall project manager, I too was assigned work stream responsibility and reported progress with other work stream leads at the weekly coffee meetings. This was intentionally done to promote a feeling of equality across the project team. Finally, through project management experience and social construction study in workshops and programs, I came to this project with preconceived thoughts and assumptions as to how the project might be structured and guided. All of these factors inevitably influenced my approach, methodology selection, data analysis, results, and recommendations. Because of my awareness of these influences, the selection of a third-party software programmer, and an independent third-party focus group facilitator, was purposely done to reduce the perception of researcher bias. It is also important to note that when developing the project team environment and throughout the project, I never shared my specific research objectives or research questions with members of the team. My intent as the researcher, was to not consciously influence the project team.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology for the study. Through a social constructionist worldview, this study employed a qualitative approach using an auto- and duo-ethnography single case study design strategy. A qualitative research approach was used as it "relies on the researcher as the instrument for data collection, employs multiple methods of data collection, is both inductive and deductive, is based on participants' meanings, includes researcher reflexivity, and is holistic" (Creswell, 2014, p. 211). Thematic analysis was utilized as the primary analysis tool for this study.

A purposeful sample of 16 participants within the project team consisting of 23 participants agreed to participate in the 1:1 interviews. A subset of eight participants (from the 16) was asked to participate in a focus group with their project team peers. The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The focus group was facilitated by an independent third-party to reduce the potential researcher bias. The focus group facilitator was also interviewed by the researcher following the focus group meeting. Thus, observations and reflections from the researcher, focus group facilitator, project team members, and project team documentation were combined. Patton (2015) states that "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods" (p. 316). Patton further states that "triangulation within a qualitative inquiry strategy can be attained by combining both interviewing and observations, mixing different types of purposeful samples…" (p. 317).

This study contributes to the research on relational leading and organizational communication because although each construct has separately been the subject of research, there are no known research studies combining both constructs with the focus on relational leading practices within a high-technology project team. As this is a nascent area of research, there is a great need for more knowledge on effectively leading complex (I.T.) projects within organizations.

Chapter 4 reveals the results of this research through detailed examples and discussion of the findings of this thesis, as they relate to the research questions. A thematic map is also included and displays the primary and secondary themes discovered in this research.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. The study explored relational leading and organizational communication within the context of a high-technology project team. The researcher participated as both a researcher and a project team member. During the project timeframe, planning began in May 2015, project team start was July 2015, and team participation ended November 2016. Team members were not informed as to the particulars of this research in that terms such as social construction, relational leading, and organizational communication were not discussed. This was purposely done to reduce the opportunity for bias.

Due to the nature of this project and the phased implementation, there were six separate data collection segment activities conducted. These included: data from the literature, 1:1 team member interviews, a focus group, a 1:1 interview with the independent third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation (including emails), and researcher and focus group facilitator observations and reflections. The data collection segments follow each research question and are listed separately in support of the primary candidate theme and secondary themes discovered. This data segmentation is designed to allow the reader additional insight and clarity into the data sources supporting the research questions. Information gathered from these data collection segments are used to answer the research questions.

The interview questions for each research question are provided to offer additional context. Research from the literature, 1:1 team member interviews, the focus group, and the interview with the focus group facilitator constitute the primary data gathering areas and are segmented within each research question response by primary candidate and secondary themes. Project documentation and researcher and focus group facilitator observations and reflections are included as supporting information within the responses and are identified accordingly. A summary table of research themes based on the respective data collection segments is provided for each question. Additionally, composite table summaries displaying primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and related code summaries are displayed for questions 2, 3, and 4. A summary follows each data segment.

The interview guide shown in Table 3.3 was created as a guide for the researcher and the independent third-party focus group facilitator. This allowed for dialogue interchange and flexibility between the interviewer and interviewees so as to collect rich, thick descriptions regarding relational leading and organizational communication. Additionally, project documentation consisting of project email correspondence, project plan and field notes, personal memos, correspondence and instructions, project minutes, and executive presentations was collected and analyzed.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What is the meaning of relational leading?
2. What are the practices of relational leading?
3. What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?
4. How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?

The definition of "practices" in this study is taken from the writings of Gergen and Hersted (2013) and is defined as relational "forms of interchange from which the organization is nourished and from which new potentials are created" (p. 31). To answer Question 2 there were multiple datapoints in the research and the literature. The literature showed 12 relational leading practices. Specific to Question 2, four practices were initially discovered in this research study. However, when I examined the construct of organizational communication, two more relational leading practices were discovered, increasing the number of practices from this study to six. Then, when reviewing how to introduce relational leading practices into organizations, two additional practices from this study were discovered, bringing the total

number of relational leading practices from this study to eight. Each practice discovered has corresponding elements that allow the practices to be operationalized.

The study findings are the result of a rigorous process where interview data, focus group data, researcher and focus group facilitator field notes and observations, and project documentation data were reviewed and constantly compared to codes and themes discovered during the thematic analysis and constant comparison processes. This was done to uncover relational leading and organizational communication associations. In preparation for presenting the research results, the researcher manually applied an intelligent editing process to the text extracts to remove repeated words and utterances (ahs and ums). This was performed to improve readability in a way as to not change the meaning or intent of the interviewee narrative.

This chapter first presents an overview of the case study and describes the company environment and business objectives of the software conversion project. An overview of the actual project including the approach, timing, and the multiple modalities of data collection follows. The remainder of the chapter presents and reviews the findings of the study. A summary concludes this chapter.

The findings are organized and presented in the order of the research questions. The findings to the first research question were located within the literature and also found within the 1:1 interviews, the focus group session, third-party focus group facilitator interview, project documentation, and, researcher and focus group facilitator notes and observations. The primary themes discovered for question one are listed in Table 4.1. These primary theme findings reflect findings also found in response to questions two, three, and four, and the details are located within those respective questions. In response to questions two, three, and four, findings include primary candidate and secondary coding themes, and text extracts. These data were generated from multiple modality research segments that included the 1:1 interviews, the focus group, and the 1:1 interview with the independent third-party focus group facilitator, as related to the research questions. Project documentation included project email, consolidated researcher and the independent third-party focus group facilitator field notes and observations, project presentations, project plan, agendas, and meeting minutes. Text extracts are provided to highlight and reinforce the findings. Following the presentation of findings of each research question, a thematic analysis map was created. The thematic map represents the eight primary practices and associated secondary themes from this research study. A final step was an integrated analysis to form The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. This integrated analysis compared the 12 practices from the literature to the eight practices from this research study. It was found that four of the eight practices from this study overlapped practices discovered in the literature. This resulted in four new relational leading practices from this study. The integration of the 12 practices from the literature, and the four new practices discovered from this study, yielded a total of 16 relational leading practices. A summary concludes this chapter.

Each research question has primary and secondary themes. The primary themes discovered and reviewed in response, and corresponding to the research questions are listed in Table 4.1. The response to question 1 was discovered in the literature and the research data. Responses to questions 2, 3, and 4 evolved from the research. Themes are listed in order count from highest to lowest: open dialogue, environment, empowerment, shared learning, playfulness, reliance, accountability, and commonalities. The themes of empowerment, shared learning, commonalities, and reliance, along with their secondary themes, are used to respond to research question two as practices. The themes of open dialogue and accountability, and related secondary themes are used to answer research question three. Research question four is answered via the primary themes of environment and playfulness, and their respective secondary themes.

Table 4. 1 *Primary Themes Discovered in Response to Research Questions*

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
- Commonalities - Empowerment - Environment - Open dialogue - Shared learning	- Empowerment - Shared learning - Commonalities - Reliance	- Open dialogue - Accountability	- Environment - Playfulness

The following sections provide a case study overview and project description highlighting the nature of the business environment, and the context of the project.

Case Overview

This case study involves an established U.S. based global Fortune 500 "high-technology company," and their effort to implement a major software conversion project. The software conversion project design and implementation impacted core value chain components that included engineering, finance, information technology, manufacturing, and sales. This particular case study focuses on one internal organization consisting of 650 employees that were required to conform to this corporate initiative. To do so, a project team of subject matter experts (SME's) was assembled to review, analyze, and thoroughly document "as is" and "future" organizational processes. An analysis of the future software conversion project details were compared to the as is processes, the differences and potential impacts were documented for subsequent reference. The names of the corporation, project name, organization studied, and the names of individual team members that worked on the project are disguised to adhere to guidelines set forth by corporate Human Resources so as to maintain confidentially.

In the early days when the high-technology company was maturing it purchased one primary third-party software platform to manage core value chain and related components. The purchase met short to mid-term growth needs and over time was customized to address changes in the business as they occurred. Eventually, the business demand for additional customization increased and subsequently stretched the capability of the existing software. Following significant analysis of functionality, benefits, and costing models, executives made a decision to move forward to change the primary corporate software platform. Although there are always potential challenges when implementing a program of this size and nature, the new software platform allowed for expanded system functionality, easier integration of corporate acquisitions, and it established a solid foundation for the company to manage future business growth. It was this software platform change that initiated the need for the software conversion project, which globally impacted core value chain components, related functions and processes.

The corporate research for this project initially began progressing between 2010 and 2012 and was confined to a select team. In 2013, project activity was expanded to include core value chain organizations that were anticipated to experience the greatest impact and benefits in functionality and process changes. These teams began developing the initial system requirements and planning documentation. During the next 12-24 months, additional teams were invited to participate. In May of 2015, I was invited to present my organization's business model to the corporate team. The presentation of my group's charter, primary functions, revenue streams, and definitions of both our internal and external customers and suppliers were provided.

The meeting chairperson discussed the overall software conversion program goals, current status, and future phases. In this meeting, my organization was assigned designated corporate team members for us to work with over the course of our business and systems analysis, planning, development, and implementation. The corporation predetermined some of the project goals as they were tied to work

completion from other groups, and were frequently connected in the form of prerequisite requirements in order to enable future project phases.

Project Overview

Following my presentation session in May 2015 to the corporate team, I arranged a meeting with my organization's chief of staff to review the upcoming project and provide my perspectives. I was asked to contact the program managers of other organizations who were already engaged in the software conversion project so that we could learn more from their experiences. In June of 2015, the chief of staff assembled a meeting with several members of our organization's leadership team and myself to review the project and determine next steps. Finance, technology, and business operations were represented at the meeting where potential organizational implications and challenges were discussed based on the corporate information shared.

Following the leadership meeting, I was asked to provide an impact analysis, and begin to outline an action plan to ensure our organization would be compliant with all aspects of the software conversion program that impacted our organization. The chief of staff asked how much time I would need to conduct an analysis and to determine the most efficient approach. I believed two weeks was adequate considering we had knowledge of the corporate scope and timelines, and corporate business contacts were available should we have additional questions.

Understanding the anticipated software conversion project impact(s) voiced by other corporate groups with structural similarities to our organization, I completed a scoping document draft in July 2015. It highlighted a project structure of nine work streams areas that included proposed work stream subject matter expert (SME) leads. Each work stream targeted specific areas: finance, program management office (PMO), legal, systems feeds (as is and future), reporting, sales, technology, testing, and communications. The chief of staff was supportive of the general approach and noted that if not for other high visibility programs she was engaged in, she would be program managing this effort. Because of the compressed timeframe to completion and the high visibility of the software conversion project, an almost immediate project launch was required.

To launch the program, the chief of staff brought together organizational leaders, noted the importance of the program, reviewed the project scope, and advised the leadership that each would be required to provide resources to support the project. The leadership team understood the necessity and aggressive timelines, and agreed to provide resources from their existing teams based on my proposal. Leadership took the action to notify their respective participating team members noting I would be in contact with them. Following the leadership meeting and confirmation, the leadership had completed discussions with their team members, the chief of staff sent a global department memo announcing me as the program manager and explaining the program and the organization participation needed. Accordingly, the project team came together as a collective and began active work on the project in August 2015. Due to its nature, the project progressed with all work streams completing deliverables in a staggered fashion through March 2016.

This timeframe was initially intended to be the basis of the primary project team research for this study. However, following a successful implementation in March 2016, 75% of the project team continued to actively work with the software conversion platform through the post-implementation stabilization process ending in July 2016. Many of these project team members continued to work with the new software platform as part of their day-to-day roles and responsibilities through November 2016. During the July through November timeframe, 62.5% of project team members actively engaged in frequent communications directly relating to the software conversion platform. Though not a longitudinal study, the extended project team activities, communications, and supporting information, provided the researcher additional rich detail during the 1:1 team member interviews, and the focus group interview held in July and August 2017.

Characteristics of Sample

The 16 high-technology core project team members participating in this study consisted of 10 males and six females. Members of the project team were located in the Eastern and Midwestern United States, and Bangalore, India. One member of the team was a contractor, two members of the team were college interns, and the remainder of the team consisted of full-time employees. Core team member ethnicity was American, Indian, and Venezuelan. Extended team members not participating in the interview process, but engaging in periodic communications and task activities reporting into a work stream lead, included individuals from American, British, Chinese, Colombian, and Indian ethnicities. Core project team members who participated in the interviews along with associated attributes are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2 *Project Team Member Demographics*

Location	Tenure	Education	Gender	Age Group	Ethnicity
Corporate	1-5 years	Bachelor Degree	Male	20-29	White
Corporate	1-5 years	Bachelor Degree	Male	20-29	White
Corporate	16-20 years	Bachelor Degree	Female	50-59	Chinese American
Corporate	>30 years	Masters Degree	Male	50-59	White
Corporate	1-5 years	Bachelor Degree	Male	30-39	White
Corporate	1-5 years	Bachelor Degree+	Male	20-29	White
Corporate	6-10 years	Masters Degree	Male	20-29	Indian
Corporate	16-20 years	High School+	Female	40-49	White
Remote	16-20 years	High School+	Male	40-49	White
Corporate	6-10 years	Bachelor Degree	Female	30-39	White
Corporate	1-5 years	College Intern	Male	20-29	White
Corporate	1-5 years	College Intern	Male	20-29	White
Corporate	6-10 years	Masters Degree	Female	40-49	White
Corporate	16-20 years	High School+	Female	40-49	White
Corporate	6-10 years	Masters Degree+	Male	40-49	White
Corporate	11-16 years	Bachelor Degree	Female	40-49	White

Note: The (+) represents some education beyond stated level.

Question 1: What is the Meaning of Relational Leading?

The primary answer to the question "what is the meaning of relational leading" came from the literature research. Supporting data were also found in the 1:1 interviews, focus group session, third-party focus group facilitator interview, project documentation, and researcher and focus group facilitator notes and observations. The following interview questions were asked to obtain understanding of the meaning of relational leading: During the project when you engaged in shared tasks with team members, what interactions were the most meaningful to you? Were you able to have meaningful conversations with members of the team about the project in addition to the shared tasks you were working on? Can you provide an example? While working on the project how did you and your team members make decisions? How did you balance the needs of the team with the needs of the company? Was there a sense of autonomy amongst you and your team members when decisions were required? What happened when information was needed from a team member outside of regularly scheduled meetings? Was it easy to engage project team members? Based on your experience on this project, how would you describe the leadership processes that took place during the project?

Data from the literature. Based on the literature, relational leading is defined *as social construction processes where people in relation coordinate to engage in activities, and move forward to make meaningful practices*. The data from the literature provided primary support to the first research question: What is the meaning of relational leading? The research data were found in the works of Gergen (2009 & 2015), and Gergen and Hersted (2013). Within the literature findings, relational leading was described as "an activity, not a personal attribute" (Gergen & Hersted, 2013, p. 30). "*Relational leading refers to the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future*" (Gergen, 2009b, p. 333). Relational leading is the manner the relationship is executed, versus a focus on the individual characteristics.

Data from this study. Based on data analyzed from this study, relational leading is defined as *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices*. These concepts were reinforced in this study through the narratives provided by team member interviewees, the focus group, and researcher and focus group facilitator observations. Data gathered in segments from the 1:1 interviews, focus group, project correspondence, and researcher and focus group facilitator observations and reflections support the findings of Gergen and Hersted. Supporting examples of Gergen and Hersted's definition of relational leading from the 1:1 interviews, focus group, third-party facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observation follow. A research themes summary by segment are listed in alphabetical order and found in Table 4.3. A summary of this section follows the supporting examples.

Table 4. 3 *Question 1 Research Theme Summary by Segment*

1:1 Interviews	Focus Group	Third-Party Facilitator	Project Documentation	Researcher Observations
Culture	Acknowledgement	Authenticity	Enjoyment	Civility
Environment	Authenticity	Connectivity	Knowledge sharing	Collaboration
Open dialogue	Collaboration	Empowerment	Open dialogue	Culture
Respect	Commitment	Open dialogue	Safe haven	Open dialogue
	Culture	Playfulness	Safe space	Project design
	Open dialogue	Respect		Respect
	Project design	Skills		
		Trust		

The meaning of relational leading – 1:1 interviews. The individual interview comments from sixteen of sixteen team members suggested open dialogue an overall feeling of respect existed among the team. Team members believed that the environment allowed team members to be themselves. There was a sense from team members that not only was the project important, but also, efforts as individuals and the team collective were important.

> TM4: It was a due process, more than one person. It was all a discussion.
>
> TM8: I felt very comfortable being able to speak my mind, and provide the proper facts required to back up the situation I had.
>
> TM14: Everyone had their moment. I believe everyone was very receptive when things were brought to the table. I think back to that sense of security that I saw. If I bring something up, it will be given its time and attention, and it will be respected.
>
> TM15: The decision making process was to benefit the greater good and every stakeholder requirement.

The meaning of relational leading – focus group. The comments provided by members of the focus group echoed those of the 1:1 interviews and expanded on the aspects of collaboration and open dialogue. Eight of eight focus group team members reflected the theme of collaboration in their

comments while four of the eight focus group team members carried a theme of open dialogue in their comments.

> TM1: It was a collaborative environment; people were actually asking questions and giving suggestions on other people's work stream, which doesn't always happen. It showed that they cared and we were able to work together as a unit to come up with solutions on this project.
> TM3: You felt comfortable asking questions about another group if you were just curious about what their efforts and tasks were, if you just wanted to understand more about what part of the process they worked on as part of the whole process.
> TM5: For me, I think it was just the level of communication and transparency that you don't see often in a lot of other projects because you may only see small pieces. I think it was how the team worked and how the project team was structured. We actually got to see where other people made contributions and everyone got full credit for their work instead of getting lost in the project shuffle, so to speak.

The meaning of relational leading – third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator shared a feeling that a sense of trust and fondness for each other was exhibited from the focus group members during the session. He noted the group appeared to be a strong and cohesive team that worked well together. Team members felt they could be themselves, and in doing so were able to contribute to a greater cause.

> TPF: They [team members] didn't feel like they were made vulnerable by talking about problems, mistakes, issues, and so on. There was a sense of authenticity by being part of a team that, you could be yourself.
> TPF: The people [team members] saw it as their project. It developed an identity. It was distinctive. It was unique and it exemplified the skills and expertise of all the participants. This project allowed them to organically leave an imprint. The project held a lot of memories for them, and they remembered it as a successful project [months following closure] and missed the relationships built during the project.
> TPF: It was a project exhibiting trust and respect. These were revealed through the ease of discussion and good humor used by the team members during the focus group session.

The meaning of relational leading – project documentation. Team members felt comfortable exchanging information and expressing their feelings within the group. There was a level of openness in how team members behaved and associated with each other; they did not feel uncomfortable or threatened by others within the team.

> TM: 9: Hi PM, here's a preliminary high-level summary I put together for October, in an attempt to try and track the test cases better. I'll go over this at our next meeting.
> TM10: Whoooo hoooo! Milestone ☺
> TM20: Team, TM15, TM5, and myself have met a few times this week to kick-off some ideas as to what the next steps should be. We will keep you informed.

The meaning of relational leading - researcher observation. Team members were not always in agreement as to the approach one should take when addressing a challenge. Through respectful dialogue they were able to have meaningful discussions, and in a majority of instances, come to a resolution. This was not always the case, sometimes, additional meetings with select team members needed to be arranged.

> RO: Team members having differences during the project continued to treat each other with respect at the coffee meetings and breakout meetings. In some instances, it was necessary to schedule several meetings in order to work through challenges. In almost all instances the team members came together quickly to remain focused on the overall goals and what was best for the project.

Summary - the meaning of relational leading. Gergen (2009b) defines relational leading as "the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future. It is not the single individual who is prized, but animated relations" (p. 333). Gergen (2009b), and Gergen and Hersted (2013) define significant elements of practice for consideration in relational leading processes

such as positive sharing, where one is comfortable sharing personal perspectives, values, and potentials for the future. Adding value has a collaborative focus that is based on respect and encouraging others. Image building is a "what if" consideration that removes restrictions of "what is," and opens opportunities for all to share future orientations. Nine additional relational leading concepts found in the literature from Gergen and Hersted were: appreciation, collaboration, connectivity, continuous learning, dialogue, distribution, empowerment, horizontal decision-making, and networking. The narrative in this thesis provided by team members in 1:1 interviews, the focus group, project documentation, and reflections of the third-party facilitator, and researcher, support the definition of relational leading and all elements of practice discovered in the literature as put forth by Gergen and Hersted in that this team did not rely on one individual as the leader. Rather, they became a team that engaged and relied on each other to meet goals effectively. This approach built trust amongst the team members and allowed them to move towards a successful completion of milestones, through to project completion.

Research findings from this study discovered 25 additional themes: accomplishment, accountability, acknowledgement, caring, celebrate, civility, commitment, connectivity, culture, efficacy, enjoyment, environment, integrity, knowledge source, ownership, personal responsibility, playfulness, project design, reliance, respect, rigor, safe haven, safe space, skills, and trust. All findings from this data research support the literature definition put forth by Gergen (2009b) and are further discussed in Chapter 5. In summary, an updated definition of relational leading based on this study is *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices*.

Question 2: What are the Practices of Relational Leading?

In response to the second research question, "What are the practices of relational leading," four primary themes for relational leading practices were discovered through the 1:1 interviews, focus group, independent third-party focus group facilitator interview, reflections from the researcher and focus group facilitator, and project documentation data segments. They are represented beginning with the highest theme count to lowest. The practices discovered were: empowerment, shared learning, reliance, and commonalities. This section contains a significant volume of data, as the practices of relational leading reside at the heart of this data analysis.

Empowerment was demonstrated across the team in that team members felt comfortable openly sharing their thoughts and ideas and contributing to ideas put forth by other team members. This "positive sharing" is reflective of Gergen, (2009b) when referring to the sharing of "visions, values, and insights" (p. 334). Gergen goes on to note "adding value" as an important part of the relational process where persons provide supportive encouragement to others when ideas are shared (p. 335). The sense of empowerment continues with "image building" where persons freely engage in "metaphor and narrative" to focus them towards the future (Gergen, 2009a, p. 150). Note that image building and "reality building" (Gergen 2009b, p. 336) are used interchangeably. This project team had a clear vision as to the project goals. Norms were formed to support the desired end state. Positive sharing, adding value, and image building were all discovered as emerging amongst the project team in this study.

Shared learning is another theme that emerged from this study with regards to the practice of relational leading. In this study, shared learning is a combination of "information sharing" and "continuous learning" practices as noted by Gergen and Hersted (2013, p. 30). Shared learning includes skill development as an ongoing application, and the development of shared knowledge resources. Reliance and commonalities are the remaining primary relational practices themes in this segment where reliance refers to team member interdependence, commonalities refers to shared interests.

Related secondary themes are also represented and follow the same data segment format as primary candidate themes. They include *empowerment:* positive outcomes, commitment, rigor, accomplishment, efficacy, and authenticity, *shared learning:* skills, knowledge source, *reliance:* interdependence, *commonalities:* caring, and connectivity.

The following interview questions were asked: During the course of the project when you communicated with project team members (including members of the PMO) outside of the coffee meeting

or at the coffee meeting, can you describe what the conversations were like? How do you perceive/feel your contributions were viewed and received during this project? Can you tell me more, perhaps elaborate on this?

This data segment begins with a research summary of themes of the findings for practices of relational leading by segment, listed in alphabetical order (Table 4.4). A composite summary containing primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and coding summaries are found in Table 4.5. An introduction of the findings is followed by a table displaying the question, candidate theme(s), assigned code(s), and secondary themes discovered. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party focus group facilitator responses, supporting project documentation, and researcher observations are also included. Summaries of empowerment, shared learning, reliance, and commonalities as a primary candidate themes, and their respective secondary themes, appear at the end of their specific sections.

Table 4. 4 *Question 2 Research Theme Summary by Segment*

1:1 Interviews	**Focus Group**	**Third-Party Facilitator**	**Project Documentation**	**Researcher Observations**
Accomplishment	Authenticity	Accomplishment	Caring	Accomplishment
Caring	Caring	Caring	Connectivity	Authenticity
Commonalities	Commitment	Commonalities	Integrity	Commonalities
Connectivity	Commonalities	Connectivity	Knowledge Source	Connectivity
Empowerment	Efficacy	Empowerment	Positive outcomes	Empowerment
Interdependence	Empowerment	Knowledge source	Reliance	Knowledge source
Knowledge source	Interdependence	Positive outcomes	Shared learning	Positive outcomes
Positive Outcomes	Knowledge Source	Reliance		Reliance
Reliance	Positive outcomes	Shared learning		Safe haven
Rigor	Reliance	Skills		Shared learning
Shared learning	Shared learning			Skills
Skills	Skills			

Table 4.5 displays a composite view of the primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and coding summaries discovered from the research to answer Question 2. Data are listed in relation to the primary theme and listed highest count to lowest count.

Table 4. 5 *Question 2 Composite Theme Summary*

Primary Candidate Themes	**Secondary Themes**	**Coding Summaries**
Empowerment	Positive outcomes	- Empowered to move to leadership roles/positions as needed
	Commitment	- Flexibility to solve issues
	Rigor	- Environment promoted learning / confidence to accomplish end state
	Accomplishment	- Targeted sub-meetings were held outside of standard meeting structure
	Efficacy	- Team took ownership of project
	Authenticity	- Flat project environment expanded team relationships and supported equality
Shared learning	Skills	- Alignment and reliance on other’s skills

		and commitments
	Knowledge source	- Efficient and enjoyable meeting structure
Reliance	Interdependence	- Flexibility and ubiquitous desire to succeed - Team members cared and looked out for each other
Commonalities	Caring	- Commonalities aided in relationship building - Team members felt valued
	Connectivity	- Relationships of key importance

Empowerment - primary candidate theme. Empowerment is one of four primary candidate themes discovered from the data in response to the research question "What are the practices of relational leading?" Eight of the sixteen project team members identified with empowerment during the 1:1 interviews. During the 1:1 interviews, it was clear that team members felt accountable for the responsibilities within their roles. They also felt a genuine obligation to assist team members when they reached out for advice. Table 4.6 provides the primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and assigned codes. Comments from the 1:1 interviews follow.

Table 4. 6 *Practices of Relational Leading – Empowerment - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Empowerment	- Positive outcomes - Accomplishment - Rigor	- Members felt empowered to move to leadership positions / roles as needed - Flexibility to solve issues - Project team environment promoted confidence and personal growth - Targeted sub-meetings were held outside of standard meeting structure to factually deep dive into issues

Empowerment - 1:1 interviews. In the 1:1 commentary, team members held a sense of ownership and accountability for their areas of responsibility. Challenges and day-to-day routines were handled as though this was their family business team member's were taking care of. As they continued the process, the satisfaction of completing tasks and the feeling of accomplishment appeared to bolster confidence.

> TM1: If we knew that we were running into a roadblock and needed help, we just had to figure out where the right place to go was for that help.
> TM6: If it was necessary, people did step up and take on those leadership roles when it came to their particular subject matter.
> TM9: So there was certainly a sense of accomplishment as we found the issues and fixed them.
> TM14: [referring to less senior project manager team members] They learned, they absorbed - I would even go so far as to say by the end of it, they became subject matter experts in this area. I saw a nice balance there, where they came in without knowledge of the project and they accomplished their tasks very effectively.

Four of eight focus group team members related to empowerment during the focus group session. They felt the weekly coffee meetings provided a rich learning experience that would be useful beyond the one project. The team members appreciated the flat hierarchical structure of the project team in that it provided the ability for one to feel empowered to take the steps necessary to accomplish the tasks as hand. Knowing they were empowered provided a level of confidence amongst individuals and the team as a collective to engage and take ownership of the challenges faced. These sentiments were also reflected in comments made by the third-party focus group facilitator. Table 4.7 provides the primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and assigned codes. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4. 7 *Practices of Relational Leading – Empowerment - Focus Group*

Question	**Primary Candidate Theme(s)**	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Relational leading practices	- Empowerment	- Positive outcomes - Efficacy - Commitment - Authenticity	- Meetings were a learning experience that team members continue to draw on - Team took ownership of project challenge - Project environment was flat, not hierarchical - Confident to engage

Empowerment - focus group interviews. Empowerment is expressed below as occurring in two ways. First, team members felt empowered to learn from each other and to apply best practices within their own project responsibility areas. Second, team members felt empowered to take steps to gather for meetings (without program managers present) to solve problems, and openly report and discuss issues and challenges. These behaviors across the team empowered individual and team ownership.

> TM2: For me, this is just as simple as how the PM handled the meetings and just allowed people, you know, calling on so and so to speak, and then positioning the conversation between two people who needed to hash something out. I've had meetings like that for other things where I've had to bring people together and solve an issue. So just as simple as that, just the way the PM ran the meetings. That's something I've learned from and use in work I've done after this project concluded.
> TM4: It wasn't hard getting a meeting together. People knew that we had to get it done. So that was good and there were a lot of “fly by” conversations. Then having a meeting, our PM would

just show up in my office or TM8's office and, whatever the question or the problem of the day was, get it done.

TM5: I think it's just the way that you have the road map built from a project standpoint that everyone sees where he or she contributes. Even if you don't get along personally or have a different group dynamic than we had, everyone still sees what they're responsible for, and where they're actually making changes to the overall project. They have a defined goal and challenge. Sometimes on projects it's almost too vague… I think we saw it as more internal to us, and our problem to solve.

TM8: I definitely felt empowered to make those decisions that were necessary to move the project forward.

Empowerment - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator commented on the ability individuals voiced with regards to being empowered to make decisions, and observing fellow team members make decisions. This ability seemed to build confidence within and amongst individuals on the project team. Team members developed a level of ownership for their work.

TPF: There was a sense of empowerment that came through very clearly among the participants. They felt empowered to be able to demonstrate their expertise and to make decisions.

TPF: The activities were not dictated, there was a lot of interest in what the particular people on the project viewed as important. People were able to "strut their stuff" and demonstrate their expertise.

TPF: People felt that other players on the team strengthened their own confidence, and they could look to others in terms of a real team focus, and act as a great team.

TPF: Based on what I heard from this group, empowerment has something to do with letting people make decisions, versus dictating to them.

Empowerment - project documentation. In reviewing the project documentation, there appeared to be a willingness and desire amongst team members to take a leadership role in sharing information that could inform and would assist their peers with their tasks. The timeliness of messages like those noted below were also a factor in the information sharing process that took place.

TM3: [To all software conversion team members.] Hi Team, as part of the Phase I software conversion testing it was discovered that a system behavior anomaly exists. The technology team is actively working – please hold testing until an update is received.

TM8: [To all software conversion team members.] Hi All, the organizational dimension coding section has successfully passed test. Thank you TM19 and team!

Empowerment - researcher observation. The project design allowed for an environment of formal and informal meetings, where project team norms were developed and supported.

