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Employee Lived Experiences and Initiative Success in Arkansas Quality Award Recipient Organizations

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Walden University

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Carol Barton

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2017

Abstract

Employee Lived Experiences and Initiative Success in
Arkansas Quality Award Recipient Organizations

by

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MBA, Walden University, 2007

BS, Phoenix University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

Businesses with failed quality initiatives lose revenue, experience high expenses, and have fewer market opportunities. Researchers attribute failed quality initiatives to human and social factors. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees in companies that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015. No one knows how employees' experiences contribute to successful quality initiatives, or how their stories about their experiences influence quality management and continuous improvement. The conceptual framework consisted of Weick's theory of sense-making and Deming's system of profound knowledge. Data were collected via semistructured interviews with 11 participants across 8 organizations. Participants checked the member experience summary created from verbatim interview transcriptions analyzed per van Manen's whole-part-whole model. The analysis of the transcripts showed that participants' most meaningful experiences were those with people, followed by materials, feelings, time, and space. The study findings also showed that people transferred proven problem-solving methods from the workplace to their home and out into the community. The results of this study could contribute to positive social change by helping managers increase the potential for a successful quality initiative when they consider people's needs and contributions before adopting a set of quality management tools and practices.

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Dedication

For everyone who has dreamed...I believe that Henry David Thoreau said it best:
“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they
should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The distinction between successful and unsuccessful quality management initiatives appears to lie in what some researchers called soft total quality management (TQM) or soft quality management factors. Abdullah and Tari (2012) defined soft TQM factors as any TQM practice that dealt with people. Successful quality management initiatives leverage soft quality management factors. In other words, developing a successful quality management system (QMS) depends on understanding people. Researchers studied people in the context of the individual's organizations.

Researchers have tried to learn how organizational culture or leadership behaviors affect QMS practices. They have studied soft quality management factors from a cultural perspective (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013; Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner, 2014) and a leadership perspective (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013; Johansson, Witell, & Elg, 2013). An employee's experiences mold his or her frame of reference for accepting, resisting, or partially resisting changes. Employees use their past experiences to build the mental model they use when they decide the meaning of an experience and to determine their subsequent actions (Weick, 1995). Researchers have not studied employee lived experiences to understand why quality management initiatives succeed or fail.

People draw upon their experiences to create stories about an event. When someone recounts an event, he or she naturally presents it as a story. I asked employees in businesses with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) to share their experiences about what it was like to work in a company that sought and achieved AGQA recognition. The research data was examined to find how people in organizations

used the AGQA criteria to solve problems in their businesses. The self-identity of some participants changed, especially if they had been, or became, AGQA examiners.

Managers may be able to use the study findings to customize their company's quality management implementation strategies. The implication for positive social change lies in the potential to increase the number of successful quality management initiatives.

This chapter provides the background of the study, the problem and purpose statements, and the research questions that guided the study. The conceptual framework blended Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking and Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge. The rest of the chapter covers the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope, and significance.

Background of the Study

Organizations adopt QMSs for many reasons. These reasons include acquiring market share (Talib, Rahman, & Qureshi, 2013), as a requirement to enter or remain in a market (Texeira Quirós & Justino, 2013) or to improve a company's processes (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013). Regardless of the reason for adoption, most quality management initiatives fail (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Quality initiatives are difficult to implement, and QMSs are difficult to sustain. Talib and Rahman (2015) identified 12 barriers to a successful quality management initiative. Nevertheless, leaders are willing to risk failure because quality management systems offer tangible value to organizations that successfully adopt them.

The value of QMSs to an organization has been well-documented. Literature reviews provide a way to judge the value of quality management systems. Mosadeghrad

(2014) examined English language articles written between 1980 and 2010, a span of 30 years. Dahlgaard-Park, Chen, Jang, and Dahlgaard (2013) reviewed 25 years of literature on quality management. Mosadeghrad focused on empirical studies while Dahlgaard-Park et al. looked at the management systems of TQM. These researchers confirmed that Deming's (2013) precepts supported business excellence and that a successful quality management system had strong ties to the company's culture. The sources used by each research team only overlapped twice out of 181 sources, thereby showing independent support for the researchers' findings of the positive value of a QMS.

One researcher looked at the quality management literature about small- and mid-sized enterprises. Murphy (2016) reviewed 55 studies from 18 countries. The studies covered the years between 1990 and 2014. Murphy shared two sources with Mosadeghrad (2014) and one source with Dahlgaard-Park et al. (2013). Murphy's findings agreed with the findings of Mosadeghrad and Dahlgaard-Park et al. Quality management is (a) good for businesses, (b) managers play a crucial part in the success of a quality initiative, and (c) that if leaders commit to quality management employees will adopt quality management practices for any size of business.

History of Quality Management

Personal relationships between craftsman and customer formed the first QMSs. They focused on the goal of satisfying the customer (Weckenmann, Akkasoglu, & Werner, 2015). Each crafter handled the design, production, and the sale of the items made. The introduction of mass production removed the ownership of item quality from the producer to the inspector.

The Industrial Revolution factory system used written specifications and uniform measurements as the definition of quality. The specialization of job duties in the factory system meant that no one person was responsible for producing a product. Inspections became the norm for preventing defective products from reaching consumers (Weckenmann et al., 2015). The shift in focus from customer assurance to waste reduction began with Shewhart's concentration on processes in the mid-1920s at the Bell Laboratories (Bacivarov, 2014). American businesses resisted Shewhart's tools and relied on inspections until Japanese companies began taking over product markets (Deming, 2013) by using advice from Deming and others. This change in American manufacturing dominance began with an invitation from Japanese leaders.

After World War II, the Japanese sought to rebuild their manufacturing capacity. A group of Japanese leaders invited Deming and Juran to share their insights and expertise with the Japanese government and businesses (Deming, 2013). Japanese industries stopped producing defective products and moved into a dominant economic position (Deming, 2013). The Japanese achieved this domination by focusing on a total quality approach that melded human resource management with strategic management. In other words, Japanese businesses successfully combined soft quality management factors with hard quality management factors.

Lived Experience and Storytelling

Where a quality management initiative is successful, the success may be due to how members of an organization interpreted the changes to their environment. To make sense of the environment, a person simultaneously engages in both creation and

discovery (Weick, 1995). Because invention precedes interpretation, each individual imposes personal experiences, knowledge, and expectations, in the form of a mental model, upon the event (Weick, 1995). It is at this point that storytelling comes into play. People use their experiences to produce stories.

People tell stories about what the organizational changes mean to them individually and as a group. The act of storytelling can be invisible because it is also the act of interpreting information. At work, employees share information about the people and events in the organization in the form of personal interpretations. Vaara, Sonenshein, and Boje (2016) suggested that these conversations help to maintain organizational stability. Therefore, storytelling is integral to how people understand events in an organization. Groups of people co-develop their understanding about events (Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) stated that social interaction performs a critical role in individual and organizational sensemaking. The interpretations and stories about an event are dependent on who is present according to Hasson and Frith (2016) since neurobiology controls human interactions when people make sense of a shared experience. Thus, the sense made of an experience depends on who shares the experience.

Mental models and theory development rely on people's experiences. People, argued Weick (1995,) use mental models to make retrospective sense of an event by assembling an interpretation in the form of a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Deming (2013) argued that understanding developed when people tested theories. Since, Deming (2013) contended that understanding was crucial to adopting a quality-focused mindset, then the stories people tell affect their understanding about quality

management. Whether the activity is an interpretation derived from a mental model or the testing of a theory, the outcome is the same. People create stories about their experiences with quality management systems.

While researchers have studied quality initiatives in many contexts, they have not studied people's experiences with a quality initiative. Researchers identified possible human or social factors for the failure of quality initiatives (Abdullah & Tari, 2012; Campos, da Costa Mendes, Silva, & Oom do Valle, 2014; Talib & Rahman, 2015), but none of the researchers examined failed quality initiatives from the perspective of employee lived experiences. During the literature review, I did not uncover any quantitative or qualitative study that used Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge or Weick's (1995) work on sensemaking to examine how people used storytelling to understand their lived experiences of adopting and using a QMS. Researchers have not published any findings on how employees used their lived experiences to develop stories about best practices in organizations with a QMS.