RO: The project design allotted one formal team meeting per week, which was known as the "coffee meeting." Senior management did not attend this meeting as it was designed to promote team member dialogue. The coffee meetings became a place where norms developed. Tardiness to the meeting by team members was rare. During a meeting if one team member happened to accidently interrupt another, more often than not, one heard apologies and comments like "sorry, please continue." A civility and respect for others blossomed. Unlike project status meetings I attended early in my career that were more focused on status checklists than discussion, the coffee meeting emphasized and encouraged dialogue and critical thinking in a safe haven atmosphere.

Empowerment - secondary themes. Secondary themes supporting empowerment were found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations. The secondary themes discovered during the research process were positive outcomes, commitment, rigor, accomplishment, efficacy, and authenticity. The data segments follow beginning with the secondary theme of positive outcomes.

Positive outcomes - empowerment secondary theme. The secondary theme of positive outcomes appeared in eight of sixteen 1:1 interviews. The group felt that the program managers treated team members with a high level of equality and fairness. This treatment aided team members to maintain

respect for each other and to move forward and remain committed to the project end state. Team members did note disruption occurred within the project team but was purposely minimized at the weekly coffee meetings. To minimize disruption when significant conflict occurred, the discussion was purposely stopped, and removed from the coffee meeting environment. A separate meeting was then held with the parties involved so detailed discussion might be held and root cause determined. Douglass and Gittell (2012) refer to this type of approach as "structured conflict resolution," (p. 724). While disruption occurred due to occasional team member conflict, the focus remained on the project deliverables. Table 4.8 provides the secondary theme of positive outcomes and the assigned codes. Interview responses follow Table 4.8.

Table 4. 8 *Practices of Relational Leading – Positive Outcomes - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Positive outcomes	- Project was positive learning experience - Maintain respect and focus on forward momentum - Project team was united and committed to project end state - Coffee meetings were positive

Positive outcomes - 1:1 interviews. Team members used differing approaches to attain positive outcomes. Some found socialization with other team members to be informational support for positive outcomes to occur. Others found a sense of joy when fellow team members met their objectives and freely shared the results. Still others found that focusing on their specific role, and taking the initiative to produce or exceed the expected results assisted positive outcomes.

> TM1: Management by wandering around, positive communication, and relationship building is just huge. I've found this approach to be effective with the projects that I've worked on so far or since this project.
>
> TM5: I think just seeing the progress everybody was making. You could see how some people were extremely excited about the progress they made and they were really proud to show the rest of the team what they had worked on. And I think that made me want to, you know, stay focused on the project.
>
> TM10: When it comes to a skillset, there's a lot of knowledge that people have. I feel that there's a certain drive, initiative that an individual has or they don't. Sometimes the ability is made up of tools at their disposal, but sometimes it's not only the knowledge, it's just how they carry themselves.
>
> TM14: I think one of the things that impressed me most about the core team was that everyone was very clear about their role, and there wasn't a sense of panic when something [a challenge] came up. It was more of an approach of, "Okay, we're going to need to deal with this. We missed it. Where can we fit it in?" And I think that came from a sense of security, in terms of everyone understood their role. Everyone understood their responsibilities, and they were very focused on …I don't want to say well-being, that's not the right word, but the positive outcome as a whole

Positive outcomes were displayed in two of eight focus group member comments. It was felt that unlike previous projects team members participated in, this project and the experiences garnered were very positive. Commentary indicated that this was partially facilitated by the structure and strong environment the project was designed within. Although only two of eight focus group team members suggested the theme of positive outcomes, there is significance to the commentary that alludes to the conflict that occurred. Despite the conflict, individuals felt the project to be successful, and they recall a positive overall experience. Table 4.9 displays the question, secondary theme of positive outcomes, and the codes assigned from the focus group. Narrative from the focus group follows.

Table 4. 9 *Practices of Relational Leading – Positive Outcomes - Focus Group*

Question	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Relational leading practices	- Positive outcomes	- Project experiences expanded team member relationships - Program had strong structure

Positive outcomes - focus group interviews. Two of the participants in the focus group discussion voiced pride in their project participation and in continuing positive relationships with other project team members. The design of the project structure appears to have contributed in allowing positive outcomes to take place.

> TM3: I think even after the project completion, our relationships continue and we still work together. It's just some successful project. We just feel more comfortable working with each other.
>
> TM6: You know, the organization [of the project] was top notch. I think that made the project go a lot smoother than it could have. As people have mentioned, there were a couple times where conversations got a little bit heated, but they were handled appropriately, so, it was just ... It was a great project. It was well done and I agree with everything that everybody's saying.

Positive outcomes - third-party facilitator. During a discussion with the third-party facilitator, he felt the consistency of what was expected from the team member's insofar as formal meeting frequency and efficiency in how the meetings were run was important. The weekly coffee meeting was purposely created for team member's only, no senior managers, the exception being myself. That said, I was also assigned work streams and reported on them. The feeling from the team was that we were all peers. Having co-PM's facilitate the meetings and communications also allowed me to be viewed more as a team member peer. There was a perceived equality each team member felt, which provided a feeling and sense of respect. This is revealed in the third-party facilitator comments.

> TPF: The feeling I got from the group was that they felt this was a very positive project that exhibited distinctive characteristics that weren't always evident in other projects they'd been on. Specifically, the way the project was managed in terms of project management practices, regular meetings, and structure. Secondly, there was an emphasis on treating people with respect and building trust. There is evidence in the comments that there was a great deal of trust and respect within the group. One person stated that "this was a project where one's expertise was valued and people were able to demonstrate their expertise."

Positive outcomes - project documentation. Members of the project management team always attempted to remain "fact neutral" when reporting an issue or concern within or outside of the team. This approach did not go unnoticed by other organizations. The tenor of the email messaging below received

from members of the corporate team reflects this. The use of the words "please" and "appreciate" tend to point toward a more civil environment, as does the offer to voluntarily schedule a follow-up meeting.

> Corp4: Hi PM, I am glad we covered an area we were missing. Please send me a list of all the attendees and I will schedule a follow-up meeting.
>
> Corp9: Hi, I greatly appreciate you all looking into this issue for us. We were able to [determine the problem and] remove the problem from the configuration.

Positive outcomes - researcher observation. Positive outcomes were found to occur within and outside of team meetings. Team members felt comfortable extending their positive behaviors to colleagues wherever they met.

> RO: Due to the nature of this project there were many pre-requisites needing to be accomplished in order to move the project forward. Each of these areas generated a new outcome to assist in meeting milestones and the eventual successful completion. These items in and of themselves generated positive outcomes from a project plan perspective. As the program manager I witnessed positive outcomes daily as I observed how team members interacted, in how they greeted each other, shared a smile or a laugh. Often this type of behavior was witnessed outside of a project meeting in locations such as the café, or a meeting that was not related to the software conversion project. Positive outcomes occurred between long-time co-workers as well as between college interns and seasoned veterans. This type of behavior seemed ubiquitous across project team members and it spilled over into the interactions outside of the team. The strong project framework that was established remained consistent throughout the project, allowing for generative dialogue and trust to be fostered.

Commitment - empowerment secondary theme. The secondary theme of commitment was suggested by three of sixteen team members during the 1:1 interviews. The flexibility of the flat project team hierarchy design provided opportunity for team members to creatively solve challenges as they arose. The flat hierarchy allowed for team members to engage more with other team members. This cross-team engagement assisted group effectiveness as demonstrated by the results achieved. Much of this activity occurred at, or as a result of, the weekly coffee meetings. Table 4.10 displays the question, secondary theme of commitment, and the codes assigned from the interviews. Narrative from the interviews follows.

Table 4.10 *Practices of Relational Leading – Commitment - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Commitment	- Flexibility to solve issues - Sense of engagement and efficacy - Coffee meetings fostered equal treatment of team members

Commitment - 1:1 interviews. The commentary highlights the agile way the project team members behaved when their assistance was needed. They took ownership and responsibility, and worked within their own role functions to meet commitments.

> TM10: You know how things go PM. Things change day-to-day, hour-by-hour, and minute-by-minute. There are times that we need to "call an audible" [American football term for verbalizing direction] and shift things in the day, meetings, whatever it may be. Your team was always great about being flexible and at the same time, accountable for the information, and, delivering on what we asked you and your team to deliver on.

TM14: Overall I feel that they had a very clear sense of purpose, and they were secure with that. They had that sense of security, because they had a very clear picture of what and how they were they going to move forward, how were they going to be able to get past a problem. Again, they had that sense of wanting to see this through, have it be fully successful at the end, not just check the box and say, "I did my job. I don't know about you guys."

TM16: I thought people took ownership of their area, and I think these coffee meetings were organized. Again, [the coffee meeting structure] really kept people honest and there was a sense of ownership across the board to be accountable for the post-go-live process.

Two of eight focus group members expressed the secondary theme of commitment with regards the level of authentic support team members received from each other. This was not a casual type of offer, but a sincere expression to work together to address a challenge or to complete a task. For the co-PM's, this was a daily routine in that they made a point of walking to team member's offices to offer assistance. The team continuously demonstrated through achieving project milestones that they were not only committed to the project, but they could envisage the benefits that would result from a successful completion. Table 4.11 displays the question, secondary theme of commitment, and the codes assigned from the focus group. Narrative from the focus group follows.

Table 4.11 *Practices of Relational Leading - Commitment – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Commitment	- Demonstrated willingness to help each other - Focused on end state

Commitment - focus group interviews. In the narratives below, the team members reference the formal coffee meeting as a way to check on the overall project status and their personal contributions to the project. There is a sense of determination and accountability that comes across with TM4's statement. There is no focus on lack of ability or lack of tools, only on a successful result.

TM1: I was just going to say I think one thing that was effective besides the weekly coffee meetings, was management by wandering around. Going to see the different stakeholders and make sure that everything was on track. If you [the team member/stakeholders] needed anything, we could help facilitate that for them. So that was something else you try to do each week.

TM4: People knew that we had to get it done…and whatever the question or the problem of the day was, get it done.

Commitment – third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator notes the importance of socialization during this project by the co-project managers. Making a point to have communications across the team not only contributed to relationship building as stated below, it also provided a means to have an informal check and balance system in place to ensure reported project statuses were correct.

TPF: The management by wandering around (MBWA) was very effective for this group. The co-PM's made it a point on a daily basis to leave their offices and to have "face time" with other members of the team whenever possible. The co-PM's were neither using texting nor email as a primary means of communicating, but MBWA. This 1:1 time with other team members cultivated and contributed to relationship building amongst the team.

Commitment - project documentation. Because of the project teams closeness with each other, an informal "closed-loop" process became an outcome of the open dialogue that was enacted. A reliance on each other for information and validation of that information led to a transparent environment. Each team member was committed to the other and linked in some way through this informal "closed-loop" process.

TM6: Hi PM, no problem at all, it was my pleasure. I have attached a list of sample quotations that I created, as promised.

TM13: All [addressed to the software conversion team members], I just wanted to report back on the action below I took from our meeting.

TM20: PM, as discussed, please find the Final version of the software conversion documents. If you see anything I missed please let me know.

Commitment - researcher observation. The co-PM's integrated into their roles gradually. This was partially due to their lack of program management experience as well as a perception they would not be taken seriously by veteran team members.

RO: The demographics of the software conversion project team were quite varied. The co-PM's were fairly recent college graduates, less than four years, and voiced some apprehension to me at the beginning of the project. This was due to their lack of experience and their perception of working and providing direction to seasoned team members. Because of this, in the first weeks of the project they seemed content to participate in meetings but were not mingling with team members as much as I would have liked. They spent a good amount of time with each other and in each other's offices. This may have been because of the physical office proximity. I addressed this in one of our weekly project manager meetings where only the three of us met. The co-PM's felt because they were receiving the weekly updates in a timely manner, all was "ok." My request of them was to spend less time in their offices and more time speaking to the work stream leads each was supporting. I provided them the example of Hewlett-Packard managers who introduced the concept of management by wandering around (MBWA). Slowly (and not without periodic reminders) the co-PM's began to engage with their work stream team leads until it became more natural for them, a norm. Though this practice was designed for information gathering as well as the building of relationships, the co-PM's and other team members began to have fun with each other during visits and looked forward to them.

Rigor - empowerment secondary theme. Two of sixteen team members interviewed referred to the project having rigor within the processes. Two of eight focus group team members noted the secondary theme of rigor in their comments. Because of the commitment team members felt towards the project, the obligation to their peers, and a sense of empowerment, team members appeared to go further into a process than perhaps they may have in past projects. This is demonstrated in the narrative below from the 1:1 interviews. Table 4.12 displays the question, secondary theme of rigor, and the codes assigned from the interviews. Narrative from the interviews follows.

Table 4.12 *Practices of Relational Leading – Rigor - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Rigor	- Focused on the end state for the collective - Challenging but enjoyable experience

Rigor - 1:1 interviews. In the first example, TM9 acknowledges and recalls team members to be honest in their communications. However, TM9 does not stop at only having honest conversations. TM9 demonstrates engagement and rigor in being certain the "ask" is understood. Voicing and extracting this level of clarity for a project task was crucial to reducing miscommunications and maintaining process efficiency. In the statement by TM10, we see demonstrated a tenacity to raise issues and have difficult discussions. TM10 mentions continuing to have the conversations until an optimum outcome is achieved.

TM9: I always felt good with team members and that they were being honest. We would have the appropriate communications, and sometimes those informal meetings would be a good place to start. But I remember usually having to be very specific in terms of, here's the three things we need out of this person.

TM10: There were times I would say where the most friction took place was with an outside group. So we had some pretty heated discussions between my management at the time. It became quite uncomfortable at times where we'd have to go through those decisions and talk through what the problem was and if it were: A. Best for the business, or B., Best for our team. Although that wasn't an easy conclusion, we did work together and we fought through some of those discussions, and we came out on the other side.

Two of eight focus group team members voiced that the project experience was challenging but enjoyable. In the co-authored statement, the team members acknowledge that not all aspects of the project went smoothly. Table 4.13 displays the question, secondary theme of rigor, and the codes assigned from the focus group. The focus group commentary follows.

Table 4.13 *Practices of Relational Leading - Rigor – Focus Group*

Question	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Relational leading practices	- Rigor	- Challenging but enjoyable experience

Rigor -focus group interviews. Team members noted that because of the caliber of their fellow team members and the actions put forth by the PM's when issues did arise, they were able to move on and continue towards their project goals. PM support appears to be recognized as one of the positive forces contributing to the project success and may reflect on the project structure.

TM3 & TM8: [TM8 concurred with the statement made by TM3] I hope I'm able to work on other projects that run as smoothly as this one. Even though we had some minor bumps in the road, they were easily smoothed out based on the team that was working there and the support that was given by the program managers. I hope that future projects have that same level and degree of cohesiveness so that we're able to move forward and have successful projects in the future.

Rigor - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator exposes a difference in this project team with regards to fear. The difference being that the team members had no fear when it came to rigors of their role in meeting commitments and expectations. It appeared to the third-party facilitator that the team almost took an isolationist approach to their activities in that they were not concerned with being judged; their primary concerns were their team, and meeting objectives.

TPF: There is a kind of theme in business where people do not want to be visible. They do not want to give opponents, competition, or perhaps co-workers, any "handles" to grab on to. They want to, you know, stay low, run fast. Don't be visible. This project was something where people could be visible. They could express more of themselves without being penalized for it.

Rigor - project documentation. The approach by team members to seek information from within or outside of the team tended to be respectful but direct. This likely reduced the number of miscommunications and maintained clarity and efficiency in expressing requirements. The examples below are a reflection of the messaging that occurred.

TM3: Hi Corp10, can you provide more background/information/purpose about the upcoming corporate review or refer me to a resource to help us?

TM18: Hi TM4, can you please verify the below two requests raised by you? I have made changes and refreshed the data environment again. Please let me know your findings.

Rigor - researcher observation. Team members took pride in their contributions and were resolute in their decision making.

RO: There was a sense amongst team members that they did not wish to negatively impact the project or fellow team members by not meeting expectations. This appeared to heighten awareness of decision impacts, and seemed to materialize during team member decision processes. Because of this, and the flat hierarchy structure of the program, team members did not appear to delay or feel encumbered when they took action.

Accomplishment - empowerment secondary theme. Two of the sixteen team members referenced the secondary theme of accomplishment in their interview narratives. TM2's comments provide a personal introspection as to what the project meant in terms of accomplishment. TM2 emphasizes the responsibility one felt as part of the project team. It is also suggested that some type of behavioral change took place with regards to TM2's self-esteem and confidence levels increasing. The overall project experience is reflected as a journey with positive end results that remain with TM2.

TM10 takes a collective approach to challenges and accomplishments, noting that at times it was not clear how, or if the challenges in their work stream process might be resolved. TM10 voices relief in successfully completing the process challenge and takes pride in attributing success for the accomplishment to the overall group. Comments from the focus group regarding accomplishment were not directly made, however, third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher comments follow the 1:1 interview comments below. Table 4.14 displays the question, secondary theme of accomplishment, and the codes assigned from the interviews. Narrative from the interviews follows.

Table 4.14 *Practices of Relational Leading – Accomplishment - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Accomplishment	- Project was positive learning experience - Learning experiences that can be applied to future work - Focused on the end state for the collective

Accomplishment - 1:1 interviews. A sense of accomplishment was derived on two levels. Accomplishment achieved by the individual team members, and accomplishment achieved by the team. During the interviews team members did not prioritize personal accomplishment over team accomplishments, their narratives were more a reflection on the realization of what was done.

TM2: Overall, it was just great exposure and a great experience, something that I'm still taking with me…a little bit of like, mental framework in a way, where you know, you completed a project successfully, you were an important piece of the project, so it kind of gives you confidence, and the ability see the light at the end of the tunnel.

TM10: [Following a milestone completion] Relieved that we had an actual process in place. I think leading up to that point we weren't really sure if this was something we were going to complete when it came to the [issue] anyway. You know, could this be something that we could pull off? So to have a great solid and thorough plan in place was a big relief, and something that we felt proud of accomplishing with the team that was part of that group.

Accomplishment - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator begins to question what exactly happened in this group for them to have such a positive feeling of empowerment that led to accomplishing all they did. During the interview with the third-party facilitator, he asked, "what would you say was the 'secret sauce' that allowed the team to perform in such a positive way?" It was clear to the third-party facilitator that something different within this project team occurred.

> TPF: The team felt different, more elite and empowered. Something happened to make the team feel special and it allowed them to express their areas of expertise. People felt they had autonomy and were accountable to accomplish the tasks at hand.

Accomplishment - project documentation. Comments extracted from the project documentation display external [corporate] forces recognizing the success of the project team members. Internal recognition is also mentioned by TM1 in the sharing of statuses and updating materials for senior management, and TM19 referencing completion of an important task to allow final development testing to occur before files are moved into production test.

> Corp11: [To software conversion team members.] Test team – thanks so much for all your efforts! Congrats everyone on this milestone!
>
> TM1: Hello TM19, I have updated your status slide accordingly [reflecting accomplishments] and will discuss your updates with the PM in our next meeting. Thank you!
>
> TM19: Hello, this [referring to end-to-end development testing] is complete. All program tables impacted by the software conversion project are now available in user test.

Accomplishment - researcher observation. Successes by team members were recognized in a consistent and uniform manner.

> RO: This was a large and challenging project with many components. Rather than constantly discuss the enormity of the project, an attempt was made to focus on the smaller pieces, the steps that would eventually bring us to completion. Because of this, it was important to recognize the accomplishments achieved along the way, no matter how small they may have appeared. Displaying positive completion statuses at the coffee meeting to showcase accomplishments when they occurred was energizing and motivating to team members.

Efficacy - empowerment secondary theme. Efficacy was found to be a secondary theme of empowerment where engagement and commitment to organizational goals were noted. One of sixteen team members suggested efficacy in their interview commentary. In reviewing the project documentation for goal completions, the volume of task and milestones completed, also reflected the theme of efficacy. With regards to goal attainment, project team members saw efficacy as a positive measure of progress and effectiveness. Urgency and responsiveness to peers and colleagues outside of the project team was valued when solving issues. One team member of eight participating in the focus group recognized this as well. It was also noticed by the third-party facilitator that when issues were discovered, project team members were not afraid to engage and to demonstrate their leadership skills. This observation is reinforced by project documentation data where examples of communicating directly and effectively are displayed. A researcher observation concludes the secondary theme of efficacy. Table 4.15 displays the question, secondary theme of efficacy, and the codes assigned from the interviews. Narrative from the interviews follows.

Table 4.15 *Practices of Relational Leading - Efficacy – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Efficacy	- Sense of engagement and efficacy

Efficacy 1:1 interviews. In reflecting on the team and the sense of urgency they had, TM14 was one of sixteen interviewees to note that a sense of urgency was not a challenge for this team. Voiced by a

person in a senior level position within the corporation, this observation from TM14 is quite meaningful and reflects the completed tasks and milestone successes. What is not said in the comment below is that team members not only displayed a sense of urgency when working on tasks, the tasks they completed were completed properly.

> TM14: I think it was really nice to work with a team that had the appropriate sense of urgency. That's a big one. People seem to miss the mark on that a lot.

One of eight focus group team members suggested efficacy in their commentary. The team member voices the high level of ownership felt as engagement took place. Table 4.16 displays the question, secondary theme of efficacy, and the codes assigned from the focus group. Narrative from the focus group follows.

Table 4.16 *Practices of Relational Leading - Efficacy – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Efficacy	- Commitment to organizational goals

Efficacy - focus group interviews. One of eight focus group interviewees suggested efficacy took place within the project team. The team continually worked towards task and milestone deadlines to keep the project on track. The approach to tasks was holistic and not siloed so as to take into account all possible impacts to the project. This was recognized and appreciated by team members and recipients of the completed tasks.

> TM5: I think that's exactly what happened. I think it almost appeared that we were working on the actual [overall corporate] project, because we were doing the legwork, and the research to come up with solutions. We worked together and understood how each area was impacted.

Efficacy - third-party facilitator. In his comment below, the third-party facilitator is suggesting the flat project team hierarchy promoted leadership at the individual team member level. Team members had the autonomy to make decisions as SME's and were not required to raise all activities upward through a command and control hierarchy.

> TPF: At the local [team member] level people saw problems, and they demonstrated leadership in responding to issues and problems in order to solve them.

Efficacy - project documentation. The project team members realized that in order to be effective they needed to be transparent and effective in their sharing of information within and outside of the immediate group. Ownership behavior occurred, not in a possessive way, but in an open and positive manner to benefit all.

> TM3: [To software conversion team work stream leads] Per the monthly software conversion project owners meeting, the notes below highlight changes that will be occurring. Please forward this [message] as necessary to members of your teams.
>
> TM10: [To one software conversion work stream team] Team, IMPORTANT, effective January 1st with the migration to the new software conversion platform, there will NO longer be the automated ability to capture the specific items listed below. Please plan accordingly.
>
> PM: Hi Corp13, looking at the slide deck there are two items in Phase I that are critical to my organizations' business. I am not sure what "moved to future Phase" means. Please advise. Thank you.

Efficacy - researcher observation. Team members understood the importance of efficiency as a means to meet commitments. Communication efficiency was very important for internal and external messaging.

> RO: The project timeline was very aggressive and corporate teams shared certain pre-requisite tasks. If not properly completed within the designated time frames, these "incomplete tasks" could have impacted one or more corporate organizations. It was imperative for each organizational team to remain focused on their committed deliverables. This sometimes meant team members needed to be clear and thorough in their messaging to other team members and the organization.

Authenticity - empowerment secondary theme. Authenticity was reflected in the project team when individuals provided a sincere and genuine suggestion or recommendation without pretense, in order to assist another. Gergen (2009b) suggests being authentic is to be "accepted by others without question" (p. 41). Gergen also notes one's authenticity is harmed whenever intent is questionable. TM9 was one of sixteen team members from the 1:1 interviews who shared personal engagement and having authentic behaviors, when commenting on his relationship and perception of team members. TM9 advised how he personally worked with members of the team with whom he shared commonalities, and with those members of the team whom he did not. His approach was one consisting of multiple levels of engagement. The focus group did not discuss authenticity during the session. The third-party focus group facilitator commented on authenticity at the team and individual levels as being natural in that transparency when discussing issues was considered a positive norm. Lastly, a researcher observation summarizes the environment where authenticity took place. Table 4.17 displays the question, secondary theme of authenticity, and the codes assigned from the interviews. Narrative from the interviews follows.

Table 4.17 *Practices of Relational Leading - Authenticity – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Relational leading practices	- Authenticity	- Commonalities aided in relationship building

Authenticity - 1:1 interviews. In the statement below, TM9 was one of sixteen team members who shared observations on working with other team members during the 1:1 interviews. What is interesting here is that TM9 suggests not all of the team members were a "personality fit" for each other. Also of interest is that TM9 remains respectful when noting perceived differences.

> TM9: [Referencing team members] I think they were mostly kind of friendly, [we shared] friendly banter. I think there are a few people that I knew better from having worked in the office with them, and that I would get along with, or look to set the pace, or be able to be a little more chummy with. Then there were a few people that I think had different reputations where they were considered more walled off, very close to the vest with their issues.

Authenticity - third-party facilitator. In his comment below, the third-party facilitator implies that there was a level of trust amongst the project team. This allowed members a sense of freedom when discussing challenges they faced, and to dialogue in an authentic manner.

> TPF: They [Team members] did not feel like they were vulnerable by talking about problems, mistakes, issues, and so on. There was a sense of authenticity by being part of the team that, you could be yourself.

Authenticity - project documentation. Messages from members of the team were clear, concise, and direct. Requesting validation or admitting a lack of knowledge was not viewed as a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength.

> TM3: [To corporate technology team] What is the process after go-live for us to make sure this issue gets prioritized into a production release? Is there an individual contact or special team we should contact?

TM8: Hello TM19, based on the information below, we will not plan on testing these items. Please ensure these items do not appear in future test plan task lists. Thank you.

TM10: [To PM's] I need to lean on you guys in regards to these issues based on what TM24 and TM25 are telling me. I don't know the differences or the impacts.

Authenticity - researcher observation. Team members formed a collective that encompassed norms such as transparency, commitment, and ownership. These norms allowed for the development and growth of individual and group authenticity to take place.

RO: The project team members developed a level of comfort and transparency with each other and with those outside of the immediate project team. There was a feeling that one could extend beyond their comfort zone to gather information, inform others, or to raise a concern that may impact the collective. Perhaps this was a feeling of ownership, concern to meet the milestone deadlines, or not wanting to disappoint team members. Team member communications in general were clear, concise, direct and authentic.

Summary – empowerment. This section covered research findings regarding the relational leading practice theme of empowerment, and the secondary themes discovered in the 1:1 interviews, focus group, independent third-party focus group facilitator interview, project documentation, and research facilitator observations. Empowerment was the primary theme supported by the secondary themes of positive outcomes, commitment, rigor, accomplishment, efficacy, and authenticity.

The research findings revealed empowerment existed amongst team members. These findings were supported in part due to the flat hierarchical structure of the project team. This structure allowed for a level of agility in moving into leadership roles across the team as needed. The team was confident in their roles and took the initiative to move forward with tasks. There existed a strong sense of community trust, which appeared to promote authenticity amongst the team. There was no noticeable hesitation by team members to move forward in their project tasks by applying skills effectively and efficiently to drive positive outcomes. Their commitment to the team and the overall project success was carried out through the development of relationships, and applied rigor to create best practices so goals might be accomplished.

The next section reviews the research data for shared learning.

Shared learning - primary candidate theme. Shared learning is one of four primary candidate themes discovered from the data in response to the research question "What are the practices of relational leading?" Twelve of the sixteen project team members identified with shared learning during the 1:1 interviews. Three of eight focus group team members related to shared learning in their narrative. Team members noted the openness of sharing information and skills amongst the project team. They mentioned the coffee meeting as a place where ideas could be shared and dialogue took place. Schein (2013) suggests "what we ask and how we ask it… is ultimately the basis for building trusting relationships, which facilitates better communication and, thereby ensures collaboration where it is needed to get the job done" (p. 8). Schein refers to this as Humble Inquiry. Table 4.18 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the interviews. This section also includes an exemplar to further demonstrate shared learning that occurred within the project team.

Table 4.18 *Practices of Relational Leading – Shared Learning – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Shared learning	- Knowledge source - Skills	- Environment allowed for shared learning - Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments

			- Coffee meetings fostered equal treatment of team members - Efficient meeting structure - Focused on time management to further end state for the collective - Learning experiences that can be applied to future work

Shared learning - 1:1 interviews. Twelve of the sixteen interviewees conveyed a sense a willingness to share, as well as being shared with. Team members voiced a sincerity to assist others. It was suggested that this shared learning environment allowed for individuals to improve personal performance and to deliver high-quality results for the collective.

TM1: It was a big confidence builder too. To know that I was so fresh out of college taking on such a big project like that.

TM2: When I started working with these team leads, it gave me…it boosted my confidence in a way where I felt this is something that I can handle.

TM6: I certainly learned a lot and I certainly felt accomplished at the end...It was great to get other people's perspective, other people's style of the way they do things, and learn something new.

TM7: A lot of people were involved that you come to know, new people. You make new friends and you learn what they are working on, and they always shared the best practices. I learned all the processes.

TM9: Every so often I would feel like it would be nice to see what so-and-so was doing, or how are they handling it, or why are we having this challenge, and, are other people having the same challenge?

TM12: Well I would say just on a general basis TM1 and TM2 were very helpful. Because they not only helped me understand what I was working on, but they would help me understand what they were working on as well. So with the whole overview understanding of the project, I was able to understand the project at a deeper level, and that helped us complete the project quickly and more efficiently, do a better job as a unit, as a collective, instead of individual people working on the project individually.

Three of eight focus group team members noted shared learning during the session. Shared learning appeared on multiple levels, both individual and team. Table 4.19 provides the primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and assigned codes. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4.19 *Practices of Relational Leading – Shared Learning – Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Shared learning	- Knowledge source - Skills	- Efficient meeting structure - Shared learning deepened team

			member understanding of project

Shared learning - focus group interviews. Three of eight focus group team members voiced learning occurred with regards to the technology functionality of the software conversion program platform, but also in learning project and program management skills. Comments below from team members reference project structure and personal growth amongst the areas of shared learning. An exemplar is also shared in this section.

> TM4: Okay. Organized, organized, organized. That's one thing we should take away from that project.
>
> TM5: I think it was one of the better projects that I had worked on in my time at the high-technology company. I took away a couple of different things personally just because project management is not my normal job. It helped me understand when involved in other projects what's the normal, what's the good, and what's the bad.

Shared learning - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator mentions that learning extended beyond the confines of the software conversion project. Team members brought best practices from this project to new projects and new project team members, expanding the shared learning process.

> TPF: The team also mentioned that some of the practices of this project were things they felt important to apply to other projects. So they learned some skills and practices based on this project they felt were effective and would take, regardless of where they were, into their future roles.

Shared learning - project documentation. The behavior of the team members tended to be selfless in sharing what they learned of an opportunity, challenge, or simply a "need to know" item. They freely shared information with the team so others might expand their learning base.

> TM3: Hello PM [with regards to a software conversion project corporate workshop] would you or someone on our team be interested in this?
>
> TM21: TM2, this is a great project update. Does it make sense for us to get together weekly to review?
>
> PM: Hello TM10, here is a summary of the actions taken as well as some considerations as the initiative moves forward.

Shared learning - researcher observation. Seasoned team members were not hesitant to share knowledge and mentor less seasoned colleagues.