This research study focused on the lived experiences of employees in organizations with an AGQA. I explored how employees' experiences contributed to the organization and the influence of their stories about those experiences on quality management and continuous improvement choices. The findings from the study would add to the body of knowledge about organizational change management. The lack of leadership support for quality management is crucial to implementation failures according to Dahlgard-Park et al. (2013). Investigating the lived experiences of employees and how the stories the employees developed to understand and to describe

their experiences can provide leaders with a better understanding about how stories enable transformation through sharing best practices and lessons learned in a company with a QMS.

Problem Statement

There is a high global failure rate of quality initiatives within businesses. Failure rates for implementing quality initiatives varied between 60% to 90% (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Businesses use quality initiatives as a strategy to increase their competitiveness, sustainability, and profitability. The general problem is that companies with failed initiatives lose revenue, experience higher expenses, and have fewer market opportunities. Some researchers posit that adopting quality practices rests upon the lived experiences of employees (Goh, 2015; Gondo & Amis, 2013). The specific problem is that the impact of employee lived experiences on quality initiative success has not been explored. Semistructured interviews were used to collect the lived experiences of employees in businesses that received the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award. Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology method was used to explore the lived experiences of the employees. The study findings showed that relationships and items held the most experiences for participants.

Purpose of the Study

The study was designed to capture the lived experiences of employees through their storytelling and to explore how the participants used their lived experiences for sensemaking and sharing best practices. Employee lived experience accounts, that is employee storytelling, has never been studied to understand why quality management

initiatives succeed or fail. I combined Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking with Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge to explore three things. First, how do employees use storytelling to make sense of the changes in their organizations? Second, what is the effect of storytelling on the employees' way of working and their understanding of quality management? Moreover, third, does the adoption of quality management practices affect the employees' identity, as described by their lived experience accounts? Phenomenology is a search for the unique essence held by each person. Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological approach was used to capture and to examine the accounts told by participants about their experiences. The interview material was analyzed to develop a rich description of how these lived experiences affected the participants.

Research Question

Research questions create the framework for designing and conducting a research study. Patton (2015) pointed out that researchers conducted many kinds of studies about the same topic, but from different perspectives. He noted that basic research questions focused on different outcomes than action research. The guiding question for this study fits his basic research model because the question is important to quality management studies.

Research Question: What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award?

Subquestion 1: What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award?

Subquestion 2: How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study consisted of two theories. Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking explains how lived experiences are perceived, analyzed, accepted completely, accepted partially, or rejected. Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge, a management theory, provided a model for identifying quality-focused behaviors and demonstrating how these behaviors contribute to a company's success. Together, Weick's theory and Deming's theory offered a way to explore the experiences of employees in a company with a successful QMS.

A QMS is one of many systems in an organization. Weick (1995) and Deming (2013) saw organizations as collections of systems. People are inseparable from an organization's systems. Organizations can no longer rely on a static set of systems to handle a global economy. Systems dynamically change as people strive to make sense of unanticipated events and outcomes (Bosma, Chia, & Fouweather, 2016). As people change the way they work and how they see themselves, so does the organization change in the way it works and its collective identity. Both Deming and Weick saw people as the keys to altering the behavior of an organization.

Sensemaking is a person's effort to make sense of something. According to Weick (1995), sensemaking is not a metaphor for something else. It is about authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery. Sensemaking is about context. Weick discriminated between sensemaking and sensibleness. Sensibleness derives from

relationships not from parts. Weick identified seven properties of sensemaking: (a) plausibility, (b) pragmatic, (c) coherence, (d) reasonableness, (e) creation, (f) invention, and (g) instrumentality. Chapter 2 includes a detailed examination of Weick's theory of sensemaking.

One of the most common sensemaking gambits rests in the phrase, "That reminds me of a story." Weick (1995) argued that stories, their symbols, and forms function as templates to explain and to energize. Ito and Inohara's study (2015) on narrative repertoire supported Weick's argument. Ito and Inohara interviewed corporate executives for their study. They found that the executives used reference points as lenses to interpret their experiences. Furthermore, these reference point interpretations could change (Ito & Inohara, 2015). An effective story is fundamental to sensemaking. Weick contended that stories were inventions rather than discoveries. The invention of a story allows a person to impose a temporal sequence. This sequence mirrors the Aristotelian story model of having a beginning, a middle, and an end (BME) (Boje, 2014). This imposition of a sequence is a powerful sensemaking tool that enables someone to understand the source event. This ordering of events and circumstances may happen at the cost of editing the event sequence and elements as the person seeks meaning by comparing their previous experiences to the new event (Weick, 1995). Therefore, people change their stories about an event.

The dynamic nature of people's stories affect the systems in an organization, especially the systems that control how people work. The system of profound knowledge offers a management system for the entire organization. Deming's (2013) system of

profound knowledge is not about managing the quality of a good or service; rather it is about the transformation of individuals and through that person's transformation, the transformation of an organization. Therefore, Deming's management theory is about micro-level organizational transformation. He also believed that information and knowledge were different. Information is facts while knowledge is what emerges when someone uses information to solve a problem. This knowledge will affect how someone perceives their environment (Weick, 1995). Ideally, someone blends information and knowledge when they solve a problem.

The four elements of the system of profound knowledge show how information and knowledge complement each other. These are (a) appreciation for a system, (b) knowledge about variation, (c) theory of knowledge or how to develop a theory and test the theory against the situation, and (d) psychology (understanding people as individuals) (Deming, 2013). I present the characteristics of the system of profound knowledge in detail in Chapter 2. During his entire career, Deming called for managers to lead their organizations by setting a good example through their words and actions.

The stories and actions of executive managers predict the success or failure of a quality initiative. The use of storytelling for knowledge transfer, leadership activities, and organizational transformation is well documented (Kadembo, 2012; Rowlinson, Casey, Hansen, & Mills, 2014). Deming (2013) wrote that leaders were the people in the organization who transformed the organization. To perform this job, the leader requires knowledge, personality, and persuasive power. Executives and leaders can use storytelling to transform their companies.

Storytelling fills many functions in an organization. Researchers have studied these activities in many populations and companies (Caminotti & Gray, 2012; Mattsson, Corsaro, & Ramos, 2015; Dawson & McLean, 2013). Scholars have sought to understand the role of storytelling in transferring knowledge or culture (Caminotti & Gray, 2012; Humphreys, Ucbasaran, & Lockett, 2012; Johansen, 2012) or in making sense of organizational environments (Mattsson, Corsaro, & Ramos, 2015; Weber, Thomas, & Stephens, 2015). Researchers have conducted these studies in a variety of populations (Dawson & McLean, 2013; Johansen, 2012; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015) and organizations (Näslund & Perner, 2012; Ybema, 2014). Storytelling has been studied through case studies (Dawson & McLean, 2013; Näslund & Perner, 2012) and phenomenological studies (Venselaar & Gruis, 2016) while using analytical methods as diverse as activation analysis (Chow et al., 2014) and interview transcript analysis (Eshraghi & Taffler, 2015). Storytelling and stories provide the foundation for learning, organizational culture, and personal identity. First, people understand an event by telling stories about the event (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Erbert, 2014). Second, stories are how people learn (Caminotti & Gray, 2012; Colville, Brown, & Pye, 2012; Humphreys et al., 2012). Third, stories form the basis of an organization's culture (Brady & Haley, 2013; Briody, Meerwarth Pester, & Trotter, 2012; Dailey & Browning, 2014). Fourth, storytelling is used to share cultural values and event interpretation frameworks (Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, & Golant, 2014; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). Finally, stories are how people create their personal identities (Briody et al., 2012; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Chapter 2 offers details about how people use storytelling and stories in

individual and organizational sensemaking, identity and transformation, and knowledge sharing.

Nature of the Study

The study's aim was to increase researchers' understanding how employee lived experiences contribute to successful quality initiatives. The lived experiences of employees in businesses that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) were the unit of analysis for this study. Qualitative research methods are appropriate for conducting studies about human experience (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). The case study method provides a way to look at organizational behavior. While experiences affect behavior, this study is not about behavior, but the experiences of the participant. The case study approach is not appropriate for the research question. The topic of study is the phenomenon of employee lived experiences, so phenomenology is the correct method to use (van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a method.

The concepts and approaches that lie under the heading of phenomenology have changed over time. Since Husserl developed his definition of phenomenology in the 1900s, other researchers have expanded the use and focus of phenomenological strategies (van Manen, 2014). I explored the methods of Giorgi, Gadamer, and van Manen. After reviewing their research methods, I chose van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological approach because it focuses on the everyday lived experience of participants. Since user experiences, as expressed by the accounts the participants shared, are the unit of analysis, van Manen's focus on writing and reflecting on the language of the interview is the right phenomenological approach for this study. The choice of a

hermeneutic phenomenological approach supports the lived experience design of the study. Van Manen (2014) contended that writing and phenomenological investigations were inseparable. Each person has a unique lifeworld constructed from their beliefs, knowledge, expectations, and experiences. They express this lifeworld through the words they choose to recount their experiences.

To join the study, all participants needed to have worked in a business that received an AGQA. The study population was selected to mitigate concerns about the characteristics of an organization with an effective QMS. A review of organizations published as AGQA recipients by various Arkansas media outlets or listed by the Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence (AIPE) between 1997 and 2015 revealed 248 organizations. The AGQA program uses the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) framework for the award requirements with each level incorporating more of the MBNQA criteria. Quality or excellence awards have been used by researchers as a proxy (Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo, 2013; Fu, Chou, Chen, & Wang, 2015; G. P. Zhang & Xia, 2013) for recognizing that an organization has an effective QMS thereby supporting the use of the AGQA for the research study. The four levels of the AGQA, (a) challenge, (b) commitment, (c) achievement, and (d) the Governor's Award for Performance Excellence offered a way to learn if experiences differed by award level. Appendix A contains more information about the AGQAs. I used purposive sampling to select the prospective participants. Then, I contacted the prospective participants through letters sent through the U.S. Postal Service, e-mail sent

by professional organizations on my behalf, through LinkedIn InMail, and through personal contacts. Eleven participants from eight organizations took part in the study.

Participants shared their experiences in semistructured interviews. To support the trustworthiness of the study, I asked participants the interview guide questions in the same order during the interview. A digital recording device recorded participant responses. The recordings were transcribed word-for-word as part of the analytical process. The interview transcripts provided the primary source of data. Field notes and bracketing material gave context for reviewing the transcripts.

The data went through two distinctive analyses. Van Manen's (2014) method requires a researcher to examine the material as (a) a whole, (b) in selected segments, and (c) line-by-line. HyperRESEARCH, a software program used for qualitative data analysis was used to assign codes to transcript segments. The codes used to develop the participant experience summaries emerged from reading and reflecting on the transcript contents. After creating the experience summaries and performing the member check, I re-evaluated the participants' transcripts through the lens of van Manen's existentials.

Definitions

General Terms and Narrative Terms

Antenarrative. Story elements that precede a grand narrative, provide the framework for grand narratives, recur in cycles, and act as the bridge between participant stories and organizational stories (Boje, Haley, & Saylor, 2016).

Aristotelian story model. A story with a beginning, middle, and an end (BME) (Boje, 2014).

Culture. The habits, beliefs, values, and behaviors followed by people in an organization (Campos et al., 2014).

Narrative. Situated in time, discursively constructed, and essential to individual, organizational, and social sensemaking (Vaara et al., 2016).

Story. Structure varies based on reason for telling the story, provides context for facts, appeals to emotion (Beamish & Beamish, 2015); a social transaction whereby one person tells another about an event (Adorisio, 2014).

Psychological and Phenomenological Terms

Bridling. Pre-understandings are restrained, observations are forward-looking, and actively engaged throughout the study as the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon (Vagle, 2014).

Epoché/Bracketing. Suspension of existing beliefs about something by placing brackets around those beliefs in order to call attention to those assumptions (van Manen, 2014); backward looking (Vagle, 2014).

Hermeneutics. The theory and practice of lived experience interpretation using the language of the participants (van Manen, 2014).

Identity. A person's unique combination of personality, knowledge, experience, and behaviors (Obodaru, 2012).

Lifeworld. Derived from Husserl's work, an expression of the unique lived experiences of an individual, the day-to-day experiences of each person (van Manen, 2014).

Lived experiences. Events experienced by someone; the base material used to drive inquiry and reflection about the event; the starting and ending point of phenomenological research (van Manen, 2014).

Lived meaning. How a person derives and understands reality and meaning from their experience (van Manen, 2014).

Reduction. Attentive examination of a phenomenon with the open mind prepared by the epoché (van Manen, 2014).

Quality Management Terms

Hard Total Quality Management factors. Also known as hard quality management factors these are the technical aspects of a QMS such as the tools and techniques (e.g. Pareto diagrams, force field analysis, flow charts) (Abdullah & Tari, 2012).

Soft Total Quality Management factors. Also known as soft quality management factors these are the human aspects of a QMS such as leadership, customer focus, management roles, organizational culture, and training (Abdullah & Tari, 2012).

Sensemaking Terms

Mental model. The unique framework that represents how someone sees the world and the interrelationships between things in the world and the person; can be situationally linked (Weick, 1995).

Sensegiving. The meaning that is given to a disruption that is then shared socially (Humphreys et al., 2012).

Sensemaking. Activity grounded in both individual and social activity performed by an individual or organization to understand various stimuli (Weick, 1995).

Assumptions

An assumption is something that a researcher cannot control but is required to carry out a research study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Participant lived experiences provide the data for a phenomenological study. The first assumption was that the employees of an organization with an AGQA support quality management and that they would show this support through their behavior and their responses to the interview questions. The second assumption was that the participants were open and honest about how they feel or felt about being in an organization with a QMS when they responded to the interview questions. Thereby providing data that would increase researcher awareness of how employee experiences affected the adoption of a successful QMS through the analysis of the participant accounts. The third assumption is that people naturally lead lives built around storytelling and used stories to understand their environment and their places within an environment. Therefore, the success or failure of a quality initiative is strongly influenced by the stories that people tell themselves.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study included employees in organizations with an AGQA, purposively sampled within Arkansas. The use of a business excellence (BE) award as a proxy for identifying a successful quality management system is supported by Zhang and Xia (2013). Simon and Goes (2013) offered boundaries as an alternative term for delimitations. The minimum of eight participants who responded to interview questions

during a meeting over the telephone or face-to-face as part of the phenomenological study design is a delimitation. I combined two theories to create the conceptual framework.

This framework gave a way to examine employee lived experiences through the accounts provided by the employees. I combined Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking and Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge. The study design excluded ISO-certified organizations without an AGQA from consideration because there are many types of ISO certifications and each certification has its strengths and weaknesses. A certification may focus on specific points or activities within an organization and thus does not represent an organization-wide look at quality management. The results of this study are transferable to managers in service, healthcare, education, manufacturing, and government agencies who want to create a successful QMS.

Limitations

The limitations of this study fell into three areas. First, I interpreted the participants' lived experiences, and the stories participants told through my personal framework and experiences because this was a qualitative study. In a qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2015). Second, the choice of methodology affected the processes used to gather and interpret data. Unlike some qualitative methods, phenomenological data collection and analysis does not have a preferred set of steps. The choice of van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology meant that I focused on the words used by the participants to describe their experiences and that I then interpreted the meanings of those experiences in the context of van Manen's existentials. Other forms of

phenomenology use coding to identify themes in the data. Third, the use of a purposive sampling of a limited population restricted the participants in the study to people who worked in organizations with an AGQA instead of people who worked in organizations with a QMS. The sample size of 11 people exceeded the minimum of eight participants and allowed data saturation to be reached.

Qualitative studies produce transferable rather than generalizable findings. If the study findings resonate with the reader; the researcher used vivid language, and the findings provide insight, then the findings are transferable (van Manen, 2014).

Phenomenological studies examine a question and do not produce empirical generalizations (van Manen, 2014). However, managers in organizations with a QMS or in organizations considering a quality initiative may find the insights obtained from the findings useful.