> RO: The project team demographics were quite varied insofar as experience in working on a project of this nature and size. One area I was pleased to observe was that of a more seasoned project team member exercising patience with their less seasoned peers. At first I witnessed what I thought to be slight frustration from a senior person toward a less seasoned peer. I felt warranted in feeling this way because the senior person who was engaged appeared to be a very factual-based person who preferred to avoid casual conversation. This was not the case. The meeting I witnessed turned quite naturally into a mentoring session. Perhaps some of the initiative behind the change in approach was due to the knowledge that as a team we had one overall deliverable and if one member of the team failed, the entire team failed. Perhaps the norms developed and nurtured through the weekly coffee meetings also extended to outside of the meeting. This particular session between the team members ended as a learning session for both team members as well as myself.
>
> Exemplar: During a discussion at a Taos Institute workshop with Arlene Katz, Ph.D., I shared a brief encounter I had with the co-PM's during our regular Wednesday pre-coffee preparation meeting. Upon hearing this account, Arlene mentioned that in her writing with John Shotter, exemplars were used when something out of the ordinary occurred. Arlene recommended I consider doing so in this particular instance. A. Katz (personal communication, October 6, 2017). Approximately three months into the project the co-PM's and I were scheduled for our weekly project management meeting. This meeting was always held on Wednesday afternoons and was a

preparation meeting for the Thursday coffee meeting. Like the coffee meeting, the program management meeting was held in a conference room away from the senior managers to reduce the opportunity for interruptions. One particular Wednesday, my meetings were running behind and I was ten minutes late to the program managers meeting. A note was sent to advise the co-PM's I would be late, however, the distance between my meeting and the conference room where the co-PM's were located was approximately a ten minute walk. I felt badly being late for the meeting and hurried to get there. When I arrived at the conference room, the co-PM's were sitting in the room, projecting the updates they were preparing for the coffee meeting on the conference room video screen. We exchanged greetings and the look from the co-PM's was one of confidence. I asked how they were doing and they said fine. I apologized for being late for the meeting and asked if there was anything I could help with. One co-PM replied, "No, we've got this." I nodded, told them thanks, and proceeded to leave the room. It was at that moment I realized relational leading had taken root.

Shared learning – secondary themes. Secondary themes supporting shared learning were found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations. The secondary themes discovered during the research process were knowledge source, and skills. The data segments follow beginning with the secondary theme of knowledge source.

Knowledge source - shared learning secondary theme. Knowledge source is a secondary theme discovered during the research on shared learning. One of sixteen team members suggested knowledge source in their 1:1 interview. Three of eight focus group attendees implied knowledge source in their discussion. The project team was acknowledged as a resource, or knowledge source for members within the team as well as for individuals external to the team. Table 4.20 provides the secondary theme of knowledge source and the assigned codes. Interview responses follow Table 4.20.

Table 4.20 *Practices of Relational Leading – Knowledge Source – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Knowledge source	- Team was viewed as a resource - Weekly "PM visits" became an enjoyable exchange of knowledge

Knowledge source - 1:1 interviews. One in sixteen project team members suggested knowledge source as an important component of the project dynamic from a perspective of connections. The project team developed into a knowledge source for members within the immediate team and for the corporate project team. While in the process of developing skills and reaching out to other groups to solve challenges, the project team accumulated a series of external contacts and resources. These external knowledge "touch points" were also shared with others needing information or assistance.

TM10: [To PM] In figuring out where we go from here, you put me in touch with all those key players. This was to have a better understanding of why things were moving forward in the manner they were, within this new initiative.

One of eight focus group team members noted knowledge source in their commentary. It is clear from the comments that there was a strong socialization aspect to learning within and across the team. Table 4.21 provides the secondary theme of knowledge source and the assigned codes. Focus group responses follow Table 4.21.

Table 4.21 *Practices of Relational Leading – Knowledge Source – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Knowledge source	- Team was viewed as a resource - Weekly "PM visits" became an enjoyable exchange of knowledge

Knowledge source - focus group interviews. One of eight focus group members suggested the secondary theme of knowledge source during the focus group session. The co-program managers make it a point to reach out to members of the team to see if there was anything they might do to assist. The process quickly socialized and became a norm for the co-PM's as well as other members of the team.

> TM1: Yeah, I think one... Sorry to cut you off. I was just going to say I think one thing that was effective besides the weekly coffee meetings, was the management by wandering around. Going to see the different stakeholders and make sure that everything was on track and if you [referring to team members] needed anything, we could help facilitate that. So that was something else you tried to do each week.

Knowledge source - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator recognized the learning behaviors that took place within the team. The flattened project hierarchy provided an environment where team members were empowered and encouraged to become curious learners.

> TPF: Problem solving was encouraged and allowed individuals to use and showcase their expertise. Also, it contributed to relationship building amongst the team.
>
> TPF: One person stated that "this was a project where one's expertise was valued and people were able to demonstrate their expertise."

Knowledge source - project documentation. The project team continued to be recognized as a knowledge source. Over time, team knowledge expanded and the project team members became viewed as a valuable resource to other corporate organizations.

> Corp13: [To project team] Hi guys, can you review the request below and indicate if this information is needed, and if so, how will it be used?
>
> Corp16: Hi PM, that's a great idea, if we can report on the data volumes, that would help us get to those [other] numbers.
>
> TM26: Hi PM, not sure if this question falls under your area of responsibility, but you are always a good source of knowledge!!

Knowledge source - researcher observation. Through their desire to learn and become experts, team members eventually became knowledge sources for other groups.

> RO: There was an interesting phenomenon that took place over the course of the software conversion project. Initially the project team was in an aggressive learning mode to understand what was occurring at the corporate and peer organization levels. Because our group entered into the project later than other groups, there was an initial "catch-up" mode that team members were feeling. Also, project team members initially demonstrated concern over the time demands of the project, and in their day-to-day roles, which they continued to maintain. As the project team became comfortable with their project roles and their in-group personas, a level of confidence began to emerge that was recognized by others. Outside groups recognized that our project team was a good place to begin information queries. This process expanded communications and resources for the project team to work with.

Skills - shared learning secondary theme. A secondary theme found in the research on shared learning was skills. Two of the sixteen 1:1 interviewees implied skills as an important theme within the project. It was discovered that team members held complementary skills and were considered the SME's for a given area. While this was a positive find, having proper alignment between the team member and their role in the project, and the skills possessed, all combined to develop repeatable skillset practices. It must be noted that commentary on the theme skills, was not found in the focus group interviews. Table 4.22 provides the secondary theme of skills and the assigned codes. Interview responses follow Table 4.22.

Table 4.22 *Practices of Relational Leading – Skills - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Skills	- Proper alignment of resources and skills

Skills - 1:1 interviews. Two of sixteen team members commented that skill development was important for members of a project team to be successful. Understanding the level of skills and past experience play a factor.

> TM3: [Commenting on needed team member skills] The level of expertise is that they know what they're talking about and they can do what they need to do.
>
> TM10: If management said, "Hey, what do you need to be successful?" I would say, "I need a team. I need a team of individuals that I can pick and assemble based on their skillset, and their previous knowledge." Then, you know they have what it takes to execute.

Skills - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator recognized the importance of individual team member skills, and how the team balanced the use of skill sets across the project team.

> TPF: Expertise was valued and able to be generated across the team. People felt confident, and team member skills were complementary. Members of the team developed both skills and practices that were repeatable.

Skills - project documentation. The project documentation reflected areas such as developed skills being used as a resource by others, troubleshooting issues found in the process, and the willingness to share skills with others.

> Corp4: Hi TM15 – send me the question(s) and I can route [to the respective subject matter expert (SME)] depending on the subject. FYI, all database changes are also published.
>
> TM4: Hello TM 18, I re-tested both issues below and it's perfect now. Both issues have been closed. Thanks for the speedy fix.
>
> TM9: [To PM] FYI, I pointed out some minor number counts being off in Corp14's new daily metric reporting, so I wanted to make sure our organization's numbers are correct.
>
> TM20: Hi TM16, I would be happy to go over the process with you at your convenience.

Skills - researcher observation. Team members viewed this project as a learning experience in which they might further develop their skills, and assist others to develop skills.

> RO: Project team members developed and expanded their skill sets as the software conversion project progressed. As noted by the third-party focus group facilitator, the skills between project team members were in many instances complementary. Because of clear role definition within the team, complementary skills allowed for a more efficient team working environment and increased sensitivity to the needs of others.

Summary – shared learning. This section reviewed the relational leading practice theme of shared learning discovered as a result of the 1:1 interviews, focus group, interview with the independent third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, research facilitator observations, and an

exemplar. Secondary themes of skills and knowledge source were also represented within the research data. Shared learning occurred with the project team members as individuals, and with the team as a collective. The broadening of skill sets through problem solving and peer information sharing drew the attention of other teams. Over time, the project became a formidable resource for internal and external team members.

The next section reviews the research data for reliance.

Reliance - primary candidate theme. Reliance is one of four primary candidate themes discovered from the data in response to the research question "What are the practices of relational leading?" Three of sixteen project team members identified with reliance during the `1:1 interviews. Two of eight focus group team members implied reliance during their discussion. The 1:1 interviews team members noted there was a reliance on others insofar as skills and commitments. Team members also noted caring, and looking out for peers as group norms. Douglass and Gittell (2012) state, "By fostering attentiveness to the situation and to others, these forms of reciprocal interrelating enable caring, timely, and knowledgeable responses" (p. 721). There appeared to be a sense of freedom, or flexibility amongst the team knowing they could rely on each other. Interdependence was found to be a secondary theme of reliance. One team member suggested interdependence during the 1:1 interviews, two team members noted interdependence during the focus group session. Table 4.23 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary theme, and assigned codes. Comments from the 1:1 interviews follow.

Table 4.23 *Practices of Relational Leading - Reliance – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Reliance	- Interdependence	- Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments - Focused on the end state for the collective - Flexibility and ubiquitous desire to succeed - Team members cared and looked out for each other

Reliance - 1:1 interviews. Three of sixteen project team members suggested reliance was a factor within the team, extending beyond the immediate team to external organizations. Over time, the reliance levels grew and a strong trust among team members developed. Comments from team members suggest that reliance and trust also allowed for intelligent risk-taking to occur.

> TM1: There was definitely that sense of camaraderie and trust between me as a project manager, representing the project team to the people who represented the different work streams… we all became close and we all trusted each other. We all had good relationships and in a sense I think that made everybody care that much more about the project and about completing it successfully.
> TM4: There's a certain point you've just got to say, oh yeah, you know what? We'll go with yours [model] because it's just better all around. At some point, everybody has to agree to the model and then the team has to follow it forward.
> TM10: [To PM] In order to come to the conclusions and make the decisions that we needed to, we relied on you and your team to bring forth a lot of that information. So, that actually made it a lot easier from my perspective because I knew I could rely on you and your team to deliver.

Two of eight focus group team members alluded to reliance in their group discussions. Reliance and trust were closely aligned from team member viewpoints. It was clear that the theme of reliance was earned through trust based on past experiences. It was also clear that an erosion of trust within relationships reduced the reliance factor. Table 4.24 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary theme, and assigned code. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4.24 *Practices of Relational Leading – Reliance - Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Reliance	- Interdependence	- Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments - Some dissident team members

Reliance - focus group interviews. Two of eight focus group team members raised the issue of reliance in their narratives. It was noted that not all team members shared in the same levels of reliance or trust. These were earned by proving one's self. Some team members worked together in the past where reliance and trust levels had taken hold. Others had little experience with team members and were in a position to earn levels of reliance and trust. Still others brought a work history that was less favorable. In one instance this caused disruption to the group.

> TM3: We probably recognized at the very beginning, when we were first pulled together, that we did have these interconnections and that it was a whole process flow of information from one end to the other. So, I mean we were really important to each other as well.
>
> TM5: [Referring to team members] There were a few that were part of the project who I don't think shared that [collective team] mentality. I think it was more of a quite tight-knit group that did a lot of the work and worked very closely. Then there were a few that were more of the rogue or lone wolf types who did their own thing without caring about the rest of the team.

Reliance - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator recognized the normalization of the team and the strong bonds that were built. The necessity of formality was not always called for. The development of trust amongst the project team allowed for less formal guidelines to become a norm.

> TPF: This was not a group of individuals operating as "I's," [the letter "I"]. They had formed into a "we," a team. And I think the interesting thing is how that team feeling was expressed in various ways. But I think trusting enough that they were able to be informal with each other.

Reliance - project documentation. Reaching out to other team members for validation and information sharing was the norm. Team members welcomed the opportunity to solicit information and to contribute to the knowledge of others.

> TM9: [To PM with regards to system issue] Hi, can I get your thoughts on the issue in the messaging below? I am not sure what the right response is.
>
> TM20: PM, thank you again for sending this email. I know you have a million things to do but I really do appreciate you taking this [action item] from me.

Reliance - researcher observation. Team members were acutely aware of their roles, and the roles and responsibilities of other project team members. This allowed for clarity in task assignments.

> RO: Members of the project team had clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and project tasks. This structure allowed team members to delineate between each other's responsibilities when questions or challenges arose. In addition to strengthening the reliance between team members, I believe it also assisted in communication efficiency.

Reliance – secondary theme. One secondary theme supporting reliance was found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project

documentation, and researcher observations. The secondary theme discovered during the research process was interdependence. The data segments follow for the secondary theme of interdependence.

Interdependence – reliance secondary theme. The secondary theme of interdependence appeared once during the 1:1 interviews and three times during the focus group session. The 1:1 interview excerpt below is interesting because it shows a level of frustration by one team member: however, there is still respect and a desire to assist a fellow team member with their work. Table 4.25 displays the question, secondary theme, and assigned code in the 1:1 interviews for interdependence. Comments from the 1:1 interviews follow.

Table 4.25 *Practices of Relational Leading – Interdependence - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Interdependence	- Team members were aware they needed each other to succeed

Interdependence - 1:1 interviews. The example cited by TM2 below is one TM2 and I previously discussed, as it was not a single occurrence. TM2 was unable to complete the activities assigned without the input from TM20. Both TM2 and TM20 needed each other in order to be successful. TM2 notes a level of frustration in working with TM20 but also mentions working with TM20 to be good.

> TM2: Working with TM20 was good; but it was hard because sometimes he wouldn't give us the correct information, and did not have the updates in the proper format. So basically, it was hard because I would have to go over to him and make sure I got the updates. Sometimes he wouldn't have them for me right away, but he would give me the information, for the updates.

Interdependence was noted by three of the eight focus group team members. Through their interdependence there was a reliance on others to assist with skills, locating information, or to empathize. The need to be independent and reliant was a reality that team members were acutely aware of. Table 4.26 displays the question, secondary theme, and assigned code discovered in the focus group session for interdependence. Comments from the focus group follow.

Table 4.26 *Practices of Relational Leading – Interdependence - Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Interdependence	- Team members were aware they needed each other to succeed

Interdependence - focus group interviews. Three of eight focus group team members suggested interdependence during the focus group session. Seasoned members of the team fully understood the dynamics of the project team environment. They also understood the need to be reliant on each other, if the team were to succeed. In several instances, team members had previously worked with each other and this made the team transition easier. In other instances, team members did not know each other and were also new to this type of project.

TM3: We probably recognized at the very beginning when we were first pulled together, that we did have these interconnections and that it was a whole process flow of information from one end to the other. So, I mean we were really important to each other as well… I think everybody that participated had to participate for it to be successful.

TM4: I think every tower [work stream] had to do their piece. If one didn't, then it didn't work. The whole thing just failed.

Interdependence - third-party facilitator. During our discussion, the third-party facilitator seemed a bit surprised at the level of relationship maturity found within the project team. He acknowledged that the team had coalesced and developed solid work habits.

TPF: My initial impressions were that this was a very strong, cohesive team that worked together very well.

Interdependence - project documentation. Members of the team developed a level of interdependence amongst themselves and in some instances, with individuals outside of the immediate team. The open flow of dialogue was very important in meeting project goals.

Corp5: Hi TM3, I can help you out with that. Let me know what time works well for you and we can jump on a call.

TM1: PM, I can visit with TM4 and TM8 when they are back in the office tomorrow. I will ask them if the communications between them and TM19 are progressing and keep you advised.

TM23: [To PM] Thanks for the info. I agree with the recommendation to keep these particular processes manual for the time being.

Interdependence - researcher observation. Team members leveraged opportunities to provide information to assist colleagues.

RO: Team members grew to develop a level of interdependence with each other. This was viewed to be quite positive as it allowed them to perform as a unified collective. What others may see as mundane, e.g., attending weekly coffee meetings, the team members embraced the opportunity to not only provide statuses, but to dialogue with members of the team.

Summary – reliance. This section reviewed the relational leading practice theme of reliance as discovered in the 1:1 interviews, focus group, interview with the independent third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and research facilitator observations. A secondary theme of interdependence was also represented in the data. Reliance germinated within the team based on complementary team member skills and a unified goal to successfully complete the project. Team members were reliant on each other's skills, knowledge, and willingness to help. Reliance between team members was experienced as a level of trust in that one team member believed they could trust that another team member would be there to assist them should they need it. Interdependence was recognized in the form of work harmony and communication between team members. Interdependence refers to project team members understanding the importance of not being fearful to engage and come together with others for the good of the collective and the project.

The next section reviews the research data for commonalities.

Commonalities - primary candidate theme. Two of sixteen team members noted commonalities during the 1:1 interviews. Two of eight focus group members implied the theme of commonalities during the focus group session. Team members noted that having something in common with a peer led to relationship building. In some instances, team members had existing relationships with peers and this further facilitated the strengthening of relationships. Others noted that having commonalities within the project, i.e., goals and tasks, aided in developing relationships and somewhat acted as an insulator from additional senior management demands. Primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes appear in Table 4.27. Comments from the 1:1 interviews follow.

Table 4.27 *Practices of Relational Leading - Commonalities – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Commonalities	- Caring - Connectivity	- Commonalities aided in relationship building - In many cases had established relationships with other team members

Commonalities - 1:1 interviews. Two of sixteen team members suggested commonalities existed within the project team. In one instance commonalities began as a result of the project work and interdependent tasks. As work continued the commonalities broadened and deepened beyond the work issues and an honest person-to-person relationship was formed. In the second commentary, TM8 voices excitement when networking and building relationships with individuals who are not based locally. Success in building these relationships is attributed to the development of commonalities between team members.

> TM3: TM1 was very good. I knew he was very young so to speak, and new to the company. This was his first big engagement. He had a very good demeanor. I continued to talk to him and have come to really get to know him as a person, and through this project, and it's been really good.
>
> TM8: I embrace any new projects that are coming up, especially with people who work remotely…because you can find that you have strong relationships or things in common with people overseas that you would have never met had these opportunities not arisen. I think it's very critical to find a commonality between the teams, between the people, and to be able to talk about similar interests.

Two of the eight focus group team members suggested the theme of commonalities in their narrative with regards to work history and job experience levels. Primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes are listed in Table 4.28. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4.28 *Practices of Relational Leading – Commonalities – Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Commonalities	- Caring - Connectivity	- Commonalities aided in relationship building - In many cases had established relationships with other team members - Insulated from other management demands

Commonalities - focus group interviews. Two of eight focus group team members mentioned a history of working with others on the team as well as having a common title status in the organization. Both are attributed to the perception of having commonality within the project team and a level of comfort to voice opinions freely.

TM3: I had worked with many of you in previous projects, so it was a really comfortable environment. I wasn't afraid to say what I needed to say. I didn't have to worry too much about how do I market this to make it more powerful, or what I needed to say so it would be more accepted by the group. I could just say it.

TM5: I think a lot of it too is just because we were all relatively the same level and experience, and were able to talk at those coffee meetings. We didn't have real management there all the time, so I think that changed the tone on the conversation. I think we were freer in discussing challenges and other issues that some might not be comfortable discussing with levels of management there.

Commonalities - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator suggests that commonalities were developed and emerged within the project team based on the project structure initially created. This structure allowed team members to freely build relationships and develop acceptable group norms.

TPF: The types of interactions experienced by this group are not the norms found in most businesses. I find that business tends to focus on competition; battles amongst teams where individuals can receive a bonus based on exercising competitive behavior. This group embraced and valued the relational norms that developed from the project framework put forth by the PM. They were committed to each other and to the overall project.

Commonalities - project documentation. The recognition and cultivation of commonalities between project team members fostered a sense of openness and trust, supporting civil and appreciative communications.

PM: Hello TM19, thank you. I think the team can request sign-off for each subject area if that will provide you a level of comfort?

TM9: [To PM] Yes, happy to talk more about this tomorrow. It is frustrating to have access problems hold things up. But we are getting good visibility on any issues that we are bringing forward.

TM23: Hello PM, can you please set up an hour today with TM21 to talk about this? I will stop by in a little to discuss. We need to begin socializing this. Thank you.

Commonalities - researcher observation. Norms developed as the project matured, and team members became comfortable with demands and responsibilities.

RO: There was a noticeable ease, or level of comfort between team members, which appeared to increase as the project matured. This contributed to the increased levels of civility in communications, even when difficult subjects needed to be broached. Because team members understood the vision and project expectations, their roles and the roles of their peers became quite focused. I believe this contributed to uncovering commonalities that could be shared in order to move the project forward. I found TM5's comments about not having management present to be interesting. My first thought was, doesn't TM5 remember I was there? After reflecting on TM5's response I realized that for this project, the team considered me a work stream lead, a peer. My official senior manager label was somehow lost within the equality of responsibilities.

Commonalities – secondary themes. Two secondary themes supporting commonalities were found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations. The secondary themes discovered during the research process were caring, and connectivity. The data segments follow for the secondary themes of caring, and connectivity.

Caring - commonalities secondary theme. Two of sixteen team members noted the secondary theme of caring in their interview conversations. Two of eight focus group team members implied caring in the focus group discussion. Through the process of caring, team members looked out for each other and provided future vision. Many team members noted the coaches were very caring, and supportive of their success. This was not just senior team members looking after newer team members, instances arose when a less seasoned team member noticed an issue and brought it forward to a senior project team

member. Table 4.29 displays the question, secondary theme, and assigned codes in the 1:1 interviews for caring. Comments from the 1:1 interviews follow.

Table 4.29 *Practices of Relational Leading - Caring – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Caring	- Experienced team members were caring and took ownership in challenging and coaching less seasoned members - Team members cared and looked out for each other - Team members felt valued

Caring - 1:1 interviews. Two of sixteen team members noted caring between team members appeared during the course of the project. Team members encouraged each other and took the time to provide guidance and learning moments to other members of the team.

> TM9: [To PM] I think you specifically, and the other co-PM's would always be very positive and understanding. If there were any setbacks, they usually weren't from our team, but we weren't there to point fingers. We were always looking to the corporate team to give us the marching orders. You would frequently remind me, in ways that helped me feel good about the process, where you said after the fact [following project completion] that this [project experience] would be great for my resume, and that the corporate team would end up taking the guidelines I put together, and my procedures, and the things that I contributed to become the corporate standard. We would use that terminology between us, and that all kind of sunk in.
>
> TM12: The co-project managers were very helpful to me with my tasks, especially TM1. He was a mentor per se to me during my time at the high-technology company. He helped me out a lot with any of the questions that I had with the specific project task that I would be working on. He was very understanding and he wouldn't get frustrated with me if I had a question that may have had a simple solution that I was just not seeing. But he was understanding, and helpful, and guided me through the process.

Two of eight focus group team members noted the secondary theme of caring. Emphasis on the end state of the project for the collective, and coaching less seasoned team members were mentioned. Table 4.30 displays the question, secondary theme, and assigned codes in the focus group interviews for caring. Comments from the focus group follow.

Table 4.30 *Practices of Relational Leading - Caring – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Caring	- Experienced team members were caring and took ownership in challenging and

		coaching less seasoned members - Team members cared and demonstrated willingness to help each other

Caring - focus group interviews. Two of eight team members noted caring in their narrative. One took a direct approach when working with one particular team member and expressed the importance of the work and why it needed to be done.

> TM5: I was involved with some other project actions that had some relatively newer people. They didn't appear to have the same kind of like commitment or drive or experience that we had, so part of my time was almost like babysitting. For those fly-by meetings, I would say something like, "you need to do this." "You need to understand how important this project is and then stay on top of it."

Caring - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator intimated that the structure of the project environment contributed to positive outcomes. The norms of trust and respect played a role in how behaviors evolved within the team.

> TPF: There was an emphasis of treating people with trust and respect. Positive feedback loops occurred and team members were able to build a sense of confidence.

Caring - project documentation. Project documentation reflecting caring in the group was developed as coaching tools via PowerPoint presentations, or through more formal training sessions led by instructors, or via recorded sessions. Impromptu sessions took place frequently, during a review of documentation, a curious question, or reinforcement of a process. Caring was demonstrated at all levels of the project team. Time to assist others was respectfully and willingly provided, and received in assisting a team member to develop new skills, or to hone existing skills.

> Corp17: [To PM] You can view the same demo from the links provided in the email invitation. The refresher walk-through will cover the same information as the original class.
>
> TM9: Hi PM, yes, I can delve into this during the next day or two and get us more information to review.

Caring - researcher observation. Team members provided coaching to other members of the team, regardless of experience or role status.

> RO: Displays of caring by the project team members occurred on multiple levels. There were impromptu situations where the timing was right for a member of the team to engage with another in the coaching process to learn a new skill, or view a challenge from a different perspective. There were other scenarios where the learning was a bit more in-depth and as a result, required a more formalized approach. This was usually conducted via recorded sessions or formal classroom training. During this more formal coaching/training, project members scheduled larger conference rooms in order to host additional team members. Team members took care to ensure their colleague learning needs were met.

Connectivity - commonalities secondary theme. Connectivity was the ability for project team members to engage both formally and informally as needed. It also referred to the project team members engaging in the project, and through that engagement, connecting with the project as an entity, and with other project team members. One team member suggested that connectivity occurred when individuals engaged in a genuine manner, not as a "robot." The weekly coffee meeting occurred on a set day and at a set time. However, team members often connected via impromptu sessions held outside of the coffee meeting. Three of sixteen team members acknowledged the secondary theme of connectivity during the 1:1 interview sessions. There was no acknowledgement of the theme connectivity during the focus group sessions. Table 4.31 displays the question, secondary theme, and assigned codes in the 1:1 interviews for connectivity. Comments from the 1:1 interviews follow.

Table 4.31 *Practices of Relational Leading - Connectivity – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices	- Connectivity	- Demonstrated willingness to help each other - Development of relationships important - One must consider relationships to be of key importance

Connectivity - 1:1 interviews. Three of the team members noted in their 1:1 interviews the theme of connectivity. It was felt that team members connected through common understandings with regards to task deliverables, and team member willingness to assist each other. The weekly coffee meeting also served as a point of connection providing an environment where dialogue could freely take place. Below is the commentary from the 1:1 interviews.

> TM3: I found that he was very open to my suggestions about ways to present information to the team that would help make sure that everybody had a common understanding of what was going on.
>
> TM7: Whenever we deliver anything there is a small bit of having that feeling, okay, we delivered, it's fully delivered. And people will be using it. And it will have a big impact on my organization. Maybe you will not feel that impact right away because it's a big, huge company, and the changes will be impacting a lot of people. But definitely it's a feeling that you delivered something. And the other best thing, personally I would say, the experience of working with other team members.
>
> TM8: I would say the constant time spent together, every week we had some precious time that we normally wouldn't have had, had these meetings [coffee meetings] not been facilitated in the way they were. I believe time, and getting to know each other that way was helpful. We joked and made some of the meetings light, and that was fun. So people got to see other people's fun personalities versus always work, I think that's important. I think sometimes getting away from the, I'm a robot, I have to do this, and I expect you to do this, and getting back to looking at someone as a human, and having the time to joke around is critical. By doing that people gain respect for you, people realize you're human, they're human, and that everyone makes mistakes.

Connectivity - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator implied that the project team was very active as a group, and behaved in a cohesive manner. He notes that people felt that other players on the team strengthened their own confidence and they could look for others in terms of a real team focus, and act as a great team.

> TPF: People made it clear, they felt that the structure of the project provided a "space" for them to operate. There was more going on, more interaction – treating people as people.

Connectivity - project documentation. Connectivity occurred throughout the project timeframe. Team members connected to exchange project status, share technical skill information, or to have a personal conversation. The manner in which they connected, and the civility in their approach, was positive and assisted in building relationships.

> TM9: Hello TM13, thank you for the follow-up. Our primary issue, the one we'd certainly like attention placed on, is defect #xxxxx.
>
> TM19: Hello PM, can I stop by your office really quick? We have completed the software conversion remediation and are gearing up for the cutover.

Connectivity - researcher observation. Formal opportunities were provided for team members to connect with each other. Informal opportunities to connect were initiated by the team members.

> RO: The project design allotted one formal team meeting per week, which was known as the "coffee meeting." Senior management did not attend this meeting as it was designed to promote team member dialogue. The coffee meetings became a place where norms developed. Tardiness to the meeting by team members was rare. During a meeting if one team member happened to accidently interrupt another, more often than not, one heard apologies and comments like "sorry, please continue." A civility and respect for others blossomed. Unlike project status meetings I attended early in my career that were more focused on status checklists than discussion, the coffee meeting emphasized and encouraged dialogue and critical thinking in a safe haven.

Summary – commonalities. This section reviewed the relational leading practices primary theme of commonalities, which was discovered as a result of the 1:1 interviews, focus group, an interview with the independent third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and research facilitator observations. Secondary themes of caring and connectivity were also represented in the data and reviewed. Commonalities were seen in a foundational manner to expand relationships. Team members would find a work, family, or social item of interest that they shared with another to enter into dialogue with. Commonalities in this project existed at both the individual team member level and at the project team level. Individual team members shared common tasks, skills, and visions in order to complete respective areas of responsibility. Within these activities, the secondary themes of caring and connectivity were exposed. Caring existed across the team and was not only specific to seasoned team members coaching less seasoned team members. Frequently, less seasoned team members asked questions that revealed a perspective not previously considered by senior team members. Team members were connected by the overall project vision; however, many found deeper relational connections with other team members as valued colleagues on a personal level.

Question 3: What Relational Leading Practices Enhance Communication?

In response to the third research question, "What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication," Two primary themes for relational leading practices that enhance organizational communication were discovered: accountability and open dialogue. These primary themes emerged through the 1:1 interviews, focus group, independent third-party focus group facilitator interview, reflections from the researcher and focus group facilitator, and project documentation data segments.

Accountability and open dialogue are the primary themes that emerged from this study with regards to the question, "What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?" In this project, accountability reflected ownership, a willingness to assume responsibility for assigned activities, and for one's actions. Team members displayed accountability through status reporting at the coffee meetings and in their dealings with team members and external contacts. Drath (2001) distinguishes between the terms responsibility and accountability. Drath suggests that the term accountability by nature contains more of a connection to leadership-type activities. When addressing social accountability, Gergen (2015) cites Shotter (1984), where Shotter refers to social accountability as "ways in which correctives function" (p. 76). In essence, "correctives ask us to give an account of ourselves, to explain our actions. And if we are successful, we sustain the definition of ourselves as good people" (p. 76). Team members did engage in the practice of personal correctives with their task assignments, and in their dealings with peers and other organizational contacts.

Open dialogue was encouraged within and outside of the project team. An environment was provided where team members were able to have candid and meaningful dialogue in a safe space. Reitz (2015 & 2017) suggests one needs to go beyond traditional perspectives and styles of leadership and look to ways conversations might be enhanced through the dialogical process. Through this type of process, positive and unexpected events may occur. Open dialogue reflected a level of information transparency across the project team, and, with external sources they interfaced with. Cross-functional communication

was viewed as both important and valued. There was also a positive consistency to team dialogue as a formality of communication checkpoints, such as project documentation and coffee meetings that provided a baseline structure for open dialogue to flourish.