The most important tool the researcher has for reducing bias is to recognize when and where the researcher has a bias. This bias can be difficult to perceive because a researcher cannot imagine another way of thinking, feeling, or behaving. In a phenomenological study, the researcher must become aware of personal biases and how prior knowledge could affect data gathering and data analysis (O'Halloran, Littlewood, Richardson, Tod, & Nesti, 2016). To develop my awareness of biases, I kept a detailed research log. I documented participant encounters, my data analysis choices, and reflections about the data as I transcribed the interviews, posed potential interpretations of the material and my reactions to participant experiences. The use of rigorous

documentation and checking supported the strength of the research study design and the research study findings.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

Executives start quality management practices in their companies because of the benefits they believe that the QMS will deliver. Business managers adopt QMSs for a variety of reasons, including discovering that a QMS is required to enter a market (Lo, Wiengarten, Humphreys, Yeung, & Cheng, 2013), improving financial performance (O'Neill, Sohal, & Teng, 2016), or managing customer focus and satisfaction issues (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013). Certainly, few academics argue against the benefits of a QMS for a business for improving customer satisfaction, business performance, and employee satisfaction (Assarlind & Gremyr, 2016; Psomas, Vouzas, & Kafetzopoulos, 2014). Despite these proven benefits, most quality management initiatives fail. These failure rates vary between 60% and 90% (Mosadeghrad, 2014). This gap between proven benefit and almost certain failure drives researchers (Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Kovach & Mairani, 2012; Mosadeghrad, 2014) to identify practices that could bridge the gap and improve the success rate of quality management initiatives.

The study confirmed the potential of QMSs in general and the AGQA in particular, for helping businesses achieve business profitability, increased market share, improved customer satisfaction, and an engaged workforce in for-profit and non-profit organizations and government agencies. Non-profit and government organizations benefited from improved business processes that allowed operations to continue without

significant impact despite the layoff of many employees. For-profit organizations experienced reduced turnover and improved customer satisfaction. These outcomes arose from the experiences of participants with leadership and management support, teamwork, employee engagement, training, and learning. These are all soft quality management factors. Furthermore, this study confirmed the value of the Baldrige Excellence Criteria, which is the material used by the AGQA program.

Significance to Theory

Most QMSs studies have been quantitative. The three qualitative studies were case studies (Goh, 2015; Ingelsson, Eriksson, & Lilja, 2012; Steiber & Alänge, 2013). The design of this study was phenomenological. Specifically, I explored the lived experiences of members through van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological method. The qualitative study design is appropriate for studying issues such as the human factors identified as contributors to failed quality management initiatives. Abdullah and Tari (2012) listed management commitment, employee involvement, training and education, and reward and recognition in their list of soft quality management factors. Mosadeghrad (2014) listed insufficient education and training as the number one reason that TQM initiatives failed. Mosadeghrad's extensive list of factors includes the elements identified by Abdullah and Tari. Mosadeghrad's list of factors confirmed the importance the work done by Abdullah and Tari.

This research design offered three contributions to quality management studies. First, this research contributes to the literature for the use of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) model for assessing the validity, reliability, and research quality of a qualitative study.

Second, van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological method has not been used by researchers to examine the lived experiences of employees adopting or using a QMS.

Third, the study findings contribute to the literature on Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge.

Significance to Social Change

One implication for positive social change lies in the potential to increase the number of successful quality management initiatives which produces successful and resilient businesses. Leaders and managers who understand how employee experiences support or stifle a quality initiative are more likely to engage in behaviors that produce supportive employee experiences. These behaviors include effective communication with employees, training, and enabling problem-solving at the front-line. In organizations that are interested in creating and supporting a quality-focused culture, the implications for positive social change include recognizing the power of storytelling to drive workplace and community change. The power of stories and storytelling affects people's beliefs (Appel & Mara, 2013) and how they see themselves (Obodaru, 2012; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). A successful quality management initiative may rest on the stories developed by employees to understand their experiences. These stories about the tools and their experiences follow people home.

This implication that people will use the problem-solving tools from the workplace to solve problems in their personal life and their communities, show this movement from a workplace to individual to community produces a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement. People are unlikely to separate their mental models for work

and non-work environments. One of the study participants made this argument to his executive team. The employees use the methods from their workplace to solve problems in their homes and communities as an outcome of their changed mental models.

Ramarajan and Reid's (2013) research on the impact of nonwork identities on people's workplace identities supports this perspective. As people learn to solve problems in different ways, the way that they see themselves and the way that people interact with their environment changes.

Summary and Transition

Organizations continue to invest in quality management initiatives despite a high failure rate. These failures might be traceable to the stories that people told themselves and others about their experiences with the quality initiative. Asking employees in businesses with a successful QMS to share their experiences helps identify ways to reduce the failure rates of quality management initiatives. The findings from this study may add to the literature supporting the positive social impact of a QMS. The implications for positive social change lie in the potential to increase the number of successful quality management initiatives. A positive social change potential also exists when people take home problem-solving tools from work. This chapter introduced how people used storytelling to make sense of their environment, share knowledge, and create or maintain a QMS.

In Chapter 2 the role of storytelling in sensemaking, identity, and learning, Weick's theory of sensemaking, and Deming's system of profound knowledge are explored in greater detail. Chapter 3 contains a detailed analysis of van Manen's

approach to hermeneutic phenomenology and the method's applicability to this study. In Chapter 4, I describe the processes used for data collection and the development of the participant experience summaries and the performance of the existential analysis process. Chapter 5 contains an interpretation of the findings. I identify the limitations of the study and offer recommendations for future studies. Finally, I examine the study's implications and offer my conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees in companies with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award to discover how employee experiences contributed to successful quality initiatives through the stories they told about the quality management initiatives. Businesses use quality initiatives as a strategy to increase their competitiveness, sustainability, and profitability. It makes poor business sense to invest in a system that usually fails. According to several researchers (Calvo-Mora et al., 2013; Mosadeghrad, 2014; Sabet, Adams, & Yazdani, 2016; Talib & Rahman, 2015), most quality management initiatives fail. The failure rate varied by the reporting researcher. Failed quality initiatives shared a common thread: the human factor. Researcher findings suggest that quality management failures were due to soft quality management factors (Fu et al., 2015; Mosadeghrad, 2014). Examples of soft quality management factors include human resources, leadership, training, and management (Abdullah & Tari, 2012). These factors affect the experiences of employees in the organization. Examining the lived experiences of employees in businesses with successful quality management initiatives may help increase the number of successful quality management initiative adoption.

The conceptual framework combined two theories about how people make sense of their environment. In the first theory, Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking, Weick argued that people understand experiences through the process of talking about what the experience meant to them. In the second theory, Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge, Deming took the counterpoint that someone understood something after the

person tested a theory about what had happened. Each theory rests on how people choose to act based on their lived experiences. Weick recognized the influence of language on interpreting lived experiences. Storytelling is a form of talking. People tell stories to themselves and others about the meaning of an experience. People constantly use storytelling to interpret their experiences. This behavior makes it difficult to separate sensemaking and storytelling from lived experiences.

Literature Search Strategy

This research study concentrated on three elements: quality management, sensemaking, and storytelling. Several databases were queried using a general-to-specific search strategy in Academic Search Premier, Academic Search Complete, ERIC, ProQuest Business, SAGE, and ABI/Inform Complete. The queries used the keywords *quality*, *stories*, *storytelling*, and *sensemaking*. This part of the review was limited to the years 1980 to 2015 and covered both articles and books to identify foundation literature in the field of quality management. Two internet search engines, Bing and Duck Duck Go, were used with keyword searches during this phase to identify potentially relevant articles or other resources missed during searches of the academic journal databases.

After reviewing the initial search results, I refined the search queries to use synonyms unique to a database and then I created wildcard combinations to produce the widest array of articles. Keyword phrase searches used *organizations* and *stor**, *effective organizations* and *story*, *story* and *quality management* and *organizations*, *organization* and *quality management* and *failure* and *story*, and *storytelling* and *organizational change*. The second round of database searches was limited to full-text, peer-reviewed

materials between 2000 and 2013. The dissertation topic is a business problem. ABI/INFORM Complete had the largest number of appropriate resources for the dissertation topic, making it a logical choice as the primary database for the literature review. A literature search for articles produced between 2012 and 2015 provided recently published material. Reference lists attached to reviewed articles offered additional leads. Monthly keyword searches in Google Scholar and weekly ProQuest alerts provided Walden library links to studies more recent than 2012.

Conceptual Framework

Joined theories offer an innovative way of examining soft quality management factors. There is an inverse relationship between Weick's (1995) work on sensemaking and Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge. Deming's system of profound knowledge and Weick's theory of sensemaking support each other. Deming took the stance that people develop knowledge by creating and testing theories. Weick took the opposite position: no one knows what he or she thinks or knows about something until he or she sees what he or she says about the event. Weick and Deming both viewed organizations as systems. Weick and Deming saw people as inseparable parts of those systems. I chose Weick's theory of sensemaking because sensemaking is about life and living, language and story: the components of lived experience. Weick's work rests upon acting before thinking while Deming's work is about thinking before acting. Both Weick and Deming believed that small changes could make large impacts on the environment. Weick's theory of sensemaking is about everyday life. Disruptions do not have to be

dramatic to require someone to engage in sensemaking. Deming's theory, like Weick's theory, is about everyday life.

The system of profound knowledge is not a management system focused on quality. It is a management system that helps leaders in an organization develop and sustain employee behaviors that lead to quality-focused outcomes throughout the organization. Deming (2013) based his system of profound knowledge on his 14 Points for Management. The system of profound knowledge is a management theory that supports results researchers recognized as essential to business success. Researchers have identified three beneficial results of a successful quality initiative. These outcomes are leadership involvement (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013; Fu et al., 2015; Steiber & Alänge, 2013), soft quality management factors support (Abdullah & Tari, 2012; Calvo-Mora et al., 2013; Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa, 2013), and profitability (Swink & Jacobs, 2012; Texeira Quirós & Justino, 2013; G. P. Zhang & Xia, 2013). The focus of the system of profound knowledge suggests that managers using these practices are more likely to be in an organization with an effective QMS, yet few researchers have studied the impact of Deming's system of profound knowledge.

The literature review revealed the scarcity of material on Deming and his work on business management practices. Carder and Monda (2013) argued that Deming's management theories are no longer well known. Babula, Tookey, Nicolaides, and Infande's (2015) review of literature about Deming from 2008 to May 2014 supported Carder and Monda's position. Babula et al. (2015) discovered that articles and citations about Deming's work had decreased. However, when they used Kruskal-Wallis and

Mann-Whitney tests, the researchers found that the impact of Deming's work exceeded that of his contemporaries such as Juran, Crosby, or Ishikawa. Researchers have recently begun re-examining the potential of Deming's theory for solving modern workplace quality management issues.

A QMS is not about managing quality. A QMS is about using quality-focused principles as management guides. Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge represents a transformative management theory based on four factors. These factors are (a) appreciation for a system, (b) knowledge about variation, (c) theory of knowledge, and (d) psychology. Deming aimed first to transform the individual and then the organization. In practice, the line blurs between QMSs and the system of profound knowledge. Perhaps, this blur is partially due to Deming's standing as a quality guru. The assessment of the blur is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Within the scope of this dissertation is how a theory such as the system of profound knowledge can explain how people use storytelling to understand quality management behaviors and make sense of events in an organization with a QMS.

People use sensemaking to process their everyday experiences. Sensemaking can be difficult to describe. Sensemaking is not metaphorical (Weick, 1995). Weick noted that the act of sensemaking was so ingrained in the human experience that the process is invisible (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). In 1995, he described sensemaking as a set of ideas. By 2005, Weick's years of research had helped him to develop a more formal explanation. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) described sensemaking as an ongoing process that is (a) central to human experience, (b) was tied to language, and (c)

was socially mediated. Table 1 matches Weick's (1995) propositions to the features identified in the 2005 article.

Table 1

A Comparison of Sensemaking Properties and Sensemaking Features

Seven Properties of Sensemaking (Weick, 1995)	Features of Sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005)
Grounded identity construction	Sensemaking is about presumption.
Retrospective	Sensemaking is retrospective.
Enactive of sensible environments	Sensemaking is about action.
Social	Sensemaking is social and systemic. Sensemaking is about organizing through communication.
Ongoing	Sensemaking organizes flux.
Focused on and extracted by cues	Sensemaking starts with noticing and bracketing.
Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy	Sensemaking is about labeling.

People use sensemaking to determine where they stand and who they are in an unstable world. Weick's (1993a, 1995) theory of sensemaking rests on the concept of contextual rationality. Weick's theory (1993a) asserted that the world is volatile; to simultaneously manage the world's instability and create interpersonal relationships, people required some structure. This understanding has the potential to change that person's identity (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Obodaru, 2012; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Weick et al. (2005) pointed out that two properties differentiate sensemaking from cognitive psychology. First, sensemaking must be plausible (Weick et al., 2005). Second, people use sensemaking to construct their identities for themselves and their organizations by combining items they select from an array of categories of meaning

(Weick et al., 2005). This deliberate development of identity through selection provides a method of changing an identity by changing the items selected by someone during their sensemaking process.

Sensemaking and storytelling affect people's behavior. Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking has been used to examine both individual and organizational behavior and the effect of storytelling on behavior. In a study of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Weber, Thomas, and Stephens (2015) focused on how missed triggers lead to a flawed understanding of what having permanent training zones on the Great Lakes meant to the USCG and the public. Vogus, Rothman, Sutcliffe, and Weick (2014) argued that members of organizations that required error-free operations despite a complex dynamic environment engage in mindful organizing. This condition allowed members to be simultaneously sensitive to the needs of others and to anticipate situations that could result in negative outcomes. Weick's theory, as determined by the scope of the literature review, has not been used to study QMSs in an organization. The article that comes closest is Soltani and Wilkinson's (2010) investigation on leadership and TQM practices. In each of these examples, the lived experiences of the participants affected the sense the participants made of the cues in each situation and how they acted.

People change what they believe and how they act when they change their mental framework. Weick's (1995) work informs this dissertation three ways. First, people must develop self-understanding about their experiences before they can change. Second, when people change, their mental models and by extrapolation, their identities change as well. Learning and knowledge contribute to and are outcomes of mental model change. Third,

a person's sense of self-identity ties to how they make sense of their experiences and how they construct their mental models. Storytelling is how people make changes to their mental framework. Emotions are part of the story experience.

Storytellers have long recognized the connection between emotion and stories. Storytelling is a process; stories are a product. Emotions are part of day-to-day organizational life (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012). Riolo (2014) contended that sensory details in a story evoked emotions; otherwise, the material was a collection of facts. Katuscáková (2015) shared the results of her study on knowledge transfer at the European Conference on Knowledge Management. Her study demonstrated that students who received information in the form of a story retained the material longer and more accurately than students who received the information in other formats. Dailey and Browning (2014) supported Riolo's contention and Katuscáková's findings with their premise that emotions are inseparable from the knowledge and remembrance functions of a story. This recognition lends support to Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park's (2006) call for organizations and researchers to recognize emotional competency as a contributing factor in successful quality initiatives. People's emotions provide the energy for transformation. Information that leads to change are facts wrapped up in a story.

The scientific research about storytelling is now catching up to experience and common knowledge. The position that stories evoke emotional responses in the audience is supported by Chow et al.'s (2014) study on how listening to stories affected the bodies of participants. His team used visually vivid, action-based, and emotionally-charged

stories to study how human bodies responded to the material (Chow et al., 2014). Their work helped to show how stories affect listener's bodies and emotional state.

Laboratory researchers have identified the areas of the brain affected by stories. The most popular tool for neurobiological research on stories and human physiology has been the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) (AbdulSabur et al., 2014; Chow et al., 2014; Silbert, Honey, Simony, Poeppel, & Hasson, 2014). Silbert et al. (2014) used an fMRI to study the brains of speakers telling a 15-minute narrative. They repeated the test with people listening to the narrative. The study showed that the speaker and listener brain activity overlapped, an activity that the researchers called coupling. Silbert et al. concluded that the shared neural activity supported the communication process. Some researchers have focused on the impact of language on human bodies.