Related secondary themes for accountability and open dialogue are also represented and follow the same data segment format as primary candidate themes. From highest count to lowest they include *accountability:* ownership, and personal responsibility, *open dialogue:* collaboration, integrity, civility, acknowledgement, trust, and respect.

The following interview questions were asked: Regarding your participation in the coffee meetings, can you describe some parts of the meetings that seemed to help? How did you experience the co-PM roles? Can you provide an example? How did PMO work in a complementary way with you? How would you describe your experiences on this project? Are you aware of any pre-conceived notions you had upon learning about this assignment? How do you think they contributed to your experiences? What feelings did you experience upon completion of the project? How do you imagine that will impact your participation in future projects? What types of project team activities do you think happened between the start of the project and the end of the project that provided you with the experience you noted?

This data segment begins with a research theme summary by segment, listed in alphabetical order (Table 4.32). A composite view of primary themes, secondary themes, and coding summaries follows in Table 4.33. An introduction of the findings followed by a table displaying the question, candidate theme(s), assigned code(s), and secondary themes discovered. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party focus group facilitator responses, supporting project documentation, and researcher observations are also included. A summary of the primary and secondary themes for accountability and open dialogue appears at the end of this section.

Table 4.32 *Question 3 Research Theme Summary by Segment*

1:1 Interviews	**Focus Group**	**Third-Party Facilitator**	**Project Documentation**	**Researcher Observations**
Accountability	Accountability	Acknowledgement	Integrity	Accountability
Collaboration	Collaboration	Commitment	Open Dialogue	Collaboration
Open dialogue	Integrity	Integrity	Trust	Commitment
Civility	Open dialogue	Trust		Respect
Respect	Civility			
Trust	Respect			
	Trust			

Table 4.33 displays a composite view of the primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and coding summaries discovered from the research to answer Question 3. Data are listed in relation to the primary theme, highest count to lowest count.

Table 4.33 *Question 3 Composite Theme Summary*

Primary Candidate Themes	**Secondary Themes**	**Coding Summaries**
Open Dialogue	Collaboration	- Open dialogue was the norm across the project team - Willingness to debate, decide, and move forward - Curiosity was welcomed - Flexibility to solve issues
	Integrity	- Honesty was appreciated and

		expected - Concentrated on greater good
	Civility	- Conflict was not ignored
	Acknowledgement	- Team members felt valued
	Trust	- No fear of reprisal
	Respect	- Development of relationships was important
Accountability	Ownership	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Transparency of information - Ownership and accountability at team member level
	Personal responsibility	- Committed to peers - Personal integrity and allegiance to company - Team member activity concentrated on greater good, not personal agendas

Open dialogue - primary candidate theme. Open dialogue is a primary candidate theme discovered from the data in response to the research question "What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?" Fifteen of the sixteen project team members identified with open dialogue during the 1:1 interviews. During the 1:1 interviews, team members noted an obligation to maintain honesty in communications. Five of eight focus group team members suggested the primary theme of open dialogue in their commentaries. Open dialogue amongst team members allowed them to feel valued. They suggested open dialogue was natural, the norm for team members, and believed that open dialogue across the project contributed to its success. When speaking of dialogue, Hosking and McNamee (2006) state, "Dialoging can be viewed as a collective discipline of learning how to have his special kind of conversation; some call this learning how to learn – and some say this is what organizational learning is all about" (p. 279). Anderson (2006) states, "Dialogue is an interactive process of interpretations of interpretations. One interpretation invites another. Interpreting is the process of understanding. In the process of trying to understand, new meanings are produced" (p. 40). Table 4.34 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the 1:1 interviews.

Table 4.34 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Open Dialogue – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Open dialogue	- Collaboration - Integrity - Civility - Acknowledgement - Trust - Respect	- Open dialogue was natural, the norm - Dialogue across the project team contributed to success - Team members felt valued - Weekly coffee meeting was centering point for team - Focused on the end state for the collective

			- Development of relationships was important - Flexibility to solve issues - Conflict was not ignored

Open dialogue - 1:1 interviews. In their 1:1 interview comments, fifteen of sixteen team members expressed that open dialogue was the norm. Team members felt valued, attributing open dialogue as a factor in the project's success. The weekly coffee meetings were noted to be the centering point for the team where relationships were fostered. The coffee meetings were not always easy, disruption occurred and required attention. However, the project structure allowed flexibility for challenging issues to be resolved as noted in the team member comments below.

> TM1: Just the fact that we had good people all around and we had such an open and trustworthy culture. That's just something I think I'll take with me almost every day in the working world, and that was all learned back at that project.
>
> TM2: TM1 and I would kick off the meeting, state what the purpose was of the meeting each week, and review everyone's updates. The most important part was the conversations happening with each milestone and the [discussions with the] project owner.
>
> TM2: There were definitely some points where there was a bit of hostility and anger. We could use the word anger. I think that sometimes there would be some anger between TM19; and then, between, TM4 and TM8, with TM19. What I think it came down to was miscommunication.
>
> TM12: Since everyone was onboard with the decisions being made, and everyone felt as though they had a say in the decisions, they felt more involved in the project. I think that was important, that everyone felt involved.
>
> TM16: I felt like the coffee meetings were a great way to just make sure that everybody was still on the same page, nothing new had popped up. It's great to have conversation with everybody because your initial conversation might not bring about some of the issues or potential gaps. So, I feel like the weekly meeting in this instance really helped make sure that we were all on the same page and nothing was overlooked.

Five of eight focus group team members related to open dialogue during the focus group session. They felt the weekly coffee meetings provided a respectful environment where team members could voice opinions, provide suggestions, and if needed, disagree with others. The team members had a level of comfort and trust with each other that allowed transparency and curiosity to assist on task focus, rather than having a focus on personalities jockeying for positions of power. Table 4.35 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4.35 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Open Dialogue – Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Open dialogue	- Collaboration - Integrity - Civility - Acknowledgement – - Trust - Respect	- Open dialogue was natural, the norm - Curiosity was welcomed - No fear of reprisal - Did not have to "position" comments,

			honesty amongst the team members was appreciated and expected - Targeted sub-meetings were held outside of standard meeting structure to factually deep dive into issues - Willingness to debate, decide, and move forward - Dialogue across the project team contributed to success - Direct open questions at coffee meeting were used to uncover hidden or perceived hidden issues

Open dialogue - focus group interviews. Focus group members noted a level of comfort when meeting that allowed them to be curious in learning about what others were working on, and to be candid when discussing project issues. A transparency and openness was shared amongst the team and this openness continued when communications were held with individuals outside of the immediate project team. Team members voiced pleasure in working with their team members, others shared that difficult discussions did occur.

> TM3: You felt comfortable asking questions about another group if you were just curious about what their efforts and tasks were, and just wanting to understand more about what part of the process they did, as a part of the whole process.
>
> TM5: I think when we had our individual meetings with the middle and senior managers, I think even just at the team level to allow for that discussion, the back and forth, people had that honesty. I think that helped set the tone for the overall project. I think it would have been completely different if it were a standard micromanaged approach that you usually get with some of these bigger projects.
>
> TM7: This was a big project with communication and collaboration between various team members, so I do agree what my team members are saying and I have had the great pleasure of working with all of the team members.
>
> TM8: In some cases the facilitator would then ask pointed questions [at the coffee meeting] or, if at an impromptu meeting, to understand why we were lacking in a particular area. There were some additional questions that would be brought to the team, in front of the team, to help narrow down where the situation was [status], and help bring out that dialog. This was because that dialog wasn't always forthcoming with certain individuals. I think that once it was out in the open and the questions were asked, there was no way of really escaping it or diverting direction to someone else. It was out in the open and everyone heard it. Minutes were taken to understand where we were and where we were going. So, if there were an action item that would come out of

that [coffee meeting] for follow-up, it would be addressed at another meeting. There was constant documentation of the project.

Open dialogue - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator commented on the ability individuals voiced with regards to being empowered to make decisions, and observing fellow team members make decisions. This ability seemed to build confidence within and amongst individuals on the project team. Team members developed a level of ownership for their work.

TPF: Well, I think in traditional projects, the questions of "why" do not always get raised. They're really focused on the "what and how." I think the specific practices on this project went much further than typical projects because they really asked people to give feedback throughout every phase of the project, and to express how they felt the project was going. This was all done in a safe environment.

Open dialogue - project documentation. The project documentation excerpts below confirm a certain level of vulnerability and openness team members were willing to expose themselves to. Publicly apologizing to a member of the team, acknowledging a mistake that one made, and reaching out to engage the group in a project decision is not always the norm in project teams. There appears to be a level of trust and respect amongst the team in that they relied on each other to do the right thing.

Corp6: [To PM] Sorry, I was trying to obtain information from Corp7 before replying back. I didn't want to leave you hanging. Do you need this change to system "X" as well?

TM19: [To all software conversion team members] Hi, please ignore [recently sent] organizational dimension code remediation document. I mistakenly added a wrong one. Attached is the corrected remediation version.

TM21: [To all software conversion team members.] Team, I would strongly suggest that TM20 and I do not choose the option in a silo. We need to make a collective decision.

Open dialogue - researcher observation. Team members were respectful and non-judgmental with each other. They focused on a vision of the future and worked together to achieve it.

RO: In this environment, project team members could be themselves. The competition that existed amongst the team was with regards to deliverables, it was not who was a favorite to work with, who had the greatest presence, or even, who was the most intelligent. The team found a natural way to accept others for their abilities and the skills each team member brought to the project. Because there was no stereotyping or superficial judging of persons and personal traits, the team was able to focus on deliverables. The success in meeting milestones appeared to breed an additional desire to continue moving forward with engagement and efficacy.

Open dialogue - secondary themes. Secondary themes supporting open dialogue were found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations. The secondary open dialogue themes discovered during the research process are represented from highest count to lowest and were, collaboration, integrity, civility, acknowledgement, trust, and respect. The data segments follow beginning with the secondary theme of collaboration.

Collaboration - open dialogue secondary theme. The secondary theme of collaboration appeared in eleven of sixteen 1:1 interviews. The theme of collaboration was noted by two of the eight team members during the focus group session. The structure of the project team environment, with special mention of the coffee meetings, appeared to contribute strongly and provided an environment of equality for collaboration to occur. Challenges were freely raised with no fear of reprisal. It allowed the team to focus on priorities and to maintain a vision of the end state deliverables. Team members echoed a reliance on each other for support and skills transfer to build confidence and personal growth via a collaborative process. Table 4.36 provides the secondary theme of collaboration and the assigned codes. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party facilitator commentary, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.36 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Collaboration – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Collaboration	- Project team environment was "flat" not hierarchical - Coffee meetings fostered equal treatment of team members - Focused on the end state for the collective - Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments - Project team environment promoted confidence and personal growth

Collaboration - 1:1 interviews. Team members used differing approaches to attain positive outcomes. Some found socialization with other team members to be informational support for positive outcomes to occur. Others found a sense of joy when fellow team members met their objectives and freely shared the results. Still others found that focusing on their specific role, and taking the initiative to produce or exceed the expected results assisted positive outcomes. Team members did acknowledge the team was not without challenges.

> TM4: To be honest, there's always at least one challenging person in a group. So, the fact that we still got through it and, at the end we got done what we needed to get done, is ... that's kind of the beauty of the whole thing. The whole team came together and basically over powered if you will, the resistance from that one individual.
>
> TM5: The other part I liked about it too, from a group standpoint, was there were different levels of experience. To have junior people or other people focused on a different area, [the team] had more of a coaching and back and forth feel that allowed for really creative solutions. Sometimes you would think outside of the standard process. Someone says, oh I have experience with that on this project. This is what we did. Maybe this helps you out. And then you can try to incorporate that into it. So, I think that's what really helped foster that conversation.
>
> TM12: During those meetings when we had to make decisions, I would say that the co-workers and everyone involved in the project would make the decisions as a collective, and make sure everyone was on the same page, and make sure everyone understood what the decision that was being made was before they went ahead and made the [final] decision. So what I mean is that not one specific person was making all the decisions, but instead, the team would collaborate on the decisions that had to be made.
>
> TM14: Again, I don't know what it was that fostered that ... the dynamic of the team, but it seemed that there was a comfort level socially and professionally among the team members. Whatever brought that about, I think, was really the driving factor for why it was successful. Like you [PM] said, you had two kids pretty much fresh out of college that grew over the course of this project. They developed this level of professional confidence that I really truly believe

was fostered by that dynamic. So I don't know what it was ... (laughs) but if- if I could tap into it, I would love to.

Collaboration was suggested in two of the eight focus group team member responses. Team members voiced they cared for others on the project team. There was a focus on the project vision and end state allowing team members to refine their focus and work together. This togetherness permitted team members to develop a reliance on the skills and commitments of other team members. Table 4.37 displays the secondary theme of collaboration and the assigned codes. The focus group responses follow.

Table 4.37 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Collaboration – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Collaboration	- Project team was united and committed to project end state - Team members cared and looked out for each other - Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments

Collaboration - focus group interviews. Two focus group participants suggested the need to have a unified project team that worked collaboratively. It was also suggested that team members held a certain level of empathy towards each other in their quest to deliver a successful final product. This may have been partially due to the realization that everyone on the project team brought value and skills that were needed.

TM1: Well, one thing that TM5 said in terms of different parts of the greater organization being super siloed and not really paying too much attention to what's going on with the overall project. I feel like we kind of had the opposite type of environment, [for example] in the coffee meetings. It was a collaborative environment that people were actually asking questions and giving suggestions on other people's work stream, which doesn't always happen. It showed that they cared. We were able to work together as a unit to come up with solutions on this project.

TM3: [regarding perception of contributions] I think valuable but also necessary. I think everybody that participated had to participate for it to be successful.

Collaboration - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator noted that this project was managed differently than those he witnessed in the past. In this project, the structure was not one designed to foster a command and control environment to search for statuses, rather, this environment encouraged project team members to use creativity in solving problems. The coffee meeting structure provided a formal way to collaborate.

TPF: [Referring to other projects] In terms of the analytical questions of "why," people really aren't given an opportunity to analyze these types of situations. They're mostly focused on resolving, executing. The nice thing in this project was there was also a lot of problem solving and project meetings were formed to discuss some of the issues.

Collaboration - project documentation. Project team members continued to drive towards the end result of goal and subsequent project completion. They did so through the engagement of others who were SME's within their specific groups and organizations. Project team members respected areas of responsibility that fell outside of the realm of their own authority. They developed relationships with

those SME's, and through collaboration were able to work together to resolve challenges. Examples of dialogue reflecting collaboration and respect for others are below.

> TM8: Hello TM19, TM4 is currently awaiting a response from the technology team regarding the two items indicated below. TM4 will advise once he receives that information.
>
> TM9: [To PM] FYI, I declined the meeting this afternoon since we just have one open issue, don't need to take up everyone's time.
>
> TM15: Hello Corp4, I met with representatives from Finance and we need to wait until TM27 is back from vacation next Monday to assess the impact on their end.

Collaboration - researcher observation. As team members became more comfortable with the project expectations and learned more of colleague abilities, collaboration appeared to flourish.

> RO: This project was a learning experience for all who participated. Some members were initially concerned when beginning the project and questioned what they might bring to it. I think others may have felt a slight level of superiority when the project began due to their experience, education, or perception of self. Once the vision of the project end state was revealed, along with the timelines and associated roles and responsibilities, the focus seemed to change. The initial perceptions of self were superseded by a focus on deliverables and what was needed to complete them. This realization resulted in increased team member transparency and collaboration.

Integrity - open dialogue secondary theme. The secondary theme of Integrity was suggested by five of sixteen team members during the 1:1 interviews. Four of eight focus group team members noted integrity during their session. Both the 1:1 and the focus group team members viewed integrity as something concentrated on the greater good, not personal agendas. They felt this was assisted by the clarity of project objectives, team member role definitions, and how the overall project was structured. Team members also suggested team members willfully took ownership and were accountable for their respective areas of responsibility. There appeared to be "wholeness in all areas of character," amongst team members that allowed for them to engage utilizing their areas of expertise (Cloud, 2006, p. 33). Table 4.38 provides the secondary theme of integrity and the assigned codes. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party facilitator commentary, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.38 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Integrity – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Integrity	- Project team environment allowed for honesty in communications - Team member activity concentrated on greater good, not personal agendas - Clarity of objectives and respective roles - Ownership and accountability at team member level

Integrity - 1:1 interviews. The commentary below highlights a level of peer equality where individuals worked in tandem to complete tasks. The reporting structure was flat, not hierarchical. This seemed to contribute to the level of equality amongst team members. A sense of partnership, versus

competitor existed across the team. Regardless of one's experience, team members seemed to find ways to work together and provide collaborative learning experiences.

> TM3: I felt it was very collaborative. I mean nobody really sat up and said, "Well, this is the way to do it and everybody has to do it this way." I think it was more that everybody accepted, and again because of a work stream concept. That's your work stream. You own it. You know what it takes to get that done. You just report on what you know, how you do or not.
>
> TM6: The people that I had to work with [from the project team] made themselves readily available and worked well with me, to collaborate on whatever we needed to get done. So, it was great.
>
> TM12: I would say the preconceived thoughts that I had were "I don't want be the intern that's always asking questions and has no idea what they're doing." But by the end of the project, I felt as though everyone was very welcoming, and they encouraged asking questions because the only way that I would be able to learn was if - if I asked questions to get a deeper understanding of the project at hand.
>
> TM15: So I do believe in teams. I do believe in human beings to make things happen. It is critical for any project, any task, and any job, for those relationships to exist. There's nothing better than a good partnership and that network of people to work with. So, definitely this was perfect, a great team to work with, not only my team, but also those who were involved. In this case, some other team members that were first working toward the same goals, understanding that the decision making process was to benefit the greater good and every stake holder requirement.

Four of eight focus group members expressed levels of integrity and allegiance to the company as important. There was also a focus by the team to work toward the greater good and not for personal benefit. It was suggested that the coffee meeting structure held people accountable for their assigned tasks and that it brought ownership to the team member level. Table 4.39 displays the secondary theme of integrity and the assigned codes. Focus group team member comments follow.

Table 4.39 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Integrity – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Integrity	- Personal integrity and allegiance to company - Team member activity concentrated on greater good, not personal agendas - Weekly peer review encouraged accountability - Ownership and accountability at team member level

Integrity - focus group interviews. In the narratives below, the team members emphasize accountability and working towards the greater good. There is a personal effort to support the team and to hold allegiance to the company. Commentary from the focus group session is noted below.

> TM2: Also just the nature of the slides that we used. If you didn't complete a certain thing by it's go-live, it would show up as red. So if you had all red down on your spreadsheet just like TM5

said, it just made you not look great, so, that was part of the accountability too. Just wanting to come off like you're on track and, you know, you're organized and whatnot.

TM3: There are the folks that say, "I want the easy or the quick and easy thing," and not necessarily what's best for the company.

TM4: Yes, I think TM3 and TM8 mentioned it earlier - if there's a problem that hadn't been quickly resolved within the meeting [coffee meeting], you should take it offline. I mean, let's not drag down the whole meeting for something that two groups need to take care of offline

TM5: I would say not just focus, but accountability. Because that you had to go there [the coffee meeting] and you couldn't be like, well, I didn't do anything this week and everyone else did. So that would make you look bad.

Integrity - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator suggested group and individual integrity in the comments made. He noted that the program management team struck a nice balance between structure and informal behaviors. Through this balanced approach, project team members were able to engage, develop respect and trust for each other, and for the structure of the project. These factors assisted in the success of team members and the project deliverables.

TPF: The project manager portion [of this project] was able to bring about three distinct behaviors amongst the team. These were engagement, respect, and trust…the mutual respect was brought about by practices that had predictability, repeatability, and demonstrated respect for all of the parties involved. The leadership of this project made certain nobody's time was going to be wasted and their [team member] participation was going to be optimized.

Integrity - project documentation. Comments found in the project documentation display a sense of respect and openness.

TM4: Hi Corp4. It sure has been a long time since we last spoke; I hope all is well with you. I really need your help…

TM19: My apologies TM3. I missed your email. Thank you so much for sending this again. We will initiate the pull for the tables you requested.

TM20: PM, sorry, I sent you the wrong version. Please use this one. Thank you.

Integrity - researcher observation. Team members were keen to keep commitments that were made. They progressed through the process with a level of civility and openness.

RO: Integrity was displayed within the project team through the honesty and transparency demonstrated in the relationships and communications between team members. There was a general aura of respect and civility across the team. That said; team members were also tenacious in keeping commitments with regards to promises made to each other and in completing their deliverables as committed. This sometimes led to increased intensity of communications, both email and personal visits.

Civility - open dialogue secondary theme. Four of sixteen team members interviewed referred to civility in their commentary. Team members mentioned dissident team members who caused disruptions, some senior management not engaging as much as they would prefer, and that the project was more grueling than they anticipated. Three of eight focus group team members noted civility in their session. One team member felt the need to plan discussion updates with senior management carefully. This was due to an earlier misunderstanding between the team member and his senior leader. The senior leader had not taken the time to read specific details on a program initiative and misinterpreted the information to others. Team members felt some senior leaders tended to over complicate issues, perhaps for political reasons, but more likely due to not wanting to invest the time to learn the details. There was a consensus that disruption did periodically occur within the group. This is demonstrated in the narrative below from the 1:1 interviews. Table 4.40 displays the secondary theme of civility and the assigned codes.

Table 4.40 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Civility – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Civility	- Not all senior managers invested the time to develop understanding - Some dissident members - Disruption occurred - Portions of the project were grueling

Civility - 1:1 interviews. Four of sixteen team members noted disruption occurred periodically within the team and needed to be addressed. The program management team made a decision when constructing the environment for the project to maintain a consistent level of civility at the coffee meetings. If there was disruption or disagreement involving one or two work streams, the recommendation was to call for a separate meeting. This was done to respect the time of the work stream leads not involved in the disruption, and to reduce the opportunity for negativity to permeate the coffee meeting. Having a separate meeting allowed the conflicting parties to begin new dialogue and to construct an agreed-to resolution. The newly constructed solution would be brought forth at a subsequent coffee meeting. Team members also voiced concerns with regards to senior management not engaging at the level(s) team members felt necessary so that challenges might be clearly understood. Commentary from the 1:1 interviews appears below.

> TM4: This was the challenging part. Most of them [team members] were fine. It was just one person that was a challenge though, throughout the whole project. Other than that it was fine.
> TM7: To get the feedback from the ground level so that you know that actually people who will be working on that project can give their honest opinion, like, how much time it's going to take to deliver those things.
> TM9: I think it's mostly just the span of the project, where things would take months to complete and be kind of repetitive. But that's part of what the testing [process] would be, and it was all based on different milestones. Every so often there might be a little fire drill, or a hiccup, or something that crashes and needs to be worked around. But it was mostly pretty much the train running on time.
> TM15: On the negative side we saw some, what I call the bad apples. People that didn't believe in the project itself, and in the way [approach] the team handled it. They were reluctant, or trying to move away from change. That actually took some leadership to manage as they were trying to bring everyone to be against the project. That [situation] was handled by the team [PM's] perfectly. That was taken outside of those [coffee] meetings.

Three of eight focus group team members voiced civility were visible during the course of the project. While dissident team members caused some hurdles to occur, the focus group felt senior management behaviors also contributed to the issues experienced. Table 4.41 displays the secondary theme of civility and the assigned codes. The focus group commentary follows.

Table 4.41 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Civility – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Civility	- Senior leadership appeared to place own interests ahead of organization - [Team members] Felt the need to mask working details from senior management - Concerned senior management would take situations out of context - Some senior management tended to over complicate things, creating drama - Not all senior managers invested the time to develop understanding - Senior manager lack of consistent engagement tended to delay things when they did engage - Command and control from some senior management was restrictive - Conflict was not ignored

Civility - focus group interviews. Team members strongly voiced concerns over senior manager behaviors in relation to the project and the manner in which information was presented to them. There appeared to be a lack of concern for details and the desire to only learn of surface related statuses by some senior managers. This was disconcerting to those team members as the team members did not know what narrative some senior managers would communicate, and to whom. Team members were pleased with the project management support and the overall project environment. Commentary from the focus group is below.

> TM4: The other thing is with some of the different towers [senior managers], it just seemed like they were more interested in just getting the solution that was best for their particular tower, and did not have any regard for the overall organizational impact.
>
> TM5: One is just trust and communication from the project management team, that we all knew what we were talking about, and had the best kind of interest for. The problem I had with upper management wasn't that. It was more of like command and control, doing it their way and only

> their way, instead of allowing for that flexibility of thought to come up with solutions that might not be readily available or, took more time to get to, instead of just that immediate answer which I think they were looking for… I had to be careful in how I approached and presented it [challenges and statuses], because different managers interpret it differently, based on scale or approach.
>
> TM6: You know, the organization [of the project] was top notch and I think that made the project go a lot smoother than it could have. As people have mentioned, there were a couple times where conversations got a little bit heated, but, you know, they were handled appropriately, so, it was just ... It was a great project. It was well done I agree with everything that everybody's saying.

Civility - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator learned from the focus group that some senior management [also referred to as executive management in his commentary] seemed to be less interested in process or the team members than results. This caused negative feelings amongst some of the team members because they interpreted their efforts as not valued by senior management.

> TPF: The team mentioned that the larger organizational context presented various challenges. For example, the same norms and practices found within the project team were not necessarily found in different parts of the organization. Also, some of the executive management seemed to be focused on results not process. So there was a feeling of the team that they [the team] weren't really viewed as people.

Civility - project documentation. Despite the perception of team members with regards to some senior managers, team members were able to remain focused on their committed deliverables. The project PM's worked as insulators to buffer the team from senior management when possible. A communication example is provided below. TM16 was not invited to a meeting with senior managers and was looking to be updated in order to learn possible impacts and actions.

> PM: Hello TM16, we presented the revised plan to several senior managers on Friday. I will phone you and provide an update as to what occurred, and what the anticipated next steps will be. Best regards, PM

Civility - researcher observation. Every effort was made to provide senior management with information they needed to be comfortable with the progress of the project.

> RO: This project was purposefully designed to have the PM's as the central communication points of contact between senior management and the project team. Messaging and meeting invitations to senior managers were consistently distributed and scheduled in accordance with the frequency agreed to at the onset of the project. Certain senior managers held a command and control perspective with regards to project management. For their purposes, obtaining statuses and understanding progress against plan was what they felt they needed. Ad hoc communications with project team members during the course of the project often brought about these types of questions, which were not well received by some of the project team members. It is interesting to note the senior managers all believed the project team was doing good work meeting deliverables. The approach taken by many of the senior managers in working with team members would not be described as relational.

Acknowledgement - open dialogue secondary theme. Four of the sixteen team members suggested the theme of acknowledgement to be present within the project. Two of eight focus group team members noted the theme of acknowledgement arose during the focus group session. Team members felt the recognition of contributions to be important, as was the sense of being valued. The coffee meeting structure provided visibility to project successes and the positive momentum appeared to aide in the building of relationships amongst the team. Table 4.42 displays the secondary theme of acknowledgement and the assigned codes. Commentary from the 1:1 interviews, the focus group, third-party facilitator comments, supporting project documentation, and researcher observation follows.

Table 4.42 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Acknowledgement – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Acknowledgement	- Recognition of contributions was important - Team members felt valued - Weekly coffee meeting was centering point for team - Success of project strengthened relationships

Acknowledgement - 1:1 interviews. Four of sixteen project team members suggested the theme of acknowledgement as being a form of appreciation. Acknowledgement by the co-PM's occurred when team members provided updates to their deliverable statuses at the coffee meeting, or when conversing with another team member. This type of positive sharing behavior is in line with Gergen and Hersted (2013) when they discuss practices of successful organizations and note "effective participation in practices of sharing, supporting, appreciating, and so on should take place at all levels of the organization" (p. 30). Commentary from the 1:1 team member interviews follows:

> TM1: I guess one thing that we tried to do with this project was that when people did put out good work, it was our job [as co-PM's] to reward them at the weekly coffee meetings. We would thank people and talk about what a great job they did on this or that. I feel like people need to be recognized when they do good things to help out a project or a program.
>
> TM4: I think I was appreciated. Or, you know, that I had a little teeny piece of it [project contribution]. A lot of other people had huge chunks of stuff. But, I think that I was appreciated for my piece.
>
> TM9: I think just where we would go through the different milestones during the meetings, and turn statuses green [on schedule] and you [PM] and the people running the meeting [co-PM's] would be very positive about closing issues. I think we all saw the progress and understood what the next steps were, because it was outlined.
>
> TM11: I think when a team comes to an end of a project knowing that it was a success, there's no other way to feel but to be proud of the time that was spent. Knowing that this time was all worth it, and that everybody at the end of it was still a team and we all respected each other at the end of it.

Acknowledgement - focus group interviews. Two of eight focus group team members noted the coffee meeting structure and the dialogue that took place as assisting them to clearly understand team member contributions. Recognition of team member contributions was also viewed positively as was how the iterative project successes strengthened team relationships. It was also noted that the closing project meeting provided an opportunity for reflection and further acknowledgement. The focus group commentary, third-party facilitator comments, supporting project documentation, and researcher observations follow. Table 4.43 displays the secondary theme of acknowledgement and the assigned codes.

Table 4.43 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Acknowledgement – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Acknowledgement	- Visibility to overall team member contributions assisted greater communication and transparency - Recognition of contributions was important - Success of project strengthened relationships - Personal reflection at project end was important for team member closure

Acknowledgement - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator found the focus group comments to be positive with regards to the coffee meeting structure in that it allowed for members of the team to be recognized. This was because each week the team leads would present their statuses and discuss challenges and upcoming milestones. Team leads represented their specific organizational groups and took pride in showcasing team successes.

> TPF: As I've talked to people they've mentioned that on a weekly basis, at this coffee meeting, the co-project managers were generous. When someone turned a task status from, say, amber to green, making the status more positive and designating work being completed, that they felt it was an accomplishment and they wanted to show the team that. But also, the people on the team, especially the project co-managers were complimentary and they [team members] seemed to seek that, which I thought was interesting.

Acknowledgement - project documentation. The project was complex and required coordination and teamwork, not competition amongst team members. Creating an environment of civility and fun assisted in building relationships and trust. Civility began with acknowledging team member efforts as well as deliverables. Project documentation email excerpts follow.

> PM: Hello TM8, thank you for advising – nice teamwork. Thanks to all! Regards, PM.
>
> PM: [to core and extended project team members] Hello Everyone, we appreciate your time and creative idea sharing today! It was a very productive meeting, and we thank you.
>
> TM2: Thank you TM19 ☺ ☺ Thank you, TM2.
>
> TM13: [to PM] Glad to hear it went well. I have set up a weekly meeting with TM9 and TM11. Sounded like they were making good progress.
>
> TM28: [to PM] As a birthday present to you…I will attend and take notes ☺

Acknowledgement - researcher observation. Team members freely acknowledged the accomplishments of others.

> RO: Team members acknowledged the good work of others, whom they believed deserving, in a sincere and fun way. While acknowledgements were often delivered at the coffee meeting based on achieving a milestone, or completing a difficult challenge, team members also acknowledged superior effort. Acknowledgements were sometimes in the form of email, often, they were passing comments, a nod of the head, or a gesture such as a "thumbs-up" signifying a positive

step. Because acknowledgements were not freely given out, there was meaning assigned not only to receiving an acknowledgement, but also as the messenger providing the acknowledgement. As the PM and researcher, it was interesting to witness the positive way team members celebrated the success of other team members.