Researchers have studied language and human physiology as words, sentences, and as a discourse. AbdulSabur et al. (2014) used both positron emission tomography (PET) and fMRI techniques to explore how people told and listened to fictional stories. The scans showed that listening to or telling stories affected the brain's motor regions, social cognition areas, areas associated with making inferences, and emotion processing. These findings offer three insights. First, humans are hard-wired as storytellers and story listeners. Second, the way people learn and accept or reject the implementation of a QMS in an organization is biological. Finally, the research findings help explain why people readily remember stories and forget the directions in a document.

History of Total Quality Management, Sensemaking, and Storytelling

One reason that study findings of Total Quality Management (TQM), sensemaking, and stories are difficult to move from academia to business practice is the lack of a common meaning for each term. No one has developed a definitive definition or meaning for TQM (Green, 2012; Steiber & Alänge, 2013), sensemaking (Erbert, 2014), or stories (Boje, 2014). This condition affects the meanings assigned by the researchers, study participants, and the readers. This variability of meaning also influences the value of findings and whether a model could affect a specific organization or situation. These multiple correct meanings are an example of equivocality and represent a vivid illustration of how people can use the same terms, observe the same events, and come to different conclusions. In the remainder of this section, I present the meanings associated with TQM, sensemaking, and how researchers define storytelling and stories.

Total Quality Management

Researchers have failed to agree on a single definition for TQM despite agreement on the factors that make up TQM. Researchers have referred to the tools, processes, and practices for continuous improvement within an organization as TQM, quality management (Bjurström, 2012; Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013) or business excellence (A. Brown, 2013; R. A. Jacob, Madu, & Tang, 2012; Steiber & Alänge, 2013). Table 2 lists definitions used by several researchers for TQM. Some researchers, have changed their conception of TQM as they have conducted research, thereby adding to the confusion in defining TQM.

These different perspectives can help explain why observers or participants viewed TQM initiatives as failures. In 2006, Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park described TQM as a management philosophy. Seven years later, Dahlgaard-Park, Chen, and Dahlgaard (2013) described TQM as a blend of human resource management, companywide quality control (CWQC), and statistical process control (SPC). Another way of looking at the changes in the definition of TQM is that TQM is an evolving set of practices (Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2013). The evolution of TQM's meaning supports the concept of social sensemaking (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012) as researchers, managers, and workers struggle to understand and use TQM. A TQM initiative that focused on implementing technical tools in an organization could be perceived as a success while a TQM initiative used as a strategy in the same organization could be labeled a failure.

Table 2

TQM Definitions

Author	Definition
Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013)	TQM is a set of principles and practices. It has critical factors that can be classified as either technical (hard) factors or social (soft) factors.
Dahlgaard-Park, Chen, & Dahlgaard (2013)	Blend of Human Resource Management, Company Wide Quality Control (CWQC), and statistical process control (SPC)
Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park (2006)	A management philosophy
Ebrahimi & Sadeghi (2013)	Synonym for quality management
Fu, Chou, Chen, & Wang (2015)	A combination of artefacts, core values, and underlying assumptions
Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa (2013)	A management tool to provide organizations with a competitive edge
Green (2012)	Theory and philosophy
Haffar, Al-Karaghoul, & Ghoneim (2013)	A combination composed of philosophy, management methods and culture aimed at improving all aspects of an organization's operation through the participation of all members in the organization.
Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014)	Holistic management approach that applies to all areas of the organization while emphasizing the impact of human factors to drive organizational performance.
Ingelsson, Eriksson, & Lilja (2012)	Value-based management philosophy
Mosadeghrad (2014)	Management strategy that melds quality management tools and techniques, continuous improvement, and stakeholder participation to produce goods and services that satisfy customers.
Steiber, & Alänge (2013)	Management concept championing quality principles and encompassing all areas in an organization.
Wu, Zhang & Schroeder (2011)	A value system
Zhang & Xia (2013)	An integrated management philosophy containing tools and practices that is practiced throughout an organization.

Sensemaking

Differences in sensemaking definitions seem to be more nuanced than the TQM definitions. Steinbauer, Rhew, and Chen (2015) saw sensemaking as a cognitive dimension. Weick (1995) tied sensemaking to language and plausibility. He set sensemaking in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment experience of life (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Other researchers have agreed with Weick's premise that sensemaking is a language based function (Maclean et al., 2014; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence (2013) took exception to the linguistic emphasis on sensemaking in their study of the role of emotion in sensemaking. Colville et al. (2012) chose an intermediate position. They saw sensemaking as a dynamic mix of thinking and acting (Colville et al., 2012). Most researchers agreed that sensemaking requires language and thinking. This agreement makes identifying the relevance of sensemaking study findings and sensemaking models more straightforward than determining the relevance of a TQM finding. Understanding the moment that sensemaking occurs is harder.

Indeed, the act of sensemaking is so reflexive that it can be difficult to study in a real-world environment. In Erbert's (2014) study of workplace strangeness, he commented that Jeong and Bower (2008) had observed that sensemaking studies were often theoretical rather than empirical. In summary, most researchers agree that sensemaking involves language (Maclean et al., 2014; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015), that outcomes must be plausible (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Steinbauer et al., 2015), and that sensemaking uses social interactions to derive meanings (Holt & Cornelissen, 2014; Islam, 2013; Steinbauer et al., 2015; Yeo &

Marquardt, 2015). The social interaction element becomes significant when people use their experiences to create the stories that they share with coworkers.

Storytelling and Stories

Storytelling produces stories. Stories told by a single teller, such as an officially sanctioned story, are monovocal (one-voice). Sometimes, these are called hegemonic stories (Briody et al., 2012). Stories that are told by two or more people are polyphonic (many voices) (Johansen, 2012; Näslund & Pemer, 2012). Polyphonic stories occur when different people recount their individual interpretations of an event. Although valuable for social sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005), having many versions of what happened often leads to confusion (Weick, 1995). The function of a story is independent of its label as a story or a narrative. Resolving confusion is a core function of a story, even though researchers may contribute to confusion about stories by classifying them through the unit's structure, by the number of speakers, or some other criteria.

Whether a construction is a narrative or a story depends on the researcher's definition. Gabriel (2000) maintained that if the material could be challenged factually, then the material was a narrative. Stories demanded the suspension of the audience's beliefs (Gabriel, 2000). Czarniawska-Joerges (1997) required stories to have a plot, have time-linked episodes, and result in a solution. Many researchers use Czarniawska-Joerges' definition (Briody et al., 2012; Islam, 2013). In some instances, researchers use story and narrative interchangeably (Johansen, 2012; Näslund & Pemer, 2012), thereby adding to the confusion between story and narrative. Other researchers use structure to classify the material as a story/not story.

Researchers who use structure as a classification scheme compare the material against Aristotle's model. Stories that use Aristotle's model have three sections: a beginning, a middle, and an end (BME) (Boje, 2014). This construction is known as the BME construct and is considered a complete story. This construction is also the format of a story used as part of a sensemaking event. Boje, Haley, and Saylor (2016) theorized that organizational stories exist in the form of fragments. These fragments could either be proto-stories (antenarratives) or so well known that the audience could fill in the missing material (Boje, 2014). These fragments represent ties to personal experiences. The fragments link to and form part of the mental model someone uses for sensemaking.

Reasons Quality Management Initiatives Succeed

Researchers identified the critical success factors for implementing a quality management program during their investigations into the problem of why quality initiatives rarely succeed. Researchers have presented theoretical models (Bolboli & Reiche, 2014; Malhi, 2013; Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2014) and conducted numerous empirical studies. The empirical studies use methodologies as diverse as case studies (Ingelsson et al., 2012; Latham, 2013), structured equation modeling (Abdullah & Tari, 2012; Campos et al., 2014; Kim, Kumar, & Kumar, 2012), factorial analysis (Calvo-Mora et al., 2013), and confirmatory factor analysis (Wu et al., 2011). These studies have taken place throughout the globe and in many types of organizations.

Research into Critical Success Factors Spans the Globe

Researchers conducted two of the studies used in the literature review in multiple countries, including the United States. Zhang, Linderman, and Schroeder (2012) and Wu

et al. (2011) used information from the same dataset. The dataset contained survey results about 238 manufacturing plants located in eight countries and three industries. Wu et al. (2011) used a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the maturity of the quality culture found in an organization. Zhang et al. (2012) also used CFA to analyze the data to answer whether the organization practiced or exploited quality management practices. These studies demonstrated how a shared dataset could be used to investigate different aspects of quality management practices. In addition to information about the studies conducted by Wu et al. (2011) and Zhang et al. (2012), Table 3 includes information about the other non-U.S. quality management studies reviewed for this chapter. The material is presented by nation and then by year. The table illustrates the methods used by researchers to identify the factors common to organizations with successful quality management initiatives.

Table 3

Studies Conducted in Multiple Locations or Outside of the United States

Researcher	Population	Geographic Location	Methodology	Purpose
Wu, Zhang, & Schroeder (2011)	238 manufacturing plants in electronics, automotive, and machinery industries	Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Sweden, & US	Confirmatory Factor Analysis	What is the level of quality maturity in the organization?
Zhang, Linderman, & Schroeder (2012)	238 manufacturing plants in electronics, automotive, and machinery industries	Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Sweden, & US	Confirmatory Factor Analysis	Does organization practice quality exploitation management or quality exploration management practices?
Kim, Kumar, & Kumar (2012)	223 ISO certified manufacturing or service firms 22 service organizations 201 manufacturing organizations	Canada	Structured Equation Modeling	Which type of quality management practices support one of five types of innovation?
Abdullah & Tari (2012)	255 electrical and electronics firms	Malaysia	Structured Equation Modeling	What is the influence of soft and hard quality management practices on performance?
Texeira Quirós & Justino (2013)	172 certified companies 172 noncertified companies	Portugal	Non-parametric decision trees	Which quality practices are associated with the likelihood of a firm being certified?

(table continues)

Researcher	Population	Geographic Location	Methodology	Purpose
Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa (2013)	451 companies with 50 or more workers 251 industrial organizations 200 service companies	Spain	Hierarchical linear regression	What kinds of organizational culture represent the best fit for TQM practices?
Haffar, Al-Karaghoul, & Ghoneim (2013)	350 middle managers in public and private manufacturing organizations	Syria	Descriptive statistics and multiple regression	Does individual readiness for change affect the adoption of quality management practices?
Campos, da Costa Mendes, Silva, & Oom do Valle (2014)	2 tourism sectors: 128 managers in the food & beverage sector 37 managers in the Accommodation	Lagos	Structural equation model with latent variables	How important is leadership in building a total quality culture?
Fu, Chou, Chen, & Wang (2015)	Recognized for excellence by Taiwanese National Quality Award; 4 manufacturing 3 service companies	Taiwan	An approach on the cultivation of organizational culture toward TQM	What is the role of culture in attaining a high level of business excellence?

TQM Critical Success Factors

Table 4 shows critical success factors for a successful TQM implementation. The table presents a mixture of case studies, empirical studies, a meta-analytic study, and theoretical studies by year, article type, and researcher. Dahlgard and Dahlgard-Park (2006) combined a literature review with a comparative analysis of a Danish company. In

their findings, they emphasized that many of the elements in the Toyota Production System echo Deming's (2013) 14 Points for Management. Over the next nine years, researchers examined QMSs in Spain, Taiwan, Syria, Pakistan, and other nations. Nearly five years passed between Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park's study in 2006 and Wu et al.'s study in 2011. Wu et al.'s study suggested that soft factors were more predictive of a successful quality management initiative than hard factors. In 2013, five empirical studies and one theoretical study repeatedly identified soft factors as major contributors to successful quality management initiatives. A meta-analysis (Hietschold et al., 2014) identified 10 critical success factors; six of which were soft quality factors. Two research teams examined the impact of culture on successful quality management initiatives using a business excellence framework in 2014. Goh (2015) used a case study with a Singapore electronics company to propose a model for developing a cultural mindset that supports quality-focused behaviors. Fu et al. (2015) looked at organizations with a Taiwanese National Quality Award or who were finalists for the award. Their findings corroborated earlier research into the value of QMSs, particularly systems built on a business excellence framework. Despite the range of years, types of studies, and theoretical versus empirical articles, the researchers named the same core critical success factors.

Table 4

TQM Implementation Critical Success Factors

Researcher	Year	Article Type	Critical Success Factors
Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park	2006	Empirical	People (soft) Partnership (hard) Processes of work (hard) Product/Service products (hard)
Wu, Zhang, and Schroeder	2011	Empirical	Customer focus (soft) Process management (hard) Teamwork (soft) Training (soft)
Ingelsson, Eriksson, and Lilja	2012	Case study	Alignment between personal values and TQM values (soft)
Green	2012	Theoretical	Culture that values TQM (soft)
Kovach and Mairani	2012	Theoretical	Leadership support (soft)
Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo	2013	Empirical	Quality culture (soft) Learning and Continuous improvement (soft) Leadership (soft) Human resources (soft) Strategy (hard) Management of resources, partnerships, and processes (hard)
Dahlgaard-Park, Chen, Jang, & Dahlgaard	2013	Empirical	Proactive and open culture that supports customer satisfaction and continuous improvement (soft)

(table continues)

Researcher	Year	Article Type	Critical Success Factors
Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa	2013	Empirical	Leadership (soft) Culture (soft) Management commitment (soft) Employee empowerment (soft)
Haffar, Al-Karaghoul, & Ghoneim	2013	Empirical	Individual readiness for change (soft)
Zhang & Xia	2013	Empirical	Culture (soft)
Malhi	2013	Theoretical	Top management commitment (soft) Role modeling of desired behaviors by top management (soft) Employee involvement and empowerment (soft) Training about TQM for all levels (soft) Open and honest communication (soft)
Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner	2014	Meta-analysis	HRM/recognition/teamwork (soft) Top management commitment and leadership (soft) Process management (hard) Customer focus and satisfaction (soft) Supplier partnership (hard) Training and learning (soft) Information/analysis/data (hard) Strategic quality planning (hard) Culture (soft) Communication (soft)
Boboli & Reiche	2014	Theoretical	Compatible organizational culture (soft)
Metaxas & Koulouriotis	2014	Theoretical	Culture (soft)
Goh	2015	Case study	Reward and recognition system that supports TQM goals (soft)
Fu, Chou, Chen, & Wang	2015	Empirical	Organizational culture (soft)

In the studies represented in Table 4, soft quality management factors appear more often than hard quality management factors. There are 40 soft quality management critical factors and only 10 hard quality management critical factors. The soft quality management critical factors of people, training, culture, continuous improvement, leadership, communication, and customer focus were identified by several researchers (Bolboli & Reiche, 2014; Calvo-Mora et al., 2013; Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2013; Fu et al., 2015; Gimenez-Espin et al., 2013; Goh, 2015; Green, 2012; Haffar et al., 2013; Hietschold et al., 2014; Ingelsson et al., 2012; Kovach & Mairani, 2012; Malhi, 2013; Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2014; Wu et al., 2011; G. P. Zhang & Xia, 2013). Figure 1 is a Pareto chart constructed from the information in Table 4. The chart in Figure 1 shows the identification frequency of soft quality management factors. The category of People combines people, HRM, teamwork, personal values, employee empowerment, individual readiness for change, reward and recognition system and human resources. The Training category aggregates training and learning. The Culture category holds any of the critical factors that refer to culture. Any critical factor about management or leadership appears under Leadership.



Figure 1. Pareto chart of soft quality management factors adapted from information in Table 4.

The Pareto chart in Figure 2 shows the Table 4 hard quality management factors. The Pareto chart displays how frequently the researchers identified hard quality management factors (Bolboli & Reiche, 2014; Calvo-Mora et al., 2013; Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2013; Fu et al., 2015; Gimenez-Espin et al., 2013; Goh, 2015; Green, 2012; Haffar et al., 2013; Hietschold et al., 2014; Ingelsson et al., 2012; Kovach & Mairani, 2012; Malhi, 2013; Metaxas & Koulouriotis, 2014; Wu et al., 2011; G. P. Zhang & Xia, 2013). Process management was the most important quality hard management factor while information and data analysis was the least important.



Figure 2. Pareto chart of hard quality management factors adapted from information in Table 4.