Trust - open dialogue secondary theme. Trust was found to be a secondary theme of open dialogue where continued reliance on each other, and a demonstrated willingness to assist other team members reflected the trust between team members. Schein (2013) suggests the building of trust is "an interactive process in which each party invests and gets something in return" (p. 9). Gergen and Hersted (2013) note, in organizations that are managed by fear, trust is difficult to uncover. Rather, "The leader must establish a climate of safety, where creativity is prized and fear of negative judgment is minimized" (p. 179). Brandeau, Hill, Lineback, and Truelove (2014) view trust in a similar manner. Brandeau et al. state, "Trust is critical because it encourages members to endure the risks as they explore new ideas and approaches, and to live with and learn from inevitable missteps" (p. 110).

Five of sixteen team members suggested trust as a theme during the 1:1 interviews. Although the members of the focus group did not note the theme of trust, the third-party focus group facilitator felt the theme of trust was very evident in the focus group narrative. Table 4.44 displays the secondary theme of trust and the assigned codes. The 1:1 team member commentaries, third-party facilitator comments, supporting project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.44 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Trust – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Trust	- Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments - Demonstrated willingness to help each other - Trust is an activity to be encouraged and fostered

Trust - 1:1 interviews. Five of sixteen team members emphasized the importance of developing a level of trust between peers. Having sense of trust appeared to provide additional freedom for team members as they worked towards deliverables. Clarity of role and task definition seems to have aided team members in developing trust. Three team members placed strong emphasis on the trust they expect to receive from management. Having management trust in their team members seemed to foster problem solving creativity and skill growth amongst team members. Having this management trust also appeared to release possible fears of reprisal, and improve communications across the team and with management.

TM1: [Referring to TM2] We also trusted each other and we knew that we were both going to be accountable to get the updates, and the work that we needed from our work streams.

TM3: Well, even though we were a team, everybody had ownership of their work stream. It was very clear who owned which work stream. So, the accountability was there. With that accountability, the decision for that work stream was with that person. So, you wouldn't question what did people needed to do in their work stream, because you trusted that they knew what they needed to do to meet their goals for the team as a whole.

TM4: It's the old let the workers work. Just trust them, and trust that they'll come to you with problems or delays, or whatever. Give them space. You don't have to have your thumb on them at all times to make sure that they're working...Oh, no, no. This [project] was the opposite of that.

TM5: I think it comes down to trust. You need to trust the people that are leading the team and leading these work streams – and trust they know what they're doing. Give them the freedom to explore creative solutions without fearing failure or reprisal. … I think a lot of it is just you have to have the communication. Trust goes both ways. So, if they trust you to do the job, you have to be open and communicative with everyone above you and as straightforward and clear as possible. It's all about developing those lines of communication with management, with members of the team, and then having those [meeting] check-ins, bi-weekly, monthly, whatever the timeline allows for, to say this is where we're at, these are the pitfalls. This is where we've succeeded.

TM8: The most important thing to me is that management trusts me, and that they give me the support I need to get the job done. I will always think of the company first, and make sure that everything is done, without sacrificing relationships with people. I think that's the most critical thing that a lot of people seem to forget. They'll try to just get it done, act upon things, but not always take other people's position or feelings into consideration. From there, sometimes you sacrifice relationships, and relationships are extremely key [important] in an organization. Relationships are really how you get things done. I would say trust and support are the two major things, and also, the correct time management. Make sure that, that certain team members aren't overloaded.

Trust - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator mentions trust several times during the 1:1 interview. He suggests a combination of the project environment structure, empowering team members, and project management practices, all contributed to team member trust.

TPF: There was evidence within the comments that there was a great deal of trust and respect within the group…In terms of the culture and the structure, those were very important. I think that also played with the sense that people felt they were competent…This project, yourself [PM], setup an environment and set some practices, and consistency, which allowed people to perform their responsibilities and feel safe in a repeatable, predictable fashion, to communicate statuses and issues to co-project managers…I think [the team was] trusting enough that they were able to, you know, kind of be informal with each other.

Trust - project documentation. The project team members trusted that team member peers would carry out their responsibilities and complete the tasks at hand. Communication was open and team members felt comfortable requesting statuses and updates. Team members were also trusting as to the content and messaging when informational notifications were to be sent to a large global audience. Additionally, team members did not encroach on other team member's areas of responsibility. This behavior was appreciated and viewed as a part of the trust equation.

TM9: Hi TM11, Any updates on the weekly assigned test cases? Please let me know if you need anything further to start updating the statuses.

TM19: Hello TM4, can you please send a notification to the global technology team super users regarding the software conversion project maintenance window, so we can move forward with remediation? Thank you.

TM22: [To TM29] I checked with TM19 last week. TM19 said it would be addressed this week. Please follow up with TM19 directly.

Trust - researcher observation. The norm of trust developed through day-to-day activities and open communications. The PM's actively worked to cultivate a transparent environment.

RO: Trust within the project team was demonstrated on a daily basis as team members worked on their deliverables and communicated with each other. In reflecting on my observations and reviewing the team member commentaries, it was clear that within the project environment, there was a transparency of communications that took place via the coffee meetings. Also, clearly defined team member roles with accountability for actions were also positive contributors to trust

levels. The co-PM's, and myself as the PM, strongly enforced the transparency, and I might say we somewhat over-communicated to the team in our day-to-day activities so as to reduce any doubt as to our intentions. This was done in order to demonstrate and maintain honest team member relationships.

Respect - open dialogue secondary theme. Respect was found to be a secondary theme of open dialogue and was found in the 1:1interviews and the focus group narratives. Three of sixteen team members suggested the secondary theme of respect during the 1:1 interviews. Two of eight focus group team members noted respect in their commentaries. Team members felt the project structure fostered clarity of roles, which assisted in the emergence of respect. This may have been due to the skills expertise displayed from having defined roles and deliverables. It may also have been due to the strengthening of relationships where appreciation for other team members developed. Coffee meeting dialogue, status discussions of successful deliverables, and continuing to look towards a future vision likely fostered appreciation and respect to develop. Table 4.45 displays the secondary theme of respect and the assigned codes. Commentary from the 1:1 interviews follows.

Table 4.45 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Respect - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Respect	- Clarity of objectives and respective roles - Some dissident members - Coffee meetings fostered equal treatment of team members - Maintain respect and focus on forward momentum

Respect - 1:1 interviews. Three of sixteen team members voice a level of clarity with regards to their roles and responsibilities. This clarity and focus seemed to allow them the opportunity to develop an appreciation for the work and successes of their peers. Commentary from the 1:1 interviews, the focus group, third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

TM6: Absolutely. Yes. I think everybody respected everybody's subject matter expertise, and trusted them to do what they had to do within their portion of the project. Yes, I think it was very good overall. They were understanding and supportive.

TM8: There was really one person in one team (when invited) that created a lot of conflict. However, that was kind of their personality, most of the time, especially with our team. But, I would say for the most part, everyone was respectful, everyone was accepting, everyone was participating, and it went well.

TM11: Well, regardless of whether it's a project or just anything else in life, I think the big aspect of team is you could be working with anybody, and you may not like the person that's sitting next to you. But at the end of the day, you have a goal that needs to be accomplished, and you need to value others, other people's opinions as much as you value your own.

Respect - focus group interviews. Two focus group team members commented on the secondary theme of respect and suggested they wished to treat other team member's as they themselves would like to be treated. If a mistake were to be made, one should evaluate the severity of the issue so it can be

fixed, then put a plan in place to move on. Members of the team felt the project managers also treated team members fairly and with respect. Table 4.46 displays the secondary theme of respect and the assigned codes. The focus group comments follow.

Table 4.46 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication – Respect - Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Respect	- Maintain respect and focus on forward momentum - PM treated team members equally and fairly

TM4: Well, the other thing, adding to what TM3 said, is not throwing people off of the bus; not being like that it is always a good day. Working with them and not against them… And some people make mistakes and in fact everybody makes mistakes. It's no reason to point it out, or belabor it in front of everybody. Let's just [ask] how do you fix it and let's move on.

TM7: Yes, I think the PM maintained a healthy relationship with most of the project team members. He helped on this project and I really appreciate that he helped maintain that healthy relationship among all the team members, which built trust and, you know, we already love to work for him.

Respect - third-party facilitator. In the narrative below, the third-party facilitator notes there was a strong sense of respect amongst the team members. Months following project closure, the team remained close and took the meeting opportunity to reflect and have fun in a good-humored way.

TPF: There was evidence within the comments that there was a great deal of trust and respect within the group. One person stated that this was a project where "one's expertise was valued and people were able to demonstrate their expertise." Activities weren't dictated, there was a lot of interest in what the particular people on the project viewed as important, and people were able to kind of "strut their stuff," demonstrate their expertise.

TPF: I think that this was a project that exhibited trust and respect. Even in this focus group call [months following project closure], the way that was revealed, I think, was the ease of discussion and humor among the participants. People were able to build off comments of each other, and people listened to each other.

Respect - project documentation. Respect was demonstrated across the core and extended corporate team interfaces in messaging as well as meeting sessions. Team members were realistic and respectful of others' time and skills. Messaging reflected a level of positive civility as demonstrated by TM9's push to fix a defect.

PM: Hello Corp2, we hope your travel back from India was uneventful and you were able to catch up on some sleep! Corp2, TM2 and I would like to meet with you when you are back in the office. Please let us know a time that will work for you. Thank you. Best regards, PM.

TM8: Hello TM19, I look forward to testing these changes on Monday after this weekend's run. Please let me know if there are any issues.

TM9: Hello TM13, Thank you for the follow-up. Our primary issue we'd certainly like attention on is defect #0000.

Respect - researcher observation. Team members attempted to remain objective and to relate to the facts when challenges occurred. This was not always easy, disruption did occur periodically.

RO: Team members were consistent in their approach to others. They were always respectful and continually strived to be accommodating to assist their team members or to respond to a senior

manager or corporate representative. There was frustration from time to time with certain team member's, however; emotional maturity amongst the team was great enough to continue focusing on the task(s) at hand, and the vision of completed deliverables.

Summary – Open Dialogue. This section reviewed the relational leading practice primary theme of open dialogue, and the secondary themes discovered in the 1:1 interviews, focus group, independent third-party focus group facilitator interview, project documentation, and research facilitator observations. Open dialogue was the primary theme supported by the secondary themes of collaboration, integrity, civility, acknowledgement, trust, and respect.

Analysis of the research findings, based on the themes uncovered, suggests that the primary theme of open dialogue and its secondary themes play a strong role as relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication. Based on commentaries from the 1:1 interviews, the focus group, third-party facilitator comments, project documentation, and researcher observations, relational leading did emerge and was visible in the themes analyzed. The next section reviews the second primary theme, accountability.

Accountability – primary candidate theme. Accountability is a primary candidate theme discovered from the data in response to the research question "What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?" Within the project team, accountability reflected task ownership, a willingness to assume responsibility for assigned activities, and for one's actions. Team members displayed accountability through status reporting at the coffee meetings and in the manner they interfaced with team members and external contacts. Ten team members during the 1:1 interviews implied accountability in their commentary. Three team members participating in the focus group noted accountability in their dialogue. Team members freely voiced that accountability was present and they took pride in discussing areas of responsibility where they had positive impact on the project. Table 4.47 provides the primary candidate theme of accountability, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the 1:1 interviews.

Table 4.47 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Accountability – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Accountability	- Ownership - Personal responsibility	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Transparency of information - Ownership and accountability at team member level - Committed to peers - Personal integrity and allegiance to company - Team member activity concentrated on greater good, not personal agendas

Accountability - 1:1 interviews. In the 1:1 commentary, ten of sixteen team members expressed that team member accountability was the norm. Team members trusted that peers would complete tasks as committed, and provide assistance when promises were made to do so. Status' were presented by each

work stream lead at the coffee meetings, the expectation was always towards ownership of tasks and related issues, and the acceptance of personal responsibility to do so. Team member comments related to accountability are below:

> TM1: We also trusted each other and we knew that we were both [other co-PM] going to be accountable to get the updates, and the work status' needed from our [assigned] work streams.
> TM3: And it was very clear who owned which work stream. So, the accountability was there. And with that accountability, the decision for that work stream was with that person.
> TM10: [To PM] Your team was always great about being flexible, but at the same time, accountable for the information. Delivering on what we asked you and your team to deliver on.
> TM16: I felt because very early on we established who was driving what part [of the project] and it was a weekly accountability [at the coffee meeting]. From my standpoint, I was participating in the meetings just to make sure that we were still moving forward and making progress.

Three of eight focus group team members noted the primary theme of accountability during their session. Team members felt accountable for assigned tasks, and to present accurate and informational status' at the coffee meeting. Table 4.48 provides the primary candidate theme of accountability, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the focus group interviews.

Table 4.48 *Relational Practices Enhancing Communication - Accountability – Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Accountability	- Ownership - Personal responsibility	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Transparency of information - Ownership and accountability at team member level - Committed to peers - Personal integrity and allegiance to company - Team member activity concentrated on greater good, not personal agendas

Accountability – focus group interviews. In the focus group interviews team members referenced the coffee meeting as the forum where they, and their peers, were held accountable for milestone and task completions. The process was the same for all work stream leads in that the day prior to the coffee meeting, updated status' were provided by the work stream leads to the co-PM's to compile into the coffee meeting slide presentation. These weekly status presentations were considered the plans of record denoting project health.

> TM2: Just the nature of the slides that we used [suggested accountability], because if you didn't complete a certain task by it's go-live [commitment date], it would show up as red [denoting behind schedule]. So, if you had all red down on your spreadsheet, just as TM5 said, it made you not look great. That was part of the accountability too.
> TM3: There are some folks that say, "I want the easy, or the quick and easy thing, and not necessarily what's best for the company."

TM5: [In reference to the coffee meeting] I would say not just focus, but accountability because you had to go there and you couldn't be like, Well, I didn't do anything this week and everyone else did, so that kind of makes you look bad.

Accountability – third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator noted that even with a high-level of independence, team members remained accountable and adopted best practices as the norm.

TPF: The project was designed to be efficient and to allow people to use their expertise. Team members felt they had autonomy and were accountable to accomplish the tasks at hand. There were practices implemented within the project design that served as the glue to keep things together.

Accountability – project documentation. Project documentation consisted of a template that was completed each week for the coffee meeting. The-co-PM's assisted the work stream leads in distilling their information to maintain consistency in the status reporting. Having co-PM's physically visit local work stream leads, or communicate electronically with remote work stream leads, allowed for rich discussion in preparation for the coffee meeting(s), and in the creation of senior leadership updates and presentations. Gathering and documenting data for the weekly coffee meeting was the nucleus for maintaining high levels of communication across the project team, the corporate team, and senior management.

TM2: Each week we had Thursday catch-up meetings, what we called the coffee meetings. So everybody could get together and just hash everything out, and discuss what their updates were.

TM8: Communication was clear due to the weekly coffee meetings. We were able to know where we were in the project along the way, which steps were met, who was behind, if any, and why. We were able to discuss those factors openly. Also if anyone was behind based on any actions I had to do, I knew about them during the meetings, and had action items from there that I would take and work on after the meeting to be prepared for the next meeting, so we could keep the project on track.

Accountability – researcher observation. The team members took pride in having information prepared to present at the coffee meetings. Displaying status' allowed for additional discussion, and acknowledgement of the contributions being made.

RO: Data gathered for the coffee meeting was subsequently utilized at other project meetings and for communication purposes to senior management levels. Team members knew the information they were accountable for, and what was presented at the coffee meeting would remain as part of the project records. They embraced the opportunity to represent their work, and the work of the team when sharing status data.

Accountability – secondary themes. Secondary themes supporting accountability were discovered in the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, and through researcher observations. The secondary accountability themes discovered are represented from highest to lowest count and were ownership and personal responsibility. The data segments follow beginning with the secondary theme of ownership and followed by personal responsibility.

Ownership – accountability secondary theme. The secondary theme of ownership appeared in five of the sixteen 1:1 interviews. The theme of ownership was suggested by two of the eight team members during the focus group session. Team members were empowered to take ownership of their tasks, and to become instrumental in the project's success through collective project ownership. Table 4.49 provides the secondary theme of ownership and the assigned codes. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party facilitator commentary, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.49 *Relational Leading Practices Enhancing Communication – Ownership – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Ownership	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Ownership and accountability at team member level

Ownership - 1:1 interviews. The secondary theme of ownership refers to one taking responsibility for assigned tasks, as well as for behaviors with other team members. The coffee meeting allowed team members to showcase project status', and to share information that was useful to the collective.

TM3: Everybody had ownership of their work stream. It was very clear who owned which work stream. So, the accountability was there. And with that accountability, the decision for that work stream was with that person.

TM5: I think it was a freer environment to allow for the creativity to come out of people and have a frank, open discussion, and really hold yourself accountable and others accountable as the team pressed forward.

TM12: I found that that was important that if I had any questions I would go directly to you, go directly to TM1, or another coworker, and they would be very understanding and help me out with what I needed help on, and that way when I got to the meeting I would be able to explain the problem I was having and explain how I was able to go about solving that problem.

TM14: Everyone understood their responsibilities, and they were very focused…on a positive outcome as a whole.

TM16: I thought people took ownership of their area. I think these coffee meetings that were organized, again, really kept people honest, and there was a sense of ownership across the board to be accountable for the- the post-go-live process.

Ownership was suggested in two of the eight focus group team member narratives. Team members expressed levels of autonomy in taking ownership, whether they worked with members of the core project team or, were left to explore solutions on their own. Table 4.50 displays the secondary theme of ownership and the assigned codes. The focus group responses follow.

Table 4.50 *Relational Leading Practices Enhancing Communication – Ownership – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Ownership	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Ownership and accountability at team member level

Ownership – focus group interviews. Two focus group participants voiced levels of autonomy in how they managed their assigned tasks, and expressed the personal commitment and pride in how they viewed themselves within the greater project.

TM4: …it wasn't hard getting a meeting together. People knew that we had to get it done. So that was good and there was a lot of, someone mentioned it earlier, there was a lot of "fly by" [impromptu] conversations.

TM5: I think it almost appeared that as we were working on the actual [corporate team] project, because we were doing the leg work, and the research, to come up with solutions. We worked together and understood how each thing [task/milestone] impacted [the project]…

Ownership – third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator recognized that ownership that took place within the project team. He noted that team members embraced their responsibilities, and through that process, developed identities with the overall project, and with their team members.

TPF: The people [team members] saw it as their project. It developed an identity. It was distinctive. It was unique and it exemplified the skills and expertise of all the participants. This project allowed them to organically leave an imprint.

Ownership – project documentation. Project team members were comfortable with the level of documentation required, and their weekly engagement with co-PM's in preparation for the coffee meeting. Status reporting appeared to be something of a badge of honor, not a chore, for the work stream leads. Weekly status documentation contained their names, as well as the work stream they represented. This higher level of visibility was embraced and proudly displayed.

TM3: What was nice is that the project management handled that [referring to creating executive presentations and reports] through their you know, your regular weekly coffee meetings. You pull from that to create whatever you needed for senior leadership, and you didn't have to keep coming back to us, "Oh, and can you give me this, or no, can you give me that."

TM9: I think just where we would go through the different milestones during the meetings, and, and turn things [status'] green, and you would see the people running the meeting be very positive about closing issues. I think we all saw the progress [via the documentation and presentations], and understood what the next steps were, because it was outlined.

Ownership – researcher observations. Project team members quickly assumed a cadence with regards to completing project documentation, and supplying information in a timely manner.

RO: Team member ownership extended beyond the completion and timeliness of project documentation. During the course of a day, or specific project task, team members did not hesitate to take action to assemble other team members to discuss an area of the project. They did not wait for the next coffee meeting to occur. The level of personal ownership extended to the collective and greater project team.

Personal responsibility – accountability secondary theme. The secondary theme of personal responsibility appeared in four of the sixteen 1:1 interviews. The theme of personal responsibility was suggested by four of the eight team members during the focus group session. Team members displayed a level of personal responsibility that allowed them to remain committed to their assigned tasks. Team members also demonstrated their level of personal responsibility in their civil behavior toward other team members, and to individuals outside of the project team. Table 4.51 provides the secondary theme of personal responsibility and the assigned codes. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party facilitator commentary, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.51 *Relational Leading Practices Enhancing Comm. – Personal Resp. – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Personal responsibility	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Ownership and accountability at team member level

Personal responsibility - 1:1 interviews. The secondary theme of personal responsibility appeared in four of the 1:1 interviews, and also appeared four times in the focus group narratives. The project work stream structure was defined by specific functions. The SME's assigned to each work stream were selected for their skills and knowledge. That said, the character of each person was tested in how they approached daily activities, and how well they coordinated and planned project work with other team members. Due to the vastness of the project, and aggressive timelines, opportunities existed for team members to step back at times and allow another the burden of their work. In this project, such behavior was not witnessed, in fact, the opposite was true. Team members reached out to colleagues to see how they might assist, and they took personal responsibility for assigned tasks, and in those tasks where assistance was provided. Examples of the 1:1 narratives are below.

> TM5: The weekly meetings were actually a really good check-in. It kept everybody on task, because as it evolved, people felt not only responsible for what they were working on, but also responsible to the team. You didn't want to come and say, well, I didn't do anything this week, knowing that other people were spending a good amount of time working on their process or their project. So, you didn't want to let yourself down or let anybody else down. So, there was that kind of comradery.
>
> TM7: But in this case, I feel that there was an energy. And all the teams which were involved were connected. Like you [each team member] were delivering a small chunk of that project, you feel like you were equally responsible and participating.
>
> TM9: It was clear who was responsible for who, and what the project actions were.

Personal responsibility was suggested in four of the eight focus group team member narratives. Team members shared that due to the environment, roles and responsibilities were clear. Table 4.52 displays the secondary theme of ownership and the assigned codes. The focus group responses follow.

Table 4.52 *Relational Leading Practices Enhancing Comm. – Personal Resp. – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Relational leading practices enhancing communication	- Personal responsibility	- Team members took personal ownership / responsibility - Ownership and accountability at team member level

Personal responsibility – focus group interviews. Four focus group participants voiced that the project environment and project design assisted them in understanding expectations. Project team members worked within these guidelines and took personal responsibility for their functional areas. In reflecting on the responses from team members, TM4, TM5, and TM8 below, one senses a certain personal determination, a raison d'etre. Examples of focus group narratives are below.

> TM4: We always knew that Thursday morning at 9:00 we show up for this meeting, and so we had to get our action items done.
>
> TM5: I think it's just the way that you have the road map built from a project standpoint, everyone sees where they contribute. Even if you don't get along personally, or have a different group dynamic than we had, everyone still sees what they're responsible for, and where they're actually making changes to the overall project.
>
> TM8: Trust your employees and know that they are doing the right things for you and the company.

Personal responsibility – third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator noted that personal responsibility was visible within the project team. He suggested that project team members developed a certain esprit de corps, and this spirit assisted them in accomplishing their functional tasks.

> TPF: The team felt different, more elite and empowered. Something happened to make the team feel special and it allowed them to express their areas of expertise. People felt they had autonomy and were accountable to accomplish the tasks at hand.

Personal responsibility – project documentation. Project team members were comfortable with the level of documentation required, and their weekly engagement with co-PM's in preparation for the coffee meeting. Status reporting appeared to be something of a badge of honor, not a chore, for the work stream leads. Weekly status documentation contained the names of the team members, as well as the work stream they represented. This higher level of visibility was embraced and proudly displayed.

> TM3: What was nice is that the project management handled that [referring to creating executive presentations and reports] through their you know, your regular weekly coffee meetings. You pull from that to create whatever you needed for senior leadership, and you didn't have to keep coming back to us, "Oh, and can you give me this, or no, can you give me that."
>
> TM9: I think just where we would go through the different milestones during the meetings, and, and turn things [status'] green, and you would see the people running the meeting be very positive about closing issues. I think we all saw the progress [via the documentation and presentations], and understood what the next steps were, because it was outlined.

Personal responsibility – researcher observations. Team members appeared to personalize their areas of responsibility and took great care to accurately represent project status'.

> RO: There was a level of personal responsibility and leading exhibited as team members interacted within and outside of the project team collective. There was a level of confidence in how team members went about their work. When challenges arose, this confidence did not waiver, it was leveraged through positive action and open dialogue with others to meet the challenge at hand.

Summary – accountability. In this section the primary theme of accountability, and the secondary themes of ownership, and personal responsibility were discussed. Accountability was viewed as team member, and collective team ownership of activities and challenges. It was a willingness by team members to take responsibility and ownership of assigned tasks.

The research findings related to the primary theme of accountability revealed project team members practiced accountability when engaging other team members in open dialogue. In doing so, relational leading practices emerged through the meaning making process, and allowed the team members to move forward. There was a certain level of pride that was evident when team members provided status' and information for the functional areas for which they were accountable.

The next section reviews the research data in response to research question four "How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?" Two primary themes, environment and playfulness were discovered in the research to support question four. Environment is described as a well-defined project structure where the formalities of project management such as project documentation, meeting structure, and progress tracking, create a clear structure for project team members to work within. It is where team members find psychological safety, a safe space, and where team members can do work in an insulated physical environment, a safe haven. Playfulness is described as light banter, team members having the ability to enjoy their work and the relationships with pers. It also refers to the ability to celebrate successes, whether milestones, or a final project celebration.

Question 4: How do Organizational Leaders Introduce Relational Practices?

In response to the fourth research question, "How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication," two primary themes were discovered through the 1:1 interviews, focus group, independent third-party focus group facilitator

interview, reflections from the researcher and focus group facilitator, and project documentation data segments. They are represented beginning with the highest theme count to lowest. The primary theme practices discovered were environment and playfulness.

Within the primary theme of environment, four secondary themes were discovered. They were, safe space, safe haven, culture, and project design. Within the primary theme of playfulness, two secondary themes were uncovered. Those being, celebrate, and enjoyment.

The primary theme of environment was demonstrated throughout the study as team members referenced the safe environment they worked within due to project design. The environment allowed team members to freely perform tasks and engage in open dialogue. The primary theme of playfulness came to light through the interviews and in project documentation. The theme of playfulness reflects the setting of the tone within the project team for a positive and appreciative environment to develop and mature. There was an innocent playfulness demonstrated by team members that allowed relationships to build in a positive manner. This was reflected in the commentaries as well as in third-party facilitator comments and researcher observations.

Related secondary themes are also represented and follow the same data segment format as primary candidate themes. They include *environment:* safe space, safe haven, culture, and project design, *playfulness:* celebrate, and enjoyment.

The following interview questions were asked: If you could influence a leadership team with no fears of repercussion/retaliation, what would you want them to understand? Are there specific activities that occurred during this project that worked well for you and that you would consider repeating in a future project? Why? Is there anything you would like to say about the project that has not been discussed?

This data segment begins with a research theme summary based on segment. Themes are listed alphabetically (Table 4.53). A composite theme summary displaying primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and coding summaries appears in Table 4.54. An introduction of the findings followed by a table displaying the question, candidate theme(s), assigned code(s), and secondary themes discovered. The 1:1 interview responses, focus group responses, third-party focus group facilitator responses, supporting project documentation, and researcher observations are also included. A summary of the primary themes of environment and enjoyment, and related secondary themes appear at the end of this section.

Table 4.53 *Question 4 Research Theme Summary by Segment*

1:1 Interviews	**Focus Group**	**Third-Party Facilitator**	**Project Documentation**	**Researcher Observations**
Celebrate	Celebrate	Celebrate		
Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture
Enjoyment	Enjoyment	Enjoyment	Enjoyment	Enjoyment
Environment	Environment	Environment	Environment	
Playfulness	Playfulness	Playfulness	Playfulness	Playfulness
Project design	Project design	Project design	Project design	Project design
Safe haven	Safe haven	Safe haven	Safe haven	Safe haven
Safe space	Safe space	Safe space	Safe space	Safe space

Table 4.54 displays a composite view of the primary candidate themes, secondary themes, and coding summaries discovered from the research to answer Question 4. Data are listed in relation to the primary theme, listed highest count to lowest count.

Table 4.54 *Question 4 Composite Theme Summary*

Primary Candidate Themes	**Secondary Themes**	**Coding Summaries**
Environment	Safe space	- Team member engagement was encouraged and respected
	Safe haven	- Conflict was purposely minimized - Program had strong structure
	Culture	- Encouraging team member engagement is impactful
	Project design	- Proper alignment of resources and skills
Playfulness	Celebrate	- End celebration was meaningful and validation of success
	Enjoyment	- Humor contributed to relationship building

Environment - primary candidate theme. Environment is one of two primary candidate themes discovered from the data in response to the research question "How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?" Environment is defined in this study as the project structure that allowed team members the freedom to perform tasks and openly engage in dialogue. The environment provided an area allowing relational leading to develop within the project team. Thirteen of the sixteen project team members identified with the primary theme of environment during the 1:1 interviews. Four of eight focus group project team members suggested the primary theme of environment during the focus group session. Team members in both groups voiced that the coffee meeting provided the correct amount of structure and acted as a centering point for team members and the project. The consistency in meeting frequency, and methodology to showcase skills and deliverables, as well as the respect provided to team members from the co-PM's was noted. Table 4.55 provides the primary candidate theme of environment, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the 1:1 interviews.

Table 4.55 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Environment – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	**Primary Candidate Theme(s)**	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Environment	- Safe space - Safe haven - Culture - Project design	- Well defined structure - Proper alignment of resources and skills - Consistent meeting structure important - Weekly coffee meeting was centering point for team - Remote team members were able to actively participate and contribute - Project team was

			united and committed to project end state - Program had strong structure - Encouraging team member engagement is impactful - Flexibility to solve issues

Environment - 1:1 interviews. In the 1:1 commentary, thirteen of sixteen team members believed the overall project structure from the perspective of work stream definition, SME alignment to project tasks, and the meeting formats and frequency were integral components of the environment. Team members voiced how inclusive the project was in that remote project team members along with their time zones were considerations for formal and informal meetings. Team members attributed the strong project environment in providing the necessary formal parameters allowing flexibility to solve problems. Team members felt the coffee meeting was a safe place to be open and honest with their feelings and to have difficult discussions.

> TM1: I felt like the culture of the project started from the top down. That was with you [PM] as the head project manager. I think in the first few meetings you helped set the tone for making things open…it seemed like that was the tone of the project from the start. I think people felt open at the coffee meetings and as collective project team. I just tried to be open and honest myself.
>
> TM3: What was nice is that the project management handled that [referring to creating executive presentations and reports] through the regular weekly coffee meetings. You [PM's] pulled data from that to create whatever you needed for senior leadership, and you didn't have to keep coming back to us, "Oh, and can you give me this or no, can you give me that."
>
> TM5: The weekly [coffee] meetings were actually a really good check-in. So, it kept everybody on task, because as it evolved, people felt not only responsible for what they were working on, but also responsible to the team. You didn't want to come [to the coffee meeting] and say, well, I didn't do anything this week, knowing that other people were spending a good amount of time working on their process or their project. So, you didn't want to let yourself down or let anybody else down. There was that kind of camaraderie.
>
> TM6: So, like I said, having the slides during these coffee meetings that listed everybody's tasks and everybody's subject matter, whether they're on track, or they're behind, and the status, I guess you could say that was great. The co-PM going around every week to get everybody's updates, that was great. It was organized very well and it was run very well…it just was impressive how on top of everything you [PM] and your co-PM's were.
>
> TM9: I think you [PM] and the co-PMs were always good about keeping everything pretty standard, in terms of this is, you know, the same day, time, and same slide structure and everything, and, just kind of go round robin [around the table to each team member] and have everything be pretty, formally informal I guess would be the (laughs) phrase.

Four of eight focus group team members related to the primary theme environment during the focus group session. The team voiced that the overall structure of the project, including the coffee meetings, thorough documentation, and flexibility provided an environment that allowed them to perform their tasks and dialogue with team members.

Table 4.56 provides the primary candidate theme of environment, secondary themes, and assigned codes. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4.56 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Environment – Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Environment	- Safe space - Safe haven - Culture - Project design	- Well defined structure - Weekly coffee meeting was centering point for team - Team member time was respected by PM and co-PM's - Conflict was purposely minimized at coffee group meetings - Flexibility and ubiquitous desire to succeed - Clarity of objectives and respective roles - Disagreements and conflicts were discussed in separate targeted meetings - Decisions and actions were documented and became part of the project structure

Environment - focus group interviews. Roles and responsibilities were made clear and the project management team worked transparently and respectfully in their roles by consistently documenting actions and successes. Several team members noted conflict occurring and were pleased the project structure accommodated separate meetings to not only bring about resolution, but to remove any opportunity for negativity from team members and the related work streams. Team members also mentioned the high level of flexibility they felt to do their work and drive success through task delivery.

> TM3: Yeah, that's what I would say too. The first thing you notice is it was organized. You had each group listed and who represented each section of work.
>
> TM4: It was good to have a regular schedule, quick meeting every week to keep people focused. Otherwise, we tend to get sidetracked on other things. So we always knew that Thursday morning at 9:00 we show up for this meeting, and we had to get our action items done… let's face it; there were some challenges, challenging people there. One of the things that was done, a lot of that [disruption] was taken out of the meetings. In the end there were a lot of individual meetings behind the scenes to try to kind of fix that [disruptive situation] or at least get it so that there

would be some sort of working relationship with all the parties. A lot of that behind the scenes stuff that the PM and some other folks did, soothed the nerves of everybody.

TM5: I think from the other part of the communications and transparency, I think it's just the way that you have the road map built from a project standpoint that everyone sees where they contribute. Even if you don't get along personally or have a different group dynamic than like we had, everyone still sees what they're responsible for and where they're actually making changes to the overall project.

TM8: In some cases the facilitator would then ask pointed questions [in formal or informal meetings] to understand why we were lacking in a particular area. There were additional questions that would be brought to the team, in front of the team, to help narrow down where the situation was and help bring out that dialogue - because that dialogue wasn't always forthcoming with certain individuals… I think that once it was out in the open and the questions were asked, there was no way of really escaping it or diverting direction to someone else. It was open and everyone heard it. Minutes were taken to understand where we were and also where we're going. There was a constant documentation of the project.

Environment - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator stated the project contained unique characteristics as compared to other projects team members previously worked on. He noted consistent practices and a regular meeting schedules aided in forming the structure. The third-party facilitator also distinguishes three levels of leadership that seemed to appear throughout the project.

TPF: I got the feeling from the group that they felt that this was a very positive project that exhibited distinctive characteristics that weren't always evident in other projects they'd been on. Specifically, the way the project was managed in terms of practices, project management practices, regular meetings and structure.

TPF: I think at the outset, at different levels, there was leadership. Leadership appeared as a positional role for those senior managers looking for status and results. There was the leadership that the overall program manager, you, demonstrated in creating an environment. And then I think at the local level people saw problems and they demonstrated leadership in responding to issues and problems, to solve them.

Environment - project documentation. The project documentation was in many ways part of the environmental structure. In the documentation notes below, the project master file update was sent from the co-PM's to the PM. This master file contained a complete listing of all tasks to be completed by work stream. The co-PM's reviewed this weekly in advance of the coffee meeting to maintain accurate task statuses. Communications to senior managers occurred on a weekly basis and were created based on the statuses provided to the co-PM's from the work stream leads. This provided a level of data consistency. Team members were not only focused on functionality of the software conversion, but the future result. This was done through visualization of new processes and impact analysis. While communication within the project team and senior managers was important, there was a continuous effort made to find appropriate external contacts and build relationships with them, so that what may be considered "unseen" activity might be made visible and captured.

TM1: Hello PM, please find attached the latest software conversion project master file.

TM2: Hello TM21 and 23, each week we will be sending you updates on the software conversion project status. These updates will come from the program managers.

TM16: Hi TM20, would you be able to review the "to be" process with me sometime this week? Thank you, TM16.

TM19: Hello TM2 and PM, here is the status update list to update the PowerPoint status slides.

TM28: Thank you, Corp18. To whom should I reach out to ensure the PM and myself are on all essential email lists in the future so we do not miss anything? Thank you, TM28.

Environment - researcher observation. The project structure within the environment remained consistent from the beginning. This included meeting cadence, processes, documentation, and accepted norms. Team members understood the structure and fostered a positive environment.

RO: The volume of documentation to support this project was significant. There was a defined purpose and frequency of distribution for each of the project team documents. These remained consistent throughout the project. Diligence was applied to maintain accurate information and to keep the project team members informed via timely and transparent messaging. This consistency and messaging openness assisted in the development of trust between the project team members, the program managers, and others in the organization.

Environment - secondary themes. Secondary themes supporting environment were found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations. The secondary themes discovered during the research process were safe space, safe haven, culture, and project design. The data segments follow beginning with the secondary theme of safe space.

Safe space - environment secondary theme. The secondary theme of safe space appeared in nine of sixteen 1:1 interviews and two of eight focus group comments. The theme of safe space refers to a conceptual place, a state of mind for team members where they felt comfortable being themselves and stating what was important to them. Schein (2013) refers to this type of place as a "cultural island" (p. 107). Schein suggests one should "devise some innovative ways to actually get the work team together and, through Humble Inquiry, build the necessary trusting relationships. Gittell (2016) states, "At the heart of these methods is establishing psychological safety – creating cultural islands, relational spaces, safe containers, or holding environments in which participants can develop new ways of connecting with one another" (p. 82). Team members voiced a need to feel supported and to be able to do their work. Because of the environment created, team members were confident their contributions were valued and that they could rely on other team members to meet commitments.

Table 4.57 provides the secondary theme of safe space and the assigned codes. Interview responses follow Table 4.57.

Table 4.57 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication – Safe Space – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Safe space	- Project team environment was "flat" not hierarchical environment - People need to know they are supported and have the "space" needed to perform - Team members felt confident their issues were listened to and appropriate action would be taken - Consistent meeting structure important - Team member reliance on each other's skills and commitments

Safe space - 1:1 interviews. The secondary theme of safe space refers to the knowledge, a state of mind, by team members that in meetings they were free to have open dialogue and voice opinions, concerns, and to have fun. Work stream and role focus appeared to be important in delineating task responsibilities. Nine of sixteen team member's felt unconstrained offering recommendations for enhancements, or to request an external meeting venue to discuss issues. From reading the research commentary, there is a sense of belonging and acceptance amongst team members regardless of their experience. This welcoming sense of having safe space had a positive impact on team members and allowed them to be themselves, and allowed for dialogue to flourish.

> TM3: Definitely convey the message to whomever is going to get involved that they are behind them [the project team] 100%, that they would make sure that we have the right project management resources available to assist the actual ... and I call it, the format of the project … [this project] everybody had their own work stream. To assist those work stream leads in making sure they can not only get the work done, but help report in the manner that, that's easy to report back to senior leadership team. This is our progress and this is how we're doing. So you get that back and forth communication without having to pull out of your daily task and say, "Ah, now I have to produce a special report because they need it for the senior leadership team."
>
> TM7: I would say definitely there was a full support from under the leadership [co-PM's, PM] team. Like I said, whatever we needed to have to deliver that project, we were provided on time.
>
> TM8: Some of the coffee meetings were where the issues started, and there was one other member that was on the team, and unfortunately, this individual was feeling a little bit overwhelmed with the conversation that was going on in one particular meeting, and asked that [the topic] be side-barred, for another time. We honestly weren't getting anywhere in the meeting. It was great that someone felt comfortable enough to stop and say, "Hey, we need to take this offline, let's go ahead and deal with that at another time. It seems specific only to you two teams." I think it was great to see the interaction between the teams, to allow that and feel comfortable, and be able to speak up when needed…so yes, I believe I felt very comfortable there, and well supported, and respected.
>
> TM11: I was excited to see how it [project team] would work. Working for a team like that, and meeting on a weekly basis, which I had not done prior. It was a very great experience to be able to meet with people that I hadn't worked with before. I think that all of those people did a great job in allowing me to voice my own opinions.
>
> TM12: Everyone was very supportive of one another, and especially since I was an intern, I had a lot of questions. I didn't feel uncomfortable going to someone with a question. I felt comfortable asking them.
>
> TM14: Everyone had his or her say. Everyone had his or her moment. I believe everyone was very receptive when things were brought to the table. Again, I think that really all goes back to that sense of security that I saw, that if I bring something up, it would be given its time. It may be determined that we don't need to worry about it [an issue], it may be determined that it's outside the scope, or it may be determined that someone else is going to deal with it. But if I bring something up, it will be respected, it will be given time and attention.

The secondary theme of safe space was exhibited in two of eight focus group member comments. Table 4.58 provides the question, secondary theme of safe space, and assigned codes. Focus group team comments, third-party facilitator comments, project documentation extracts, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.58 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication – Safe Space - Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational	- Safe space	- Encouraging team member engagement

leading practices to strengthen organizational communication		is impactful - People need to know they are supported and have the "space" needed to perform

Safe space - focus group interviews. Two of the focus group team members suggested that the consistency of how meetings were structured reduced uncertainty and assisted in creating the perception of a safe space. There was an adversity to being micromanaged and a desire to be treated like knowledgeable professionals and subject matter experts.

> TM3: I find it is always so critical to any meeting that you have an agenda. Making sure people that attend the meeting are aware [of discussion topics], and maybe, as TM2 was saying, you just sometimes call on people to make sure they're participating and that makes the meeting more effective.
>
> TM8: Sometimes there can be a level of micromanagement that you can be so far in and know every little thing and question every little thing, versus understanding that you have an SME [subject matter expert]… So I think that the statement that TM4 said is simple but perfect. Trust your employees and know that they are doing the right things for you and the company.

Safe space - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator commented on the safe space environment that was created by the project team and managed throughout the duration of the project. He noted promoting this type of environment to be atypical in comparison to what team members were used to.

> TPF: I think you [PM] know there was also a sense in their mode of operation, which you had helped create this environment, was a different mode of operating than typical projects within the organization. That safe space operated differently, but it required leadership by you to ensure that it could work.

Safe space - project documentation. Team member communication was open and factual. A focus on personalities and personal agendas was not a norm. Wilderom, Hur, Wiersma, van den Berg, and Lee (2015) note "Norms regulate the social habits, events, performance targets, and conflicts, among others, in a unit" (p. 829). The positive norms created by the team allowed for a natural, more accepting level of engagement across the team in support of the safe space that continued to evolve. It was "ok" to be vulnerable at a deeper level because there was no threat of reprisal, only positive support.

> TM2: Hey PM, I just spoke with TM15. I believe there is a misunderstanding. What TM15 is saying is that there may be other groups impacted that we have not considered.
>
> TM4: Hello TM19, Happy Friday. Two things, one good, one not so good…
>
> TM28: Thank you PM. Let me know if you need anything from me. I am underwater until next week, and then I can assist as needed.

Safe space - researcher observation. It was a delicate balance to meet project expectations, cater to senior management requests, and maintain a project team environment where team members could thrive. Understanding it to be a process was quite helpful as challenges arose.

> RO: As the PM and researcher, the concept of safe space was challenging in that we as a project team were still part of a greater organization that did not hold these same practices as norms. My charter as PM was to see this project through to successful and timely deliverables, regardless of methods deployed. I was the accountable individual senior management would look to, whether the outcome was successful or otherwise. From my studies on relation leading, I believed whole-heartedly that creating a safe space environment to promote dialogue was the correct thing to do. My initial concern was with regards to how the team members may view such a concept as the majority had only worked in command and control type environments. I think it would be fair to say, at the beginning of the project there were a few skeptics within the project team who were

hesitant to "open up" to the others. Over time, I believe team members found the safe space concept (though I did not label it or share the concept with them) liberating. Team members realized that they were welcome to be who they are, and were respected.

Safe haven - environment secondary theme. The secondary theme of safe haven was suggested by four of sixteen team members during the 1:1 interviews. Three of eight focus group team members implied safe haven during their session. Table 4.59 displays the question, secondary theme of safe haven, and the codes assigned from the interviews. Supporting narrative from the interviews follows.

Table 4.59 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Safe Haven – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Safe haven	- Reliable and repeatable meeting structure - Insulated from other management demands - PM and co-PM's provided environment allowing the experts "space" to work - Development of relationships important - Project team environment promoted confidence and personal growth

Safe haven - 1:1 interviews. The secondary theme of safe haven was suggested by four of sixteen team members during the 1:1 interview process. Having the ability to have open dialogue with peers was well received and over time became embraced by all team members. Open dialogue was a behavioral change for some due to past experiences in command and control type environments. These past environments were in the least, an environment where dialogue was not encouraged as much. The team developed a comfortable cadence in dialoging with each other. The weekly coffee meeting became more of an important group gathering place rather than a pure status meeting. Team members were rarely late when attending the coffee meeting; members saw the coffee meeting as "their meeting." Meetings were strategically held in conference rooms away from senior management to limit interruptions, and to foster dialogue. Gergen and Hersted (2013) when referring to physical environments, comment, "The atmosphere or aesthetics of the physical location of a meeting can make a real difference in the quality of the dialogue" (p. 79). Commentary from the 1:1 interviews follows.

> TM3: I think the toughest thing for most people is treating the coffee meetings as regular meetings, as not just I have to give my status, but the opportunity to just share thoughts, insights on how you think of the processes might be working… what was nice is that the project management team handled that [referring to creating executive presentations and reports] through the regular weekly coffee meetings. You [PM's] pulled from that [information] to create whatever you needed for senior leadership, and you didn't have to keep coming back to us. "Oh, and can you give me this or no, can you give me that."

TM11: I think that it's best to obviously see where that person is coming from, get their opinions first, and then move to a friendly approach around that. As much as it may be business, I don't operate really on a serious business level. I think if you can talk at a more human level and take that person for who they are, that's how tasks or any problems, I think, work out the best.

TM14: I think they [project team members] felt very secure. Their environment made them feel secure, and in my opinion, I think when you feel secure, you have backing, you have support, you feel that everyone is going to be there for you, it builds confidence. And I think that confidence allowed them to take things in stride.

Three of eight focus group members expressed the secondary theme of safe haven. Team members mentioned the importance of being insulated from management so deep work could be accomplished. The ability to solve problems and focus on end deliverables was also noted to be an important factor. Table 4.60 displays the question, secondary theme of safe haven, and the codes assigned from the focus group session. Supporting commentaries from the focus group follows.

Table 4.60 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Safe Haven – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Safe haven	- Reliable and repeatable meeting structure - Insulated from other management demands - Team members used to handling “what” and “how” task related questions, not reflective “why” questions - PM and co-PM’s provided environment allowing the experts “space” to work - Not penalized for non-standard thinking, able to “stretch’ - Project team had “protected space” to work in - Project team PM and co-PM’s provided layer of insulation from senior management

Safe haven - focus group interviews. Three of eight focus group team members acknowledged the theme of safe haven in their dialogue. The weekly coffee meeting was physically held in conference rooms on the opposite side of the building from the senior manager offices. The project managers always tried to book a conference room having windows on two of the exterior walls. This made for a pleasant

setting as the morning sun lit up the room on most days. Those team members unable to physically join the meeting connected via telephone or Skype connections in order to participate. The physical haven away from senior management, consistent meeting scheduling and approach, and the belief that the project managers would provide a buffer between the team and senior management, were well received.

> TM3: Well, I was going to say, adding to what TM4 was saying, is that they [coffee meetings] were regular, but also, the information we presented was consistent for all the teams so that we had a common format we used to present our updates. That helped us all stay on track and it helped us keep our focus as well.
>
> TM3: When you have certain levels of management there you might be more cautious about what you say or, or how you're saying something versus I know like working with you [PM], with everybody that was on the team, I had worked with many of you in previous projects so it was a really comfortable environment. I wasn't afraid to say what I needed to say and I didn't have to worry too much about, you know, how do I market this to make it more powerful or what I need to say would, would be more accepted by the group? I could just say it.
>
> TM4: I think the PM was a good insulator, which I think is important. He kept management at bay. He kept them away to allow us to do our jobs and that's very, very important…it was very open, you were very comfortable. You could take chances.
>
> TM5: I think a lot of it too is just because we were all relatively the same level and experience. To talk about those coffee meetings, we didn't have real management there all the time, so I think that changed the tone on the conversation. I think we were freer in discussing challenges and other issues that some [project team members] might not be comfortable discussing with levels of management there.

Safe haven - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator observed a physical buffer between the project team and senior management that was put into the project structure by the PM. The team recognized this and they leveraged the opportunity to build relationships.

> TPF: The PM created a framework for relational leading to take place, a safe haven in a heartless world. He did not constrain people. Focus team members made it clear there was an obvious buffer created by the PM with senior management. This provided additional freedom for the project team to work. There was a balance of structure by the PM's, and good feelings amongst the team to help them do good work.
>
> TPF: I think people made it very clear that their team worked within a specific physical space that was buffered. And, the buffering was done by you [PM]. The buffer was between them [the project team members] and senior management, whom they felt was kind of just focused on results, and in some way a distraction from the real issues, really understanding. There wasn't a good understanding by senior management except through your [PM] leadership by keeping them at arm's length so that the complexities of the project could be dealt with.

Safe haven - project documentation. The communication for this project was created within the structure of the PM's being the soul source of overall project statuses and communications. Weekly updates were held at the formal coffee meeting where team members attended. Results from the meeting were published in the weekly minutes and rolled-up into a summary for senior managers. It was important to have both physical, and operational buffers within the project environment. Having a central communication source was not about control, but more about consistent and accurate messaging to the team, senior management, and the corporate representatives.

> TM16: Hi PM, I am not able to attend this week's meeting but I wanted to touch base on the organization's milestone we have been discussing. Do you feel this is on track?
>
> TM20: Hi PM and Team, please see the attached software conversion guidelines for tomorrow's meeting. Also included are the relevant attachments.

Safe haven - researcher observation. Team members escalated challenges to the PM's as needed. This was done knowing the escalation would be perceived as a sign of personal strength, not a weakness.

> RO: Early on in the project, one of the senior managers happened to meet one of the project co-managers in a hallway. The senior manager was complimentary as to the work the project team

> was doing, but asked to be invited to the weekly coffee meeting. Taken aback by this request, the co-PM came to see me and ask what we should do. I suggested the three of us meet to discuss the intended purpose of the coffee meeting and we proceeded to schedule a meeting. A few days prior to the scheduled meeting I too happened to meet the same senior manager in the hallway and the invitation question was once again raised. I stated we had a meeting scheduled and also let him know the coffee meeting was off-limits to anyone but project team members, and I explained why i.e., open dialogue might not take place with senior level individuals attending. I did offer to schedule a monthly meeting to answer any questions should the weekly meeting minutes not be adequate. It was also mentioned that individuals from the senior managers team attended the coffee meeting and may also be an information resource. The senior manager was not pleased that an invitation was not forthcoming, however, they understood the reasoning and importance behind the coffee meeting structure. Several days later the senior manager and I met with the co-PM in the timeslot that was scheduled. The meeting was professional and the senior manager was quite complimentary towards the project team. Following the meeting, the co-PM noted to me that the meeting went much better than he thought it would.

Culture - environment secondary theme. Five of sixteen team members interviewed implied the secondary theme of culture in their comments. Two of eight focus group team members noted the secondary theme of culture in their session. Culture takes into account the organizational norms that permeated the project team, allowing team members to productively work. McNamee (2015) refers to the creation of an environment as "Constructing a World" (p. 378). In this model McNamee states:

> As people coordinate their activities with others, patterns or rituals quickly emerge. These rituals generate a sense of standards and expectations that we use to assess our own and others' actions. Once these standardizing modes are in place, the generation of values and beliefs (a moral order) is initiated. Thus, from the very simple process of coordinating our activities with each other, we develop entire belief systems, moralities, and values. (McNamee, 2015, p. 377)

Table 4.61 lists the research question, the secondary theme of culture, and the assigned codes. Commentary from the 1:1 interviews, focus group session, third-party facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.61 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Culture – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Culture	- Learning outside of comfort zone - Visibility to overall team member contributions assisted greater communication and transparency - Flexibility to solve issues - Was able to make new friends - Project team environment promoted confidence and personal growth

Culture - 1:1 interviews. During the 1:1 interviews, five of sixteen team members implied that the culture played a role. The expectations for team members were high and many had new areas in which to learn and grow. Throughout the project, visibility into team progress and successes was shared. Everyone was aware of the end state deliverables and the role(s) they played in the project process. In addition to the formal coffee meetings, the environmental culture was such that team members had ongoing opportunities to hold informal meetings as they were needed. Throughout the process team members maintained a level of respect and civility, even when challenges arose.

> TM2: You know it's one of those things where it put you out of your comfort zone, so you get into a place where you really are at full throttle in terms of trying to understand what I need to do.
> TM3: That's what was good about the work streams, it was visible to people what the other groups, what the other work streams were working on. So that you could know if you had a concern about well, about maybe a process that they were doing, it was very easy to ask questions about it and get further information.
> TM4: It wasn't hard getting a meeting together. People knew that we had to get it done. So that was good. There were a lot of "fly by" conversations. Then having a meeting, it was just like our PM would just show up in my office or TM8's office, and whatever the question or the problem of the day was, get it done.
> TM7: A lot of people were involved that you came to know, new people. You make new friends and you learn what they are working on, and they always shared the best practices. I learned all the processes.
> TM14: So there was definitely a growth on his part [co-PM], and I think leadership was definitely something that came from that. I would say in the beginning, he was a little too timid for that (laughs). But his confidence grew, and I think it was born of security. He knew he had a good core team. The team was comfortable with each other. There was definitely [something] whatever that environment was fostered by, it was evident. Everyone was comfortable, not in an unprofessional way. They were very professional. But everyone was comfortable.

Two of eight focus group team members took solace in knowing the project was viewed as important from a corporate and organizational perspective. The environment was supportive, the weekly coffee meetings, where the project team leads reviewed the statuses of their critical path milestones and discussed them with other work stream leads. The consistency of structure aided the project in setting appropriate priorities. Table 4.62 displays the question, secondary theme, and assigned codes for the secondary theme environment. Commentary from the focus group, third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations follow.

Table 4.62 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Culture – Focus Group*

Question	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Culture	- Consistent meeting structure important - Took comfort knowing project was viewed as important - Allowed focus on work priorities - Project team environment promoted confidence and personal growth

Culture - focus group interviews. Team members were pleased to have a defined and consistent structure for their meetings and communication processes. This structure allowed for project team norms to formulate. Having support of the organization and corporate project team managers, as well as the senior staff, provided a sense of value and contributed to the overall feeling of respect amongst project team members.

> TM3: I find it is always so critical to any meeting that you have an agenda. Making sure people that attend the meeting are aware [of discussion topics], and maybe, as TM2 was saying, you just sometimes call on people to make sure they're participating and that makes the meeting more effective.
>
> TM4: We had upper management support for the whole project.

Culture - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator comments on the cultural environment as being the vehicle where formal and informal practices were able to take place in repeatable and consistent ways.

> TPF: I think the leader on this project, you [PM], set up an environment and set some practices, and consistency, which allowed people to perform their responsibilities but also feel safe, in a repeatable, predictable fashion, to communicate status, issues, do joint problem solving. And that formal, the way the project managers, there were a couple of project managers, operated was to take that formal structure and also carry it into, and outside of the project management framework that is outside the formal meetings. To demonstrate that they cared about the people and they respected what they had to say, and as one said, "Management By Walking Around," going off to people and ensuring that everything was on track and if there were other issues, to raise those issues.

Culture - project documentation. Project team members remained diligent in communicating issues and requests for assistance. The messages were clear and concise, and the tone of the messages was professional and civil.

> PM: Hello TM16, as discussed, please find a recap of our discussion points today. Let me know if you have any questions or require any additional assistance. Best regards, PM.
>
> TM4: Hi [to project team members], after meeting with the PM today, I just re-opened two (2) issues.
>
> TM16: Hi all [to project team members], Thank you for joining the call this morning. Below are a few actions we came up with to complete before we re-group later next week.

Culture - researcher observation. Removing uncertainty from the environment was important to project team success.

> RO: The team members found the structural consistency of the coffee meetings and project communications to be of significant benefit and comfort. The fact that these critical project areas had a level of certainty in how they were approached and executed, provided a stability, and an opportunity for project team norms to develop.

Project design - environment secondary theme. Four of the sixteen team members referenced the secondary theme of project design in their interview narratives. Two of the eight focus group team members made mention of project design in their commentary. Commentary from the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher comments follow the 1:1 interview comments. Table 4.63 displays the question, the secondary theme of project design, and assigned codes. Commentary from the 1:1 interviews follows.

Table 4.63 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication – Design - 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to	- Project design	- Consistent expectations - Conflict was

strengthen organizational communication		purposely minimized at coffee group meetings - Learning outside of comfort zone - Fairness may have impeded progress - Proper alignment of resources and skills

Project design - 1:1 interviews. Four of sixteen team members noted during their 1:1 interviews the secondary theme of project design in their commentary. The project design takes into account program structure, personnel, methodologies, and functional processes within the actual project team. This included conflict management, which was mentioned by several team members and is represented in examples below. Having subject matter experts to lead the work streams was also noted as an important component.

> TM4: The fact that everybody knew what we had to do, they knew there was a certain deadline, and it was in our face. It was in our face every week. There was no question about the priority of it. That whole [argument], you know, I don't have time for all that stuff just went away. It was just like, all right, we see the problem in terms of what it is, how do we do [handle] that? Let's figure it out.
>
> TM5: Obviously there were challenges with a few people that were in the collective group, but those were always handled very professionally. Not only from some of the leads, but also from the PMO management team.
>
> TM15: I think it's in relation to the bad apple. I do think that everyone understood all of the issues that we had from that person. All the problems that person even gave us during the project, we gave that person too many degrees of freedom. I think we should have framed the issues with her early in the process. I think we let her have an opinion that we know that was wrong to start with, to be fair. But that fairness I think cost much more pain.
>
> TM16: So, number one, it is important to get subject matter experts right from the get-go. [You need] people who understand the current processes, and are the right people to engage. This is because this project touched more than just the immediate group. It had a larger effect that we needed to pull people in, so from reporting, or some other areas. You needed subject matter experts, process owners, and the weekly communication on the deliverables, and the ownership. That’s key. So anything like a change initiative or anything like that, I like the model that this team used.

Two of eight focus group project team members suggested the secondary theme of project design in their narratives. The formal project structures were appreciated to assist with efficiencies and consistency throughout the project timeline. Table 4.64 displays the question, the secondary theme of project design, and assigned codes for the focus group. Commentary from the focus group follows.

Table 4.64 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Design – Focus Group*

Question	**Secondary Theme(s)**	**Assigned Code(s)**
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen	- Project Design	- Expansive scope demanded organization - Learning experiences

organizational communication		that can be applied to future work

Project design - focus group interviews. Two of eight focus group team members implied the secondary theme of project design in their narratives insofar as the organization of the project, and the scalability of the project design. The team appreciated the day-to-day management of the project and several noted the project as a learning experience they would bring with them to future projects.

> TM5: The scale of the project was completely different than any other thing we've worked on before, because we were used to working in smaller pods and having small initial conversations about things. I think because of how the software conversion project had different topic areas, we had to engage with other groups that we might not necessarily engage for other projects. And just because of the overall scale, I think it forced the project to be more organized. If not, it would have failed miserably.
>
> TM6: I agree with what TM5 said. I've been on some projects over the years and this was one of the better ones. Certainly run much better than other projects. And, similar to what TM5 said, not coming from a project management background, it was nice to take away some things that the PM did that seemed to work very well to apply to my everyday job or a project that I might be involved in going forward.

Project design - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator commented on the efficiency of the project design with regards to team member engagement and behavior, and team practices.

> TPF: The project was designed to be efficient and to allow people to use their expertise. Team members felt they had autonomy and were accountable to accomplish the tasks at hand. There were practices implemented within the project design that served as the glue to keep things together.

Project design - project documentation. The project documentation in this area primarily consisted of the project plan, meeting invitations, meeting agendas and minutes, weekly coffee meeting work stream status slides, executive presentation slides, and general correspondence. The comments below reflect the general communication process executed by the project managers.

> TM1: Hi PM, per update #5 in this week's coffee meeting summary, how can we help in expediting this request from the corporate software conversion team, to our reporting team? Regards, TM1.
>
> TM2: Hello TM21 and TM23, Each week we will be sending you updates on the software conversion project. These updates will come from the program management office.

Project design - researcher observation. Planning the design and structure of the project was important so that a consistent model for project team members to work within could be established.

> RO: The project design began with the project planning and the decision to incorporate work streams led by subject matter experts, and a project management team as the primary work functions of this initiative. Once that decision was made, a listing of needed project documents, including how they would be used and by whom was created. A minimalist approach was taken with regards to the documentation team members would be required to complete. This was done to optimize the actual working time on the project, and to not have time spent completing forms. Team members appreciated that approach and understood the co-PM's would complete the majority of documents in consultation with the work stream leads, leaving time for the subject matter experts to spend more time to work deeper areas of the project. The decision to hold one meeting per week (the coffee meeting) was also purposeful in that areas not covered in the meeting, needed to be taken outside of the meeting. That structure by default required team members to socialize and work together to resolve problems. This socialization deepened relationships resulting in increased trust and respect amongst team members.

Summary – environment. This section covered research findings of the primary theme, environment. Environment was one of two primary themes associated with the second research question, "How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?" Team members viewed environment as the overall project structure that included work stream definition, resource alignment, meeting schedules and communications focus. The primary theme environment included four secondary themes, safe space, safe haven, culture, and project design. Safe space was viewed as a conceptual space where team members could be comfortable projecting their own behaviors and thoughts. The feeling of safety in being supported, and the ability to act as themselves, reflected a certain state of mind I am referring to as "safe space."

Safe haven was another secondary theme discovered. Unlike safe space as a state of mind, a psychological element, safe haven was created via a group of physical barriers and processes. These included project managers acting as buffers between the team members and the senior managers, scheduling meetings physically away from where senior management was located, and, developing and agreeing on a consistent communication schedule and frequency in how information was provided to the team, senior management, and the corporate team.

Another secondary theme was that of culture. The environment with structured meetings, and defined processes, allowed team members to develop practices to assist in completing tasks and milestones. Team members were able to hold informal meetings, socialize, and use their good judgment to take risks. These types of cultural practices contributed to the development and sustainability of group norms. Project design was the final secondary theme under the primary theme of environment. Project design within the project team involved program structure as it related to personnel, process methodologies, and the functional processes used.

Playfulness is the second primary theme discovered in response to the research question "How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?" The primary theme of playfulness and the two secondary themes of celebrate, and enjoyment, follow in the next section.

Playfulness - primary candidate theme. Playfulness is one of two primary candidate themes discovered from the data in response to the research question "How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?" The theme of playfulness reflects the setting of the tone within the project team for a positive and appreciative environment to develop and mature. The primary theme of playfulness generated two secondary themes, celebrate and enjoyment. Team members remained focused on milestone completion and project deliverables; however, they also created and enjoyed an environment where light-hearted banter existed to break the tensions of such an important project. There was enjoyment in the civility of communications, as well as with the mischievous opportunities that arose. Five of the sixteen project team members identified with playfulness during the 1:1 interviews. During the 1:1 interviews team members noted they enjoyed the light-hearted banter during both formal and informal meetings. The structure of the coffee meeting allowed flexibility to share information in both a formal and informal manner. Regardless of the approach taken, the main goal of the team was their focus on the end point deliverable.

Two of eight focus group team members noted playfulness in their narratives. In addition to the enjoyment of light-hearted banter, the focus group members commented on the importance of consistent expectations. Table 4.65 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the 1:1 interviews. Table 4.66 provides the primary candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes from the focus group session.

The primary theme of playfulness generated two secondary themes, celebrate, and enjoyment. The following section begins with the primary theme playfulness and includes assigned coding and commentary from the 1:1 interviews, focus group comments, third-party administrator comments, project documentation excerpts, and researcher observations. The secondary theme findings are structured in the same manner and follow the primary theme.

Table 4.65 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication – Playfulness – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Playfulness	- Celebrate - Enjoyment	- Lighthearted banter - Weekly coffee meeting was centering point for team - Focused on the end state for the collective

Playfulness - 1:1 interviews. In the 1:1 interview commentary, five team members voiced with pride the feeling that all wanted to do what was right for the company. There was an appreciation expressed for the type of structure the project, and the coffee meetings. Individuals revealed a level of comfort and satisfaction in being able to be themselves and to have fun with their peers. Several voiced the ability to laugh and make jokes with fellow team members to be constructive in handling stress and in building relationships.

> TM1: I guess we were always open for a few laughs, too. That kind of helped put things at ease every once in a while, if anything was burning up or getting stressful.
>
> TM3: I felt we had a very good camaraderie in those coffee meetings. We could joke around and then get to business. Everybody gets to business, and afterwards, you could joke around again. So, it was, I found it very positive for that. We're not only getting work done, but we were also reinforcing the relationships we had.
>
> TM4: I think every meeting's better off with at least a couple of jokes, kind of lighten up the mood. It was good.
>
> TM8: The conversations were more led against a presentation each week. Knowing where we are within the project statuses, and being able to discuss anything that was a delay, or anything that was a success. So not everything was a conflict, not everything was a problem, we had successes along the way. People were able to celebrate them in a fun way. We made it almost like a game of who got to blue [completion] first, or who got to blue last.
>
> TM13: So, no matter what was going on, the reality is we're all trying to do what's best for the business and not taking sides so to speak. I mean I have to say; probably your team was one of the most pleasant to work with (laughs).

Two of eight Focus group team members related to enjoyment during the focus group session. They felt the consistency of how the team members were engaged tended to remove any uncertainty, and this appeared important to the team members. Light-hearted banter amongst team members was seen as a positive occurrence during the pre-coffee meeting data gathering visits by the co-PM's. These sentiments were also reflected in comments made by the third-party focus group facilitator. Table 4.66 provides the candidate theme, secondary themes, and assigned codes. Comments from the focus group interviews follow.

Table 4.66 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication – Playfulness – Focus Group*

Question	Primary Candidate Theme(s)	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Playfulness	- Celebrate - Enjoyment	- Consistent expectations - Lighthearted banter

Playfulness - focus group interviews. Playfulness was reflected in the light-hearted banter between team members both during the project and following project closure. Projects of this size and importance are always stressful, the fact that team members were able to appreciate each other and generate stress relief through playfulness, was viewed as a positive practice.

> TM4: [With regards to the pre-coffee meeting updates with co-PM's] Yeah, I'm sure you enjoyed that, TM1. Coming over to me, and being yelled at, "Get away from me!"

Playfulness - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator noted that although the project team did serious work, there was a sense of playfulness that permeated the environment.

> TPF: There was a sense, a theme, of playfulness that connected into many parts of the conversation in terms of the humor, able to take risks, to enjoy the process. So it wasn't cold. There was something warm and playful throughout the process too, which I think made it more memorable for people.

Playfulness - project documentation. In reviewing the project documentation, respect for peers was clearly evident, even in business requests. Enjoyment was not only brought about through jokes and good-hearted mischief, there was an enjoyment through the positive communications that took place. This behavior brought a level of comfort to members of the team. Fun banter was frequently interjected providing additional enjoyment.

> Corp2: Hello PM, It is lovely to hear from you! Your team is on the list to receive the communication and then the web-based training. Regards, Corp2.
>
> Corp4: Hi TM19, Happy New Year to you too! These are the software conversion tables that do not exist in the data warehouse.
>
> TM10: Ha-ha, good call! [To PM, after PM decided not to send a "fictitious" task request to one of the team members]
>
> TM16: Hello PM, I hope all is well and you had a great Thanksgiving! I just wanted to circle back and confirm if the team had chance to meet?

Playfulness - researcher observation. A positive and appreciative tone was set and maintained by the PM's and project team members.

> RO: Civility in team communications created a pleasant environment that was enjoyable to work within. Not every day was easy, not every day was fun. The project team took a positive approach in their communications. When opportunities to create or share enjoyment existed, team members did not hesitate to do so.

Playfulness - secondary themes. Secondary themes supporting enjoyment were found during the 1:1 interview process, the focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, and researcher observations. Two secondary themes discovered during the research process were celebrate, and enjoyment. The data segments follow beginning with the secondary theme of party.

Celebrate - playfulness secondary theme. The secondary theme of celebrate appeared in three of sixteen 1:1 interviews. Team members enjoyed the opportunity to come together to put closure on the

project, be recognized for their contributions, and to have some fun. Table 4.67 provides the secondary theme of celebrate and the assigned codes. The 1:1 interview responses follow.

Table 4.67 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Celebrate – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Celebrate	- End celebration was meaningful and validation of success

Celebrate - 1:1 interviews. Team members enjoyed the project closure meeting. Cake and beverages were provided and members of the executive team were invited, and in attendance. We took the time to recognize each team member in attendance for their positive contributions in relationship to the milestone and project successes. Each team member was then asked to share something about the project that was meaningful to her or him. Following the team member sharing, the two senior managers in attendance were asked to provide their thoughts on the project.

> TM4: Well first of all, the cake was very important at the end. You don't get that very often on a project. Which is a nice touch by the way. But the fact that it [the project] went well, it all worked out so good that it makes you want to do it again. Not this specific project, but you know, have another successful project. Just kind of go in with a better attitude, I think.
>
> TM7: [Referring to the post project cake celebration] That was also my first experience you know. And that was a great idea. You felt like you are celebrating something you delivered, and you know, I really like that thing.
>
> TM8: Yes, I would say at the end of the project it was fun. There was something different that most people don't do. Most of the time projects are over, you just kind of disband, and everyone goes along their merry way. You don't normally see anything come out from it other than; you've done a good job. What we did at the end, there was a cake that was provided...and we had a little celebration together as a team, and it was great. Everyone felt very confident in what they did, and they took pride in it. Everyone felt like they were part of a team. And that I believe, based on just the little things like that, that were done, really means a lot to people that other people maybe overlook.

The secondary theme of celebrate was displayed in one of eight focus group member comments. Fun and enjoyment are expressed, as is a feeling of accomplishment. The project closure celebration was memorable to the team members. Table 4.68 provides the secondary theme of celebrate and the assigned codes. Focus group interview responses follow.

Table 4.68 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication – Celebrate – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational	- Celebrate	- End celebration was meaningful and validation of success

communication		

Celebrate - focus group interviews. One of the eight participants in the focus group discussion voiced that the project closure meeting was fun and meaningful.

> TM8: I would say just the ending of the project was pretty fun. We had a cake in celebration of the project and I think that was something different that had never been done before. So it was almost like a celebration of everyone coming together, working really well and executing and meeting the expected target date. I think it was great to have a closure to a project in that way, and to have it so successful that it helped even build relationships stronger because everyone could relax that everything was done.

Celebrate - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator comments on a discussion he and I (as the researcher) had with regards to what was the "secret sauce" that made this project so successful? The third-party provides some thoughts in his comments below.

> TPF: I was thinking, typically we think of work as hard edge, rational, emotionless…and, what you're talking about with celebration is playfulness.

Celebrate - project documentation. Project documentation was for the most part purposeful and targeted towards an end such as status, or a question, or a request for assistance. There were no overt comments relating to celebrate, however, the comment below reflects the spirit of enjoyment related to fun and celebrate.

> TM10: Whoooo hoooo! Milestone ☺

Celebrate - researcher observation. Team member progress against project milestones was very good. They were comfortable with their daily progress and understood the factors for success. This knowledge and level of comfort allowed team members to take time to cultivate relationships.

> RO: The project atmosphere was very businesslike with relation to task activities and meeting commitments. Team members were always respectful and professional in their dealings with others. Team members also enjoyed having fun and laughing with each other during meetings and 1:1 discussions. In general, they seemed to feel at ease with each other and this developed levels of trust and respect. Something I found interesting with the 1:1 and focus group comments was that team members did not mention senior manager's attending the cake celebration. Commentary and reflection was focused on the team and the successful deliverables.

Enjoyment - playfulness secondary theme. The secondary theme of enjoyment appeared in three of sixteen 1:1 interviews. One of the eight focus group team members mentioned enjoyment in their commentary. Table 4.69 provides the secondary theme of enjoyment and the assigned codes. Interview responses follow.

Table 4.69 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Enjoyment – 1:1 Interviews*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Enjoyment	- Lighthearted banter - Humor contributed to relationship building

Enjoyment - 1:1 interviews. Three team members implied the secondary theme of enjoyment during the 1:1 interviews. Engaging in enjoyment and fun appeared to be a wonderful tension breaker as well as catalyst for social interaction.

TM1: I guess we were always open for a few laughs, too. That kind of helped put things at ease every once in a while, if anything was burning up or getting stressful.

TM3: I felt we had a very good camaraderie in those coffee meetings. We could joke around and then get to business. Everybody gets to business, and afterwards, you could joke around again. So, it was, I found it very positive for that. We were not only getting work done, but we were also reinforcing the relationships we had.

TM4: I think every meeting's better off with at least a couple of jokes, kind of lighten up the mood. It was good.

The secondary theme of enjoyment was displayed in one of eight focus group member comments. Table 4.70 contains the secondary theme of enjoyment and the assigned focus group codes. Comments from the third-party facilitator, comments found in the project documentation, and the researcher observations follows.

Table 4.70 *Practices to Strengthen Organizational Communication - Enjoyment – Focus Group*

Question	Secondary Theme(s)	Assigned Code(s)
Leader introduction of relational leading practices to strengthen organizational communication	- Enjoyment	- Light-hearted banter - Humor contributed to relationship building

Enjoyment - focus group interviews. One focus group team member captured how playfulness crept into the project team environment. TM8 notes that more than the co-PM's were engaged in good levels of enjoyment, and having fun.

TM8: There was some humorous commentary that was being made every Wednesday to a few people that would come around and assess the status updates, which was nice. It kept it light. So it's good to have humor in a project that is high-visibility, that needs to get done in a short time frame, and in a productive way. I think what was nice is that most of the team had that good working relationship and there was open dialogue. For the most part, people felt comfortable with speaking their mind when things would be delayed, or if things were on track, or if there was an issue with something.

Enjoyment - third-party facilitator. The third-party facilitator noted that even months after project closure, the team displayed a level of comfort and respect with each other.

TPF: I think that this was a project that exhibited trust and respect. Even in this focus group call [months following project closure], the way that was revealed, I think, was the ease of discussion and humor among the participants. People were able to build off the comments of each other, and people listened to each other.

Enjoyment - project documentation. Enjoyment was demonstrated between project team members at formal and informal meetings. Some team members expressed a spirit of enjoyment and fun in their email communications as well.

TM10: Ha-ha, good call! [To PM, after PM decided not to send a "fictitious" task request to one of the team members].

TM28: [to PM] As a birthday present to you…I will attend and take notes ☺

Enjoyment - researcher observation. Humor assisted in reducing tension caused by project challenges. Team members were good natured when applying a level of enjoyment and fun to a situation.

RO: As the project manager I enjoyed the good humor and enjoyment that continued to develop and fill the project team environment as the project matured and team members became more

comfortable in the space created. Team members were not vindictive, nor insulting to their peers. They did not engage in personal attacks. There was a good-natured mischievousness that seemed to hover about the team, just waiting for one of the team members to set off a spark that ignited the humor and broke any tension being felt.

Summary – playfulness. This section reviewed research findings for the primary theme of playfulness. Two secondary themes, celebrate and enjoyment were also discussed. Playfulness was found in the civility of every day written and verbal communications. Celebrate was found in the project closure celebration meeting where cake and beverages were served and team members recounted their individual and team successes. Enjoyment was found in the day-to-day playfulness exhibited by team members towards each other and the project team. In reflecting on this, it is interesting to note that neither gender, age, ethnic culture, nor project experience of the team members appeared to matter. The group as a collective all shared in the spirit of playfulness.

The eight primary themes discovered and reviewed were listed in order from highest count to lowest. Those being, open dialogue, environment, empowerment, shared learning, playfulness, reliance, accountability, and commonalities. While these themes resonated through all of the research questions, the themes of empowerment, shared learning, commonalities, and reliance, along with their secondary themes, were used to respond to research question two. The themes of accountability and open dialogue, and their related secondary themes were used to answer research question three. Research question four was answered via the primary themes of environment, and playfulness, and their respective secondary themes. Based on the primary and secondary themes discovered in the research, a thematic map of all discovered themes was created in accordance with the thematic analysis guidelines set forth by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013).

Thematic Mapping From the Research

This section contains a thematic map that was generated based on all the primary and secondary themes brought forth from the research data. The thematic map (Figure 4.1) is a representation of the primary themes and secondary themes discovered during the research in response to the research questions. The answer for research Question 1 was derived from the literature review, and supporting data from the 1:1 interviews, focus group, third-party facilitator comments, project documentation, and researcher observations. These supporting data discoveries are included in the thematic mapping. Discoveries for Questions 2, 3, and 4 are also represented in the thematic mapping. Figure 4.1 reflects the eight primary themes and their supporting 25 secondary themes, 33 themes total, that were discovered in this research.

In Chapter 5, the primary themes revealed in Figure 4.1 will be designated as “practices.” The 25 secondary themes in Figure 4.1 will be designated as “elements.” The elements are viewed as the support mechanisms that assist in operationalizing the corresponding practices, providing the opportunity for each area to master relational leading.

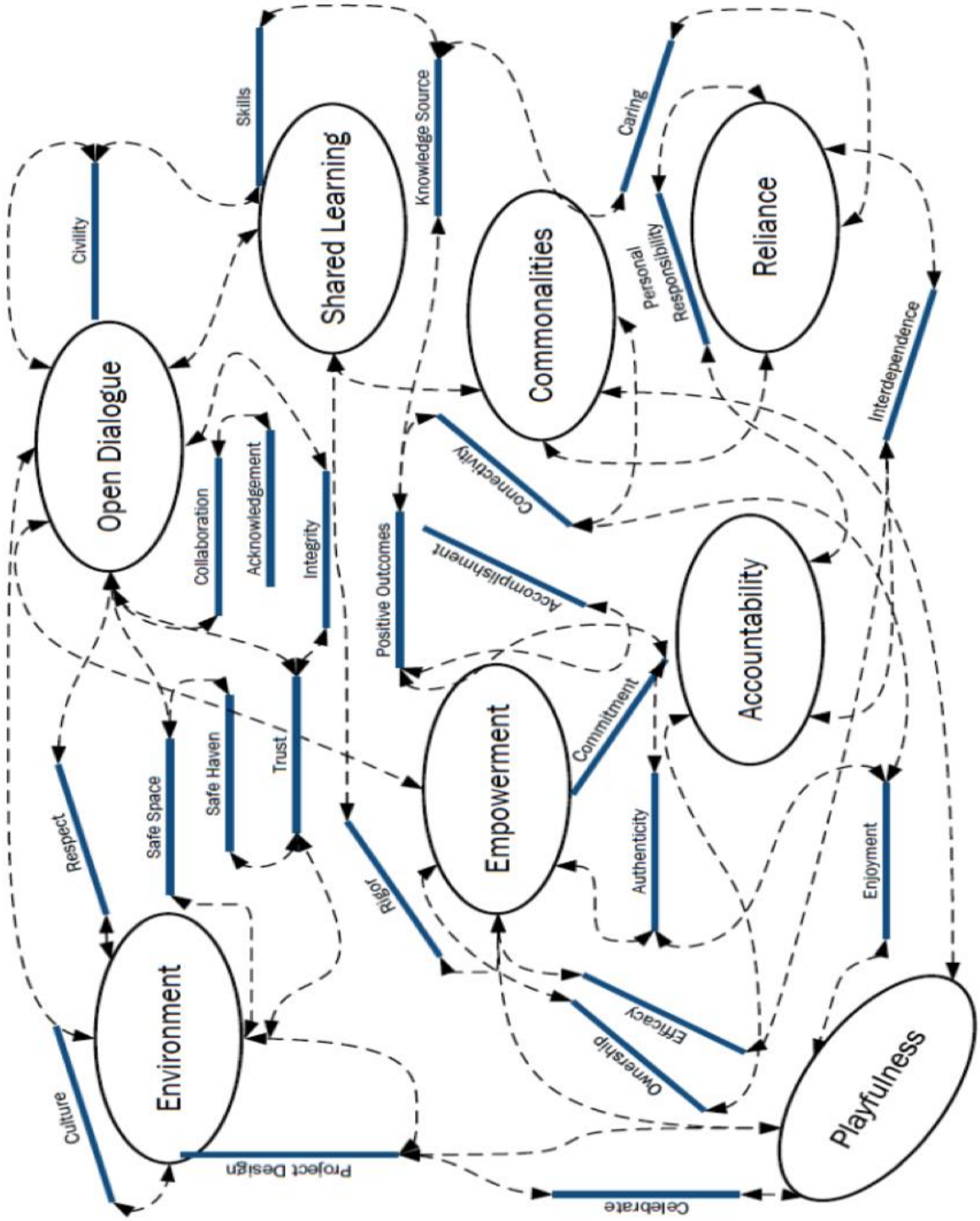

Figure 4. 1 Thematic Map of Eight Primary and Twenty-Five Secondary Themes

Summary of Results

In summary, this study uncovered eight primary and 25 secondary relational leading practice themes from the research data. There were 12 relational practices discovered from the literature. The eight primary themes in alphabetical order were *accountability, commonalities, empowerment, environment, open dialogue, playfulness, reliance, and shared learning*. These primary themes support the definition of relational leading from this study, *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices.* The findings of this study revealed the meaning and understanding of relational leading, and that relational leading did emerge and was evident within the project team. These findings are also summarized in Table 4.71.

Table 4.71 *Primary and Secondary Themes from this Study*

Accountability	**Commonalities**	**Empowerment**	**Environment**	**Open Dialogue**	**Playfulness**	**Reliance**	**Shared Learning**
Ownership	Caring	Accomplishment	Culture	Acknowledge-ment	Celebrate	Interdepen-dence	Knowledge Source
Personal Responsibility	Connectivity	Authenticity	Project Design	Civility	Enjoyment		Skills
		Commitment	Safe Haven	Collaboration			
		Efficacy	Safe Space	Integrity			
		Positive Outcomes		Respect			
		Rigor		Trust			

The findings also discovered relational leading to be influential in positively shaping the project team's organizational communication. They supported the practical use of the 12 relational leading practices put forth by Gergen (2009a, 2015) and Gergen and Hersted (2013). The next chapter will interpret the most important findings and answer the research questions, provide an integrated framework to understand relational leading, present implications, recommendations for practice and future research, plus limitations of the study.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This study explored relational leading practices within a high-technology project team. Chapter One introduced the objective of the study, which was to explore and understand the practices of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged and was evident within the studied core project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. Chapter Two presented the literature review and included historically and socially constructed leadership. Chapter Three contained the research methodology. Chapter Four comprised the results of the study. Chapter Five provides the discussion and recommendations and is presented in six sections. The first section provides a summary of the findings and responses to the research questions. The second section describes the creation of The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. The third section presents implications for practice and recommendations. The fourth section puts forth suggested opportunities for future research. The fifth section discusses the limitations of the study. The sixth section provides a comprehensive summary of the final findings of the study.

The study was conducted to answer the following research questions in a project management team:

- What is the meaning of relational leading?
- What are the practices of relational leading?
- What are the relational leading practices that can enhance organizational communication?
- How do organizational leaders introduce relational leading practices to strengthen a project team's organizational communication?

The research in this study resulted in five outcomes:

1. Provided a meaning for relational leading.
2. Eight specific relational leading practices were revealed, in addition to the 12 relational leading practices introduced earlier in the literature.
3. Developed and presented a so-called Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework with 16 relational leading practices that emerged from combining the literature and the empirical data collected within the studied core project team.
4. Insights on the association between relational leading practices and organizational communication.
5. Practical insights on how organizational leaders can introduce relational leading practices to project teams.

The findings from 16 in-depth interviews, a focus group, an interview with the third-party focus group facilitator, project documentation, third-party facilitator and researcher notes, and observations, were presented in Chapter Four. These reflect the findings of this study from the review of literature and commentary from project team members, the third-party facilitator, and the researcher, as to the meaning of relational leading, the practices of relational leading, relational leading practices that enhance organizational communication, and how leaders might introduce relational leading practices into organizations.

The Meaning of Relational Leading

The meaning of relational leading was first derived from the literature. Specifically, the works of Gergen and Hersted (2013) and Gergen (2009a, 2009b, & 2015) on this topic added much value. Relational leading was seen by them as "an activity, not a personal attribute" (Gergen & Hersted, 2013, p. 30): "Relational leading refers to the ability of persons in a relationship to move with engagement and efficacy into the future" (Gergen, 2009b, p. 333).

Based on this study, relational leading is defined as *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices.* Relational leading is the manner we executed the relationships versus a focus on the individual characteristics. These concepts were reinforced in this study through the narratives provided by team member interviewees, the focus group, and researcher and focus group facilitator notes and observations.

Team members were asked to tell of meaningful tasks they shared with other team members, if meaningful conversations were had, the decision making process and how needs were balanced, the level of autonomy they experienced, and how communication took place outside of the formal coffee meetings. Team members during the 1:1 interviews emphasized the importance of the environment in that open dialogue occurred due to the knowledge that what was said, would be respected. Members participating in the focus group also inferred open dialogue to be a strong factor. Open dialogue suggests a level of team member comfort in voicing personal perspectives, values, and potentials for the future. Gergen (2009b) refers to this dialogue sharing of thoughts and ideas as "positive sharing" (p. 334). In addition, the team members mentioned that the project design (horizontal versus hierarchical), through the environment created, allowed for collaboration, and for team members to be unafraid to make commitments, and to be authentic in their behaviors. This collaboration finding fits nicely with concept of "adding value" put forth by Gergen (p. 335) where encouraging others through collaboration and respect is viewed with high importance. Authenticity was demonstrated through generous acknowledgements of others with regards to the progress made, at both the individual and team levels, and was extended whenever team members shared their project visions. Gergen (2009a) refers to this vision sharing as "image building" (p. 150). These three areas derived from the literature, positive sharing, adding value, and, image building, are considered by Gergen and Hersted (2013) to be important relational leading practice considerations that epitomize relational leading. This study defines relational leading as *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices.*

The Practices of Relational Leading

The definition of "practices" in this study was taken from the writings of Gergen and Hersted (2013) and is defined as relational "forms of interchange from which the organization is nourished and from which new potentials are created" (p. 31). This definition is reinforced by McNamee who states:

> When we refigure meaning as relational, we regard it as practice, a *performance* that inevitably involves more than one participant. This draws our attention to the *process* of meaning making as well as the *relationship* within which meaning is constructed. (McNamee, 2004b, p. 18)

The writings of Gergen and Hersted revealed 12 relational leading practices: adding value, appreciation, collaboration, connectivity, continuous learning, dialogue, distribution, empowerment, horizontal decision-making, image building, networking, and positive sharing. These were presented in Chapter 1 as the Relational Leading Conceptual Framework (Table 1.1). This empirical study identified eight relational leading practices, four of which are new relational leading practices: accountability, environment, playfulness, and reliance. Relational practices from the literature and this study are represented in Table 5.1.

The findings relating to Question 2 were based both on a review of literature and my empirical data set. The empirical discovery of practices was a phased process. Phase one included identifying relational leading practices discovered from the literature, there were 12. Phases two, three, and four involved data collection from the core project team. Phase two specifically discovered four relational leading practices. Phase three involved reviewing practices that enhance relational leading. From this phase, two additional relational leading practices were discovered, bringing the total to six. The fourth phase explored how managers can introduce relational leading practices into their organizations. This phase discovered an additional two practices, bringing the total number of practices discovered in the empirical part of this study to eight relational practices, additions to the 12 that had been identified by others before. Table 5.1 displays the practices from the literature and this study.

Table 5. 1 *Relational Leading Practices From the Literature and this Study*

	Literature		**This Study**
1.	Adding Value	1.	Accountability
2.	Appreciation	2.	Commonalities
3.	Collaboration	3.	Empowerment
4.	Connectivity	4.	Environment
5.	Continuous Learning	5.	Open Dialogue
6.	Dialogue	6.	Playfulness
7.	Distribution	7.	Reliance
8.	Empowerment	8.	Shared Learning
9.	Horizontal Decision Making		
10.	Image Building		
11.	Networking		
12.	Positive Sharing		

With regards to Question 2, the practices of relational leading, team members were asked to describe conversations that occurred within or outside of the coffee meetings. They were also asked if they perceived or felt their project contributions were viewed and recognized during this project. The responses yielded four practices (empowerment, shared learning, reliance, and commonalities) and 10 supporting elements.

Empowerment. Team members suggested they were empowered to move into roles and positions of leadership to accomplish positive outcomes. They also noted that the feeling of empowerment promoted confidence and the necessary learning required to reach the project end state. Team members behaved authentically, but were rigorous in their pursuit to maximize effectiveness and meet commitments.

Shared learning. Shared learning was voiced by team members as the alignment with other team members and a reliance on the skills of others. Team members were aware of their own skill strengths as well as the project demands placed on other members in the team. This awareness allowed them to integrate skills with team members in a complementary manner. It also allowed them to share knowledge with others and to be recognized as a knowledge source, within and outside of the project team. This alignment of skill sharing and understanding accounted for efficiency in meetings and task completions. In commentary by team members, expertise was viewed as valuable while the ability to complete tasks per the committed schedule dates was respected.

Reliance. There was a norm across the team that members cared and looked out for each other. This knowledge of support strengthened interaction and relationships amongst team members, developing a network of interdependence across the team. Douglass and Gittell (2012) refer to this type of behavior as “reciprocal interrelating,” where attention to others as well as the present environment takes place (p. 721).

Commonalities. Team members began developing areas of commonalities through project task accomplishment and skills sharing. A commonality is described as a “like” goal or interest one shares with another. Commonalities may be based on work or personal interests. As the project progressed, commonalities increased and deepened beyond project tasks alone. The building of relationships created connectivity amongst team members, and was demonstrated through skills coaching and providing support. Project team members cared about the success of their peers and developed personal relationships that extended beyond the completion of the project.

Relational Leading Practices That Enhance Organizational Communication

In response to the question, what relational leading practices enhance organizational communication, the two practices discovered were open dialogue and accountability. Open dialogue reflected the freedom to express one's self honestly and openly within the project team. Open dialogue or "dialoging," as noted by Hosking and McNamee (2006), is thought by many to be "what organizational learning is all about" (p. 279). Team members were asked which portions of the coffee meeting seemed the most meaningful. They were asked about the roles played by the co-PM's and to share any experiences. The co-PM's were part of the Program Management Office (PMO), and team members were asked if all aspects of the PMO worked in a complementary manner with team members. They were also asked to describe their experiences on the project and any pre-conceived notions they may have had coming into the project. Lastly, team members were asked to share the feelings they experienced upon completion of the project, and implications for future project work. Open dialogue was supported by six elements: collaboration, integrity, civility, acknowledgment, trust, and respect. Accountability reflected ownership, a willingness to assume responsibility for assigned activities, and for one's actions. Team members did not feel inhibited or uncomfortable to report delays or problems with their specific work streams when they occurred. Accountability was supported by two elements, ownership, and personal responsibility.

Open dialogue. Open dialogue was identified by the majority of team members as a natural part of the project team process. It allowed for the elements of trust and respect to develop amongst the team, and for team members to demonstrate their integrity. Conflict did occur, however, through the process of open dialogue, challenges could be brought forth, discussed, and remediated. This was not always easy; however, it was understood that dialogue was an integral part of the process. It was through this open dialogue process that team members felt valued through the positive exchanges that took place. Anderson (2006) refers to dialogue as "an interactive process of interpretations of interpretations. One interpretation invites another. Interpreting is the process of understanding. In the process of trying to understand, new meanings are produced" (p. 40). This process referred to by Anderson was experienced at the coffee meetings by team members and through interactions outside of the coffee meetings. This open dialogue process was the norm for project team members in their communications. A level of trust was developed amongst team members to allow them to remain open to new suggestions, and recommendations in their day to day activities. When discussing innovation, Brandeau, Hill, Lineback, and Truelove (2014) state that "trust is also what makes members willing to endure the risks and vulnerability of sharing their ideas, the raw material of creative clashes" (p. 110).

Accountability. Accountability for project team members reflected task ownership, a willingness to assume responsibility for assigned activities, and for one's actions. Accountability also meant refining one's skills as needed to meet commitments made. Team members also displayed accountability through status reporting at the coffee meetings and in the manner they interfaced with team members and external contacts. Drath (2001) distinguishes between the terms responsibility and accountability. Drath suggests that the term accountability by nature contains more of a connection to leadership-type activities.

Introducing Relational Leading Practices to Strengthen Communication

Responses to how relational leading practices might be introduced to strengthen communication centered around the project environment and establishing a structure that was enjoyable to work within. Environment and playfulness were the two practices discovered during the 1:1 interviews, focus group, third-party facilitator interview and reflections, researcher observations, and project documentation. In this study, the positive work environment was supported by a well defined project framework that included the project strategy, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, the opportunity to share knowledge and skills, and the ability to have open dialogue where all conversations were valued and appreciated. Supporting elements for environment included safe space, safe haven, culture, and project design. The elements of playfulness included celebrate, and enjoyment. Gergen and Hersted (2013) refer to a physical environment or location, and note "the atmosphere or aesthetics of the physical location of a meeting can make a real difference in the quality of the dialogue" (p. 79). In this project, the physical locations of meeting rooms, the safe haven, did play a contributing role to enabling open dialogue to

occur at the coffee meetings. In addition, the culture of the project team was further influenced by the project structure and the elements of safe space, a positive culture, and, the project design. Gergen and Hersted (2013) note that "If the organization feels like a caring place, there will be dedication and real concern for the well-being of the organization" (p. 55). The organizational culture of the project team thrived within the environment that was created. McNamee (2015) refers to the creation of an environment as "Constructing a World" (p. 378).

Environment. Environment in this project was defined as a relational structure that enabled team members to thrive. Specifically, this was done by creating a positive culture, a psychologically safe space for open dialogue to take place. Gittell (2016) notes the creation of psychological safety to be important and suggests "creating cultural islands, relational spaces, safe containers, or holding environments, in which participants can develop new ways of connecting with one another" (p. 81). Also, the physical locations of meeting rooms, safe havens, in relation to senior management offices, were located a distance away. As part of the project structure, the development of project design began with the designation of nine work streams and the respective work stream leads, the meeting cadence, the types of documentation needed, and, the establishment of co-PM guidelines for assistance. This combination of relational practices strengthened the organizational communication within the group and positively contributed to enabling the success of the project team.

It is interesting to note that as the researcher, I expected to receive resistance from team members with regards to the required project design documentation and meeting requirements. The opposite actually occurred. During the interviews and focus group, team members spoke of the comfort they received in knowing exactly what documentation was expected to be delivered by them, and when. They also found the weekly coffee meeting to be a place where they could interface with the collective and have their voices heard. Neither the submission of required documentation, nor attending the coffee meeting was seen as detrimental to their tasks. In fact, team members felt both the documentation requirements and coffee meetings enhanced their ability to complete tasks and meet deadlines.

Playfulness. Playfulness was defined as the setting of the tone within the project for a positive and appreciative environment to develop and mature. Discovered within the practice of playfulness were the supporting elements of celebrate and enjoyment. Team members found a level of enjoyment and comfort when working with each other on project tasks. The acknowledgement of successes by the PMO and corporate representatives contributed to the enjoyment team members felt. Playfulness was evident via light-hearted banter that frequently took place. Celebrate was a supporting element of playfulness and was witnessed at the end of the project when team members were brought together to discuss their accomplishments and to enjoy a celebration cake, and beverages. Team members were pleasantly surprised by the PMO efforts to host a celebration gathering, and to review and recognize the accomplishments made by the team.

An Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework

In addition to answering the four research questions, a fifth contribution of this research is the creation of The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. Eight relational leading practices and 25 supporting elements were discovered from the research. When the (12 + 8) practices were combined with the 25 supporting elements, the Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework was formed (Table 5.2). Each of the practices in this study were reviewed and analyzed separately.
The eight practices were: accountability, commonalities, empowerment, environment, open dialogue, playfulness, reliance, and shared learning. The twelve relational leading practices discovered from the literature were: adding value, appreciation, collaboration, connectivity, continuous learning, dialogue, distribution, empowerment, horizontal decision-making, image building, networking, and positive sharing. In the literature, practices were noted, however, no supporting elements were found. In this study, the supporting elements of the relational leading practices were identified. The relationships between practices and elements are displayed in Figure 4.1, an alphabetical listing of the elements is displayed in Table 5.3.

Relational leading practices from the literature review and this study were combined to form The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework. Table 5.2 reflects the relational leading practices from this study (column 1), and from the literature (column 2), and the consolidated practices (column 3). Practices from the literature that align with the spirit and meaning of practices or elements discovered in the data, but are not named identically, are displayed in column three and identified via [brackets]. This was done to further demonstrate the relationships between the literature and data practices.

Table 5. 2 *Developing the Integrated 16 Relational Leading Practices*

	Practices discovered from the data		**Practices discovered from the literature**		**Consolidated practices**
1.	Accountability			1.	***Accountability***
		1.	Appreciation	2.	Appreciation
		2.	Image building	3.	Image building [Authenticity]
		3.	Collaboration	4.	Collaboration
2.	Commonalities	4.	Networking	5.	Networking [Commonalities]
		5.	Connectivity	6.	Connectivity
		6.	Adding value	7.	Adding value [Culture]
		7.	Distribution	8.	Distribution
3.	Empowerment	8.	Empowerment	9.	Empowerment
4.	Environment			10.	***Environment***
		9.	Horizontal decision making	11.	Horizontal decision-making [Interdependence]
5.	Open dialogue	10.	Dialogue	12.	Dialogue [Open dialogue]
6.	Playfulness			13.	***Playfulness***
		11.	Positive sharing	14.	Positive sharing [Positive outcomes]
7.	Reliance			15.	***Reliance***
8.	Shared learning	12.	Continuous learning	16.	Continuous learning [Shared learning]

Table 5.3 provides an alphabetical listing of the identified elements discovered from this study.

Table 5. 3 *The* 25 *Elements Identified from the Research*

Accomplishment	Efficacy	Rigor
Acknowledgement	Enjoyment	Safe haven
Authenticity	Integrity	Safe space
Caring	Interdependence	Skills

Celebrate	Knowledge source	Trust
Civility	Ownership	
Collaboration	Personal responsibility	
Commitment	Positive outcomes	
Connectivity	Project design	
Culture	Respect	

To provide additional order and structure to the practices noted in Table 5.2, the 16 integrated relational leading practices were grouped into three broad categories. This is in keeping with the thematic analysis refinement process put forth by Braun and Clarke (2006). The relational leading practices of empowerment, open dialogue, and shared learning, were used to organize the practice findings (Table 5.4). It is also believed that practitioners wishing to implement relational leading practices in their organizations may find it useful to begin by selecting practices in one of the broad practices categories, rather than attempt to implement all 16 integrated relational leading practices at one time. Practices in Table 5.4 are listed in alphabetical order within each of the three broad practices categories. The three broad categories and their supporting elements will be discussed next.

Table 5. 4 *The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework from this Study*

Empowerment	**Open Dialogue**	**Shared Learning**
Accountability	Appreciation	Adding value [Culture]
Distribution	Collaboration	Connectivity
Image building [Authenticity]	Environment	Horizontal decision-making [Interdependence]
	Playfulness	Networking [Commonalities]
	Positive sharing [Positive outcomes]	Reliance

Empowerment. The empowerment practices reflect the sense of ownership and responsibility the team members had for tasks they were responsible for and for the responsibilities and success of the collective team. The practices include accountability, distribution, and image building. Trosten-Bloom and Whitney (2010) note "when people realize they can and do make a difference in relation to others, they experience true liberation" (p. 270). When speaking of empowerment, Gittell (2016) suggests it is the ability for one to step back so others might share in a leadership role. It is also the ability to "learn from or be influenced by the other" (p. 53).

Accountability. The practice of accountability in this project reflected ownership, a willingness to assume responsibility for assigned activities, and for one's actions. Team members displayed accountability through status reporting at the coffee meetings and in their dealings with team members and external contacts. When addressing social accountability, Gergen (2015) cites Shotter (1984), where Shotter refers to social accountability as "ways in which correctives function" (p. 76). In essence, "correctives ask us to give an account of ourselves, to explain our actions. And if we are successful, we sustain the definition of ourselves as good people" (p. 76).

Distribution. The practice of distribution occurs when "The emphasis shifts from individual traits to processes of collaboration" (Gergen, 2015, p. 199). Through the distribution process, engagement and accompanying responsibilities are shifted away from a single entity structure to that of a collective. This allows relational leading practices such as networking and collaboration to take root. Gittell (2016) supports the comments of Gergen and speaks to distribution of power within groups suggesting when individuals share power, "power is not only equalized; it is expanded for everyone. Eventually,

participants' expanded sense of power and efficacy extends beyond their own team and throughout the broader system" (p. 276).

Image building. The practice of image building was exhibited through team member norms such as transparency, commitment, and ownership. Being part of the team, team members felt they could be themselves without pretense. Team members felt comfortable moving outside of their comfort zone when speaking with peers to raise a concern or gather information. Hosking and McNamee (2013) refer to this as "authentic participation" (p. 64). Gergen (2009b) suggests "one cannot be authentic alone" and questions if we can "ever be authentic unless others are willing to accept us without question" (p. 41).

Open dialogue. The second broad category of relational leading practices is open dialogue. Open dialogue was the norm for project team members, whether addressing project plans or having an informal social discussion with a team member. While formality existed within the project, it was the impromptu and informal discussions that team members cherished. Greenleaf (2002) used the terms formal and informal in describing organization structure insofar as where organizational strength lies. Specifically, "the *formal* structure consists of the more or less definite arrangements and ways of working that are spelled out in statures and roles or established in practice" (p. 72). According to Greenleaf, "the *informal* structure responds more to *leadership:* building purpose and challenging with opportunity, judicious use of incentives, astute ordering of priorities and allocating resources where they count the most" (p. 73). The practice of open dialogue allowed team members to be themselves, to be authentic and transparent in their dealings with other team members. The practice of open dialogue allowed them to feel valued and to maintain honesty in communications. Anderson (2006) states "Dialogue is an interactive process of interpretations of interpretations. One interpretation invites another. Interpreting is the process of understanding. In the process of trying to understand, new meanings are produced" (p. 40). The practices in this section include appreciation, collaboration, environment, playfulness, and positive sharing.

Appreciation. The practice of appreciation reflects the sincerity in recognizing others for their positive contributions. During the coffee meetings the co-PM's made a point of recognizing successes, regardless of how small or large. Progress was acknowledged, and positive call-outs to team members was the norm. Schiller et al. (2002) refer to three levels of appreciation, "an act that is outstanding or special," an act that is "mundane or ordinary," or, "situations that are painful and difficult; appreciation of the improbable and important lessons that are embedded in some of life's awful experiences" (p. 1).

Collaboration. The practice of collaboration occurred through positive relationships developed between team members, regardless of experience level. These positive relationships allowed for positive conversations to occur. Stavros and Torres (2018) note two types of conversations: "appreciative" and "depreciative" (p. 29). Appreciative conversations are those that add positive value by providing complementary suggestions to those voiced by others, or by recognizing the contributions of others, or by sharing additional possibilities. Depreciative conversations are those that degrade a discussion, or a person, or a situation. When speaking about positive conversations Stavros and Torres refer to "conversations that add value through appreciative questions and dialogue" as *"Conversations Worth Having"* (p.31). The project environment in the form of the coffee meetings, along with the encouragement for team members to engage in dialogue provided an environment for the practice of collaboration to occur. Collaboration in this project was strengthened by the need to solve complex problems within time constraints. Barrett (2012) discusses "jamming and hanging out, learning by doing and talking" when discussing his experiences as a jazz musician (p. 93). Barrett noted that "these sessions after the sessions were identity-creating moments" (p. 96). Collaboration amongst project team members in coffee meetings or during impromptu meetings served a similar purpose.

Environment. The practice of creating a positive environment takes into account the organizational culture permeating the project team, allowing the project team to productively work. In this study, creation of a positive environment included the practices of empowerment, open dialogue, and shared learning. McNamee (2015) refers to the creation of organizational culture as "Constructing a World" (p. 378). McNamee further states "as people coordinate their activities with others, patterns or rituals quickly emerge. These generate a sense of standards and expectations that we use to assess our

own and others' actions" (p. 377). Gergen and Hersted (2013) identify environments reflective of organizational culture, and environments denoting physical space.

Playfulness. The practice of playfulness involved team members having a level of sensitivity with each other, allowing civility to be maintained when dialoging and sharing with peers. Tensions were often diffused with team members taking a relational approach to their conversations and frequently injecting humor. Barrett (2012) discusses the importance of sharing information from his perspective as a musician. He advises that regardless of the size of the community, "there's a spirit of serious playfulness, even safety, associated with this sharing. By playing together, people are learning to think differently, relate differently" (p. 97). This "serious playfulness" mentioned by Barrett aligns with behaviors witnessed within the project team. Team members were not cold in their approach to peers, but civil and open. When tension was perceived, humor was often deployed to diffuse a situation. The elements in this section include enjoyment, and celebrate.

Playfulness within the project team appeared to be a wonderful tension breaker as well as a catalyst for social interaction. When referring to humor, one team member stated, "that kind of helped put things at ease every once in a while, if anything was burning up or getting stressful." The third-party facilitator observed an ease of discussion and playfulness amongst the team members. When discussing ethnographies of everyday life, Gergen (2015) speaks to using humor and notes that "making fun of what is taking place is a major vehicle for reconstruction. To joke is to be released from the grasp of the reality at hand…to place it at a distance" (p. 71).

Positive sharing. The practice of positive sharing was demonstrated at the team and individual levels. At the team level, the group felt the program managers treated them with a high level of equality and fairness. This behavior provided support to team members in developing deep levels of trust and respect for other team members. This support allowed for team members to freely share their project vision and ideas with the team, knowing they would be respected and received in an appreciative manner.

Shared learning. The third broad category grouping of relational leading practices is shared learning. Shared learning is a practice where project members exchanged ideas and developed meanings for challenges faced. The challenges may relate to a project task, learning a new skill, or receiving the latest status information through the process of dialogue. The coffee meeting was a primary location for shared learning to take place, however, ad hoc and external meetings also allowed for the process of knowledge transfer to take place. Senge (1990) refers to shared learning as "collaborative learning" in reference to conversations Werner Heisenberg had with figures who changed the science of traditional physics (p. 221). With regards to collaborative learning Senge states "that collectively, we can be more insightful, more intelligent than we can possibly be individually" (p. 221). The practices in this section include adding value, connectivity, horizontal decision-making, networking, and reliance.

Adding value. The practice of adding value, referring to a norm where a culture of openness was demonstrated by team members through their willingness to share activities, even mistakes made, through dialogue with team members. This type of approach exposed team members to a certain level of risk (Reitz, 2015). Team members did not hesitate to share information openly through dialogue at the coffee meetings and when meeting outside of the coffee meeting.

Connectivity. The practice of connectivity in this study refers to the ability of project team members to engage both formally and informally as needed. One team member suggested that connectivity occurred when individuals engaged in a genuine manner, not as a "robot." When referring to "connections," Gittell (2016) advises "The energizing nature of high-quality connections serve as an endogenous resource for accomplishing work and for creating resilience in the face of stress" (p. 29). In their review of 47 Relational Social Constructionist Leadership (RSCL) empirical studies Endres and Weibler (2017) noted "we found that the content of emerging RSCL largely involves dimensions of high-quality relating and communicating in terms of all the visible and invisible threads that connect people (in a largely positive sense)" (p. 225).

Horizontal decision making. The practice of horizontal decision-making in this study was seen as a confidence in others to assist with skills, in obtaining information, or to empathize over a given situation. Trosten-Bloom and Whitney (2010) state "To act with support is the quintessential act of

positive interdependence…The freedom to act with support leads to unprecedented action, and it also raises people's confidence in and hope for the organization" (p. 279).

Networking. The practice of networking through dialogue to discover similarities between team members, assisted relationship building amongst team members. Team members noted that having something in common with a peer led to the development and strengthening of relationships. Others noted that having commonalities within the project, i.e., goals and tasks, aided in developing relationships and somewhat acted as an insulator from additional senior management demands.

Reliance. The practice of reliance was demonstrated within the project team through the elements of skills and commitments. Team members relied on each other for assistance and project task completion. One team member noted there was a sense of camaraderie and trust exhibited between the project managers and work stream leads. Team members also noted caring, and looking out for peers as group norms. Douglass and Gittell (2012) state, "By fostering attentiveness to the situation and to others, these forms of reciprocal interrelating enable caring, timely, and knowledgeable responses" (p. 721).

Summary of relational leading practices. In summary, a total of 16 practices were discovered as relational leading practices that emerged and were evident within the project team (Table 5.2). These 16 practices, organized into three broad categories, form The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework (Table 5.4). Supporting elements of these practices were noted in the narrative and displayed in Table 5.3.

Summary

The meaning of relational leading was developed from this study and is defined as *persons in connected relationships, moving forward to make meaning to create positive change through relational practices*. In addition, through the process of answering all four research questions, this study contributed four new relational leading practices. The 16 integrated relational leading practices discovered in this study, developed, emerged, and became evident in influencing organizational communication within the project team. These integrated practices in sum create The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework.

Implications for Practice and Recommendations

The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework was developed with the purpose of linking relational leading practices to organizational communication in order to provide guidance for my immediate organization, and to make the data available to potentially assist managers of project teams and organizational teams, in public or private sectors to create and leverage relational leading practices.

Implications for practice. Keeping with a social constructionist perspective, this research offers no single set of hard and fast rules to meet every possible situation. Rather, this study provides relational leading practice considerations as guidelines on how one might proceed, understanding that it is through the dialogical process and coordination of activities where meaning within organizations will emerge. Individuals who are interested in positively influencing organizational communications through relational leading practices will benefit from this study. This is because The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework (Table 5.4) was developed based on research conducted in a project team as the unit of analysis. The relational leading practices that emerged from this study all contributed to the success of the project team members, and the project team as a collective. Since project closure, I have witnessed project team members engaging with others in the relational leading practices learned from this project. Moving forward, I am optimistic the project team members will continue to engage in relational leading practices, and build upon the successes they have come to know through this project. It is through these practices that individuals and teams will feel empowered to have generative dialogue and experience continuous learning.

Recommendations for developing and implementing relational leading practices. Based on the findings of this study, a set of recommendations have been developed for my organization and also to

assist public and private sector individuals and organizations to leverage relational leading practices to positively influence organizational communication. Eight recommendations with suggested related activities will be discussed next.

First, individuals and organizational leaders considering relational leading development and implementation of practices must first develop an understanding of social constructionist and relational leading practices. Appendix A in this study provides a reference list of literature where relational leading practices were discovered. Additionally, this thesis provides a comprehensive narrative with references for relational leading practices within a project team that influence organizational communication.

Second, individuals and organizational leaders considering relational leading practices to support a project initiative should consider the 16 integrated relational leading practices discovered in this study. Understanding that every project team and organization will be at different levels of maturity, some of the practices noted may be immediately relevant and able to be implemented reasonably quickly. Once relevant practices are identified, organizational leaders may consider the development or purchase of training programs to introduce organizational members to relational leading practices. This may be done with introductory "lunch and learn" sessions where organizational leaders provide lunch for the members and take the lunch time to review relational leading concepts. These types of sessions will provide an opportunity to introduce the concepts of relational leading, and to share how these practices can positively influence organizational communications. As organizational leaders expand their desire for relational leading practices within their organizations, more formal training can be made available through the development or external contracting of workshops, online learning opportunities, custom education programs, and conferences.

Third, developing a thorough understanding of the project requirements, including final deliverable(s), key milestones with associated timelines, scope of the project, management criteria for success, and creation of a recovery plan for each milestone deliverable (should one be needed). With the project requirements understood, the design of a project structure to support deliverables, and allow for a relational leading environment to grow, should provide for an excellent project framework. As part of the project requirements, logical work streams should be defined so that individuals with skills in the respective areas might be assigned to those work streams where their strengths can be leveraged.

Fourth, if possible, create a Program Management Office (PMO) where project managers (PM's) assist team members in coordinating administrative needs such as meetings and the creation of a safe haven location where team members are free from distractions and outside pressures. The PMO can also take responsibility for the development of effective but minimal project documentation. This includes forms and reports, to allow team members to focus on developing relationships, skills, and to meet milestones and project deadlines. PM's may also assist in creating an atmosphere of appreciation within the project environment to encourage open dialogue, playfulness, and team engagement by creating a safe space, in other words, psychological safety.

Fifth, encourage civility by developing a process to diffuse conflict and disruption. This can be done by holding separate meetings with the primary team members to address issues: it also allows the standard meeting sessions to remain on track. Creating a set of working principles or guidelines for team members to follow when disruptive situations occur will add consistency to the process and prepare team members in advance to properly respond in these types of situations. A separate meeting approach also demonstrates a level of respect to those team members who are not involved in the disruption, as their time is not consumed.

Sixth, create both formal and informal communication opportunities to allow team members the flexibility needed to solve issues and to innovate. Encourage informal discussions to support the more formal project structure. Define the methods and frequency of formal communication to all levels of management to maintain the dialogue process. Encourage an environment where shared or continuous learning conversations are able to flourish, so team members can enhance skills, develop feelings of accomplishment, collaborate, and become recognized knowledge sources.

Seventh, acknowledge and demonstrate appreciation for the successes team members achieve, no matter how mundane or significant. Schedule a formal project meeting with a recognition celebration for

the achievement of short-term wins, key milestones, and project completion. Embrace these gatherings to review the achievements, and develop positive sharing to set the vision for the next activities and project end state. In practice, acknowledging a job well done may involve only a few positive words to express gratitude and provide recognition. For teams, it may be appropriate to have a more formalized event. This may include invitees such as senior managers, or clients who benefited from the efforts of persons or teams to publically acknowledge the success and to describe the impact(s) of the effort.

Eighth, organizational leaders wishing to embrace relational leading practices are encouraged to become relational leading advocates at their place of work. The inclusion of relational leading practices within leadership development programs will expand leadership and organizational member knowledge, create consistent relational leading messaging, and assist in promoting relational leading practices. Promoting and demonstrating the benefits and power of relational leading practices for individuals, teams, and organizations will assist to encourage adoption. Sharing relational leading practices through workshops, or general learning events in organizations will all assist in providing the opportunity for others to experience and learn relational leading practices. Gergen (2015) notes that "In relational leadership the emphasis is thus placed on setting a good example for others: behavior that nourishes the relational process" (p. 201).

Recommendations for Future Research

The literature review included a small number of research studies where relational leading within organizations or groups was conducted. No research was found that was specific to the influence of relational leading on a project team's organizational communication. Therefore, the results from this first research is to further study and implement relational leading practices within an organization. The results from this research contribute to the literature on relational leading and organizational communication, and extends especially the work of Gergen (2009a, 2009b, 2015), and Gergen and Hersted (2013).

The first recommendation of this study for future research involves the high-technology project team which was used as the unit of analysis. Because a high-technology team was represented in this study, other types of non-technology teams may also benefit by developing and conducting similar research studies or extensive reflections.

Second, future research should consider organization teams that have a broader representation of cultural ethnicities. The ethnicity of core project team members from this study was primarily white. Conducting a study with a more diversified core project team consisting of individuals from multiple cultural ethnicities may provide for additional, and enhanced relational leading practices with regards to organizational communication influence.

Third, for future research it is recommended that a greater number of core project team members be located in multiple geographic regions. The majority of core team project members in this study were located in the same geographic region which allowed for more face-to-face meetings to occur. Having a greater number of core project team members working remotely, communicating solely via telephones and computer-based mediums, may alter the perceived or actual relational leading influences on core project team communication dynamics.

Fourth, future research should consider selecting a project that does not have the high-pressure, aggressive deadlines the software conversion project experienced. Core team behavior differences including relationship development, communication, knowledge sharing, and authenticity may appear differently in a lower pressure project environment where task deadlines may be viewed as less critical.

Fifth, additional research should focus on core team member relationship dynamics prior to the project start. Core team members who do not know each other before a project begins, may shift the relational leading levels of influence on project team's organizational communication.

Sixth, it is beneficial to have core project team members who are subject matter experts. When selecting a project team, having such knowledge experts will allow for skill sharing and mentoring to take place. Not all members of the team must be experts, however, for project work streams identified as critical to the operation, managers should strongly consider having at least one individual per work stream

with knowledge depth and expertise. Doing so is likely to reduce conflict within the team and increase productivity.

Lastly, future research should consider alternative methods for organizational leaders to introduce relational leading practices to their project teams. In this study, the researcher was also the primary program manager, and a work stream lead. Team members were not made aware of the processes of relational leading, they were only exposed to relational leading through processes and behavior exhibited by the researcher. One alternative may be to discuss relational leading practice considerations with project team members in advance of the project start.

Limitations of the Research

There are several potential limitations to this research study. First, because it is a qualitative study associated within a particular context, a high-technology organization project team, the results may not be generalizable. Qualitative research has value, though, because data were carefully collected in the "participants' setting" (Creswell, 2014, p. 246) and honestly reflected on.

Second, the sample size of this study was limited due to the nature of the case study to be examined. Patton (2015) suggests there is no ideal sample size and provides successful examples where n=1 and n=4. Small sample sizes allow the researcher to conduct more in-depth research. There are three types of sampling considered extremely important: sampling the phenomenon of interest, subjects, and raw materials (Boyatzis, 1998). To overcome this potential limitation based on sample size, this study used a great variety of research methods, addressing nearly all core subjects involved: requesting them to react to various aspects of the project.

A third limitation relates to the perceptions of the participants that I relied on in the research process. As the researcher participant, I had responsibility for the overall project as the program manager; in my roles as a researcher participant and program manager, participants may not have felt as free to share their perceptions with me during the 1:1 interviews as they would do with a third-party researcher.

Fourth, auto- and duo-ethnography studies are viewed by some researchers as having an "overwhelming reliance on self as the main data instrument" and "overuse of narration as the main approach to data collection, exacerbated by (un)reliability of non-corroborated personal memories, complicated by where factual recollections and interpretations begin" (Major & Savin-Baden, 2013, p. 202). An additional challenge with auto- and duo-ethnography is the perception of "poor/non-extent ethical permissions in relation to other individuals mentioned in self-narratives" (p. 203).

To curb the weight of these noted limitations, several steps were taken. First, data were collected in multiple segments. Second, an unbiased third-party was engaged to facilitate the focus group. Third, the researcher behaved as a team lead peer in receiving assignments and reporting progress results at the coffee and executive meetings. Fourth, an emphasis was placed on the collection of data from team members, and the independent third-party facilitator from 1:1 interviews, the focus group, and project documentation. Fifth, a custom software program was written to analyze and assist the researcher to compare and validate the manually processed thematic analysis results. It is hoped that this balanced approach reduced potential biased interpretations in this study.

Study Summary

This exploratory research, which discovered 16 relational leading practices, was designed to understand the meaning of relational leading, whether relational leading emerged, and was evident within a project team, and its influence on the project team's organizational communication. A qualitative approach, using an auto- and duo-ethnography single case study design, was applied to this study. Thematic analysis was the primary analysis tool. The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework was developed and presented for the meaning of relational leading, and the practices of relational leading. The Integrated Relational Leading Practices Framework consists of 12 relational leading practices from the literature, and 4 new relational leading practices discovered from this study.

All relational leading practices did emerge and were evident within the project team. It was found that these relational leading practices were also influential on the project team's organizational communication. The 16 integrated relational leading practices discovered in the study were consolidated and combined into three broad categories, empowerment, open dialogue, and shared learning. Finally, the framework suggests that developing relational leading practices within an organization provides the ability to positively influence communications, enable a spirit of empowerment, encourage shared learning, and provide opportunities for playfulness, within an environment of formal project processes, and informal social behaviors.

Epilogue

The software conversion project was successfully implemented into a production environment. The resulting implementation is functioning as intended and receiving significant daily use. The intent of this Epilogue is to provide an update as to some activities following the successful completion of the software conversion project and to provide an update on team member status.

There are many reasons for the success of this project. Certainly the technical knowledge and expertise of the work stream leads played a role. From this study, we now know that relational leading practices emerged and were evident in the project team. These relational leading practices provided an environment for team members to thrive via practices such as open dialogue, shared learning, empowerment, accountability, commonalities, reliance, and playfulness. I am grateful for the opportunity to have managed the software conversion project and to have worked with such dedicated professionals.

In my current role, I am actively participating in two impactful projects. I continue to utilize the skills learned in my thesis research, and those realized from the project team's success, in my new assignments. The early phases of one new project assignment involved the development of a team strategy. The process began by my interviewing 17 team members and subsequently developing a thematic analysis of job roles within each of the three teams that were being combined into one larger group. Through the thematic analysis process I was able to code and develop eight themes to logically group like skills, experience, future potential, and areas of concern. This analysis process also allowed us to understand the positive synergy that existed between the teams. The senior leader who was the recipient of this research and analysis was delighted with both the approach and the findings. Data were subsequently included in the senior leader's strategic planning process and shared across the organization.

My second new project relates to the shaping of my organization's future strategic vision. In this current project, two focus groups, consisting of 18 participants, were conducted with personnel engaged in the area of industry innovation and workforce transformation. A thematic analysis was conducted and resulted in the discovery of four primary focus areas. These focus areas will become the central themes to a workshop that is currently under construction. The findings discovered will be incorporated into future organization strategy.

Both of the new projects noted are exciting because through these projects, more individuals are being exposed to qualitative research methods and relational leading practices. I am encouraged to be part of this organizational change. I am also pleased to report that since the completion of the software conversion project, team members have thrived. One college intern is attending law school. The second college intern is attending professional golf school. The two co-PM's and three additional team members accepted higher-level positions within the corporation. They continue to work on high-visibility projects and report that they are using relational leading practices learned from the software conversion project with their new teams. Six team members returned to their previous roles and are viewed as subject matter experts. Lastly, three team members left the corporation to accept higher-level positions at other companies.

When I began this journey, I could not have imagined the level of personal growth that would be achieved, nor could I anticipate the positive impact levels of relational leading practices on the project team members, the department, and the organization. I am encouraged to know that the relational leading practices developed from the software conversion project will not end with the project completion. They

live on and will grow through the future work of the project team members, and the project teams that will follow.

Appendices

Appendix A

Relational Leading Practices from the Literature

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Appendix B

Email to Project Team Participants

Dear Project Team Members:

I hope this email finds you and you families well and that you are enjoying the summer. During our work together on the software conversion project I noted my return to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D. My journey continues in the area of leadership and organizational communication and the next segment of my research is about to begin. For this next segment I am requesting your assistance.

The next segment of research includes data gathering from project team members in the form of 1:1 interviews, and also via a focus group consisting of a portion of the team. The interviews and focus group sessions will be recorded so that transcripts may be printed and reviewed. Company information and your names will remain anonymous per my discussion with Human Resources and are in line with recommended corporate practices.

The focus group session will consist of approximately eight individuals and will be facilitated by Ernest Kahane, Ph.D., I will not be in attendance. The 1:1 interviews will be conducted by me with a goal of capturing information from all team members. The focus group and the 1:1 interviews are expected to last 60-75 minutes each. The focus group session and 1:1 interviews will be held on varying days/weeks to accommodate schedules. Due to the diverse geographic locations of our project team members we will utilize both face-to-face meetings and Skype for convenience.

If you are interested in participating in this research please reply to this email and indicate preferred dates and times when you will be available.

Thank you,

Ron Reidy

Appendix C

Example of an Email Confirmation from Project Team Participants

From: TM1
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 3:32 PM
To: Reidy, Ron <ron.reidy@XXX.com>
Subject: RE: Project Focus Group and 1:1 participation

Hi Ron,

I am happy to be part of the focus group and as for the 1:1 participation, my calendar is up to date if you want to setup a meeting.

Regards,

TM1

Appendix D

Ernest Kahane, Ph.D., Focus Group Facilitator

Ernest Kahane earned his Ph.D. in education policy studies from the University of Illinois, U.S.A. As a graduate student, he worked at the University of Illinois Medical School and had interests in professional education. As a graduate student he managed the second year program for medical students focusing on group study and differential diagnosis. In this role he became very interested in adult learning. Following graduation he taught at Boston University and inherited the adult learning class created by Malcolm Knowles, who developed the adult learning field and taught at Boston University.

Following several years at Boston University, Dr. Kahane moved from academia to the business sector working at Honeywell Corporation and Digital Equipment Corporation where he leveraged his instructional designer and adult learning knowledge. He remained in the high-technology sector working for a Fortune 500 corporation as a director of global education strategy until his retirement in 2015. In 2017 Dr. Kahane completed a book concerning the history of corporate education. It focuses on the rise and fall of corporate education, and the need for the reinvention of corporate education.

Appendix E

Examples of Interview Email Review Confirmation from Interviewees

From: TM9
Sent: Tuesday, August 8, 2017 3:21 PM
To: Reidy, Ron
Subject: Re: TM9 Interview Approval

Hi Ron, thank you. It looks good. I approve and wish you all the best on your research.

From: TM10
Sent: Thursday, August 24, 2017 4:53 PM
To: Reidy, Ron <ron.reidy@XXX.com>
Subject: RE: TM10 Interview Approval

All good – thanks Ron! I am ok with what this has captured.

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