Deming's System of Profound Knowledge and TQM Critical Success Factors

Several of the articles used in this literature review emphasized the significance of Deming's work on quality management practices. A theoretical paper by Alabi (2012) linked Deming's system of profound knowledge with perspectives from Drucker and Dewey. Alabi (2012) concluded that organizations that adopted the system of profound knowledge's principles were better able to deal with a chaotic business environment. Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park's (2013) literature review of articles on lean production, Six Sigma quality, TQM, and company culture identified Deming's principles as crucial for creating an organizational culture that successfully implemented and maintained a QMS. Soltani and Wilkinson (2010) used Deming's 14 Points as a lens to explore the lack of agreement on the meaning of TQM practices and principles between senior and middle managers. Their study indicated that one of the reasons that TQM initiatives

failed was the disconnect between managerial levels (Soltani & Wilkinson, 2010). These research study results confirm Deming's (2013) warnings to managers. Deming identified the potential for this type of misunderstanding in many of his writings and lectures. The findings of Alabi (2012), Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park (2006), Soltani and Wilkinson (2010) demonstrate the value of the system of profound knowledge to modern businesses. Deming's management theory offers a proven framework for creating a sustainable QMS. This management system design supports both critical success factors and sustainable quality-focused behaviors.

Researchers identified the quality management critical success factors over thirty years ago. Deming (2013) called out the responsibility of management to promote quality-focused behaviors in his 14 Points for Management. Deming's management theory holds the critical success factors identified by researchers for a successful TQM implementation. The system of profound knowledge accounts for both hard quality management factors and soft quality management factors. Deming specified these critical factors as requirements for a successful quality management program. As shown in the section on TQM success factors, researchers have confirmed Deming's points. Table 5 maps the elements in the system of profound knowledge to the success factors identified by researchers as critical to implementing a TQM program.

Table 5 illustrates that hard quality management critical success factors appear less frequently than soft quality management critical success factors. Psychology has five critical success factors; these factors deal with people. This breakdown supports the relationship between soft quality management factors and successful quality management

initiatives. The theory of knowledge has two hard critical success factors: strategic planning and information and analysis. Hard quality management (process improvement) and soft quality management (continuous improvement) appear as part of knowledge about variation. Finally, both critical success factors under the heading of appreciation for a system are hard quality management critical success factors.

Table 5

System of Profound Knowledge Elements and Critical Success Factors

Appreciation for a System	Knowledge about Variation	Theory of Knowledge	Psychology
Organizations are collections of systems	Process management	Management and Leadership	People
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park (2006) • Wu, Zhang, & Schroeder, (2011) • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park (2006) • Wu, Zhang, & Schroeder, (2011) • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kovach and Mairani (2012) • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa (2013) • Malhi (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park (2006)
Partnerships	Continuous improvement	Strategic Planning	Reward systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park (2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa (2013) • Malhi (2013) • Goh (2015)

(table continues)

Appreciation for a System	Knowledge about Variation	Theory of Knowledge	Psychology
		Information and data analysis	Training
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	Wu, Zhang, & Schroeder, (2011) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Malhi (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014)
		Customer satisfaction / Customer focus	Culture
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wu, Zhang, & Schroeder, (2011) • Dahlgaard-Park, Chen, Jang, & Dahlgaard (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green, (2012) • Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, & Cauzo (2013) • Dahlgaard-Park, Chen, Jang, & Dahlgaard (2013) • Gimenez-Espin, Jiménez-Jiménez, & Martínez-Costa (2013) • Zhang & Xia (2013) • Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014) • Bolboli & Reiche (2014) • Metaxis & Koulouriotis (2014) • Fu, Chou, Chen, & Wang (2015)

(table continues)

Appreciation for a System	Knowledge about Variation	Theory of Knowledge	Psychology
			Communication
			• Malhi (2013)
			• Hietschold, Reinhardt, & Gurtner (2014)

Deming spent years refining the material that became his system of profound knowledge. He based his system on proven business practices. Deming (2013) presented his 14 Points for Management in an earlier work, *Out of the Crisis*. The first edition of *The New Economics: For Industry, Government, Education* appeared in 1994, after Deming's death in December 1993. The second edition of *The New Economics: For Industry, Government, Education* was published in 2000. The second edition contained the revisions made by Deming before his death. Above all, Deming was a pragmatist and used easily understood examples, such as schools or beads to make his points about the system of profound knowledge. The system of profound knowledge has four parts: (a) appreciation for a system, (b) knowledge about variation, (c) theory of knowledge, and (d) psychology. Despite the generic labels of these parts, Deming (2013) described each piece of his theory in detail. Together, these parts would work together first to transform an individual, and then through the individual's transformation, transform the organization (Deming, 2013). This transformation began with understanding systems.

The first part of the theory, an appreciation for a system, could also be described as an understanding of systems as more than a set of processes or parts. Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park (2006) noted that managers in organizations with successful TQM

programs understood systems. According to Moosa, Sajid, Kahn, and Mughal (2010) failing to understand the systems in the organization represented a major contributor to failed TQM adoptions. Systems, according to Deming (2013), are everywhere. Deming used schools, family life, even an orchestra as examples of systems outside of a business setting. Systems are dynamic and have variations.

Variation in a system does not always signal a problem. Knowledge about variation formed Deming's (2013) second system of profound knowledge element. Understanding variation is vital to understanding the state of a process (Deming, 2013; Myszewski, 2015). Deming made a critical, and misunderstood point: even when a process is stable, variation will occur. Furthermore, an inaccurate measurement system produces false information, which compounds the problem of assessing the state of a process (Deming, 2013; Myszewski, 2015). Becker and Glascoff (2014) noted that process variables selected for measurement often did not reflect the actual state of the processes. If managers do not understand variation, particularly the distinction between common causes (normal fluctuations) and special causes (the system needs a closer look by someone), then management is unable to create accurate theories about the conditions in their organization. People use their knowledge and experiences to create theories to test about the situation.

The third part of the theory, the theory of knowledge, has a pragmatic focus. Knowledge develops from the predictions that a person made about the data and the context of the data (Deming, 2013). That is, people form hypotheses about something based on their knowledge and past experiences. Thus these theories or hypotheses

provide the same function as Weick's (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) mental models. Deming's (2013) contention that knowledge arose from theory and that knowledge was time-bound further supports this parallel function of theory and mental model. Deming cautioned that information did not equate to knowledge and that all knowledge emerges from theory. Lagrosen and Travis (2015) looked at the relationship between theory and learning. They suggested that theory emphasized causal relationships, thereby allowing the observer to create a foundation for learning about the observed phenomenon (Lagrosen & Travis, 2015). This link between learning and knowledge suggests that a manager using Deming's system of profound knowledge is a continuous learner because Deming saw the act of observing and creating theories to be the primary function of management. Managers represent only one part of an organization's workforce, however.

Managers need to understand how to work with their staffs and how to work together. The final part of Deming's (2013) management theory, psychology, is about understanding people. Deming's management theory needs all four parts to work effectively. Psychology, in particular, is integral to the other three management theory components (Deming, 2013). To reach people, Deming knew that he had to understand the individual. Research studies support the importance of understanding human psychology when implementing a quality management initiative. Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Park (2006) concluded from their survey of literature on TQM that psychology represented an essential element in the successful implementation of a TQM program. Alabi (2012) tied psychology and the theory of knowledge to the successful exercise of leadership in an organization with a successful TQM culture. People, that is,

the human factor, cannot be separated from quality management initiatives. Managers can use their knowledge about their people to act as translators between executives and staff.

Managers occupy the middle ground in the call for quality management initiative ownership. Moosa and Sajid (2010) took a step closer to the individuals in an organization when they called upon the organization's leaders to guide change management programs. Vora (2013) and Goh (2015) echoed the appeal for managers to lead change management programs that are designed to change organizational culture. Managers should not be surprised at this call to act as leaders. It seems as if managers forget that they are individuals in the organization just as much as frontline staff or the executive leadership team. Therefore, they have to be willing to change personally for the quality initiative to succeed.

Sustainable organizational change lies in the hands of the individuals in the organization. Haffar et al. (2013), like Malhi (2013), and Metaxas and Koulouriotis (2014) place the responsibility for change in the hands of each member in the organization. Deming (2013) designed the system of profound knowledge to change individuals. Therefore, organizations which employ the practices in the system of profound knowledge are more likely to achieve a sustainable culture based on quality management beliefs and practices. Figure 3, created by the author, shows how the parts of the theory combine to change an individual.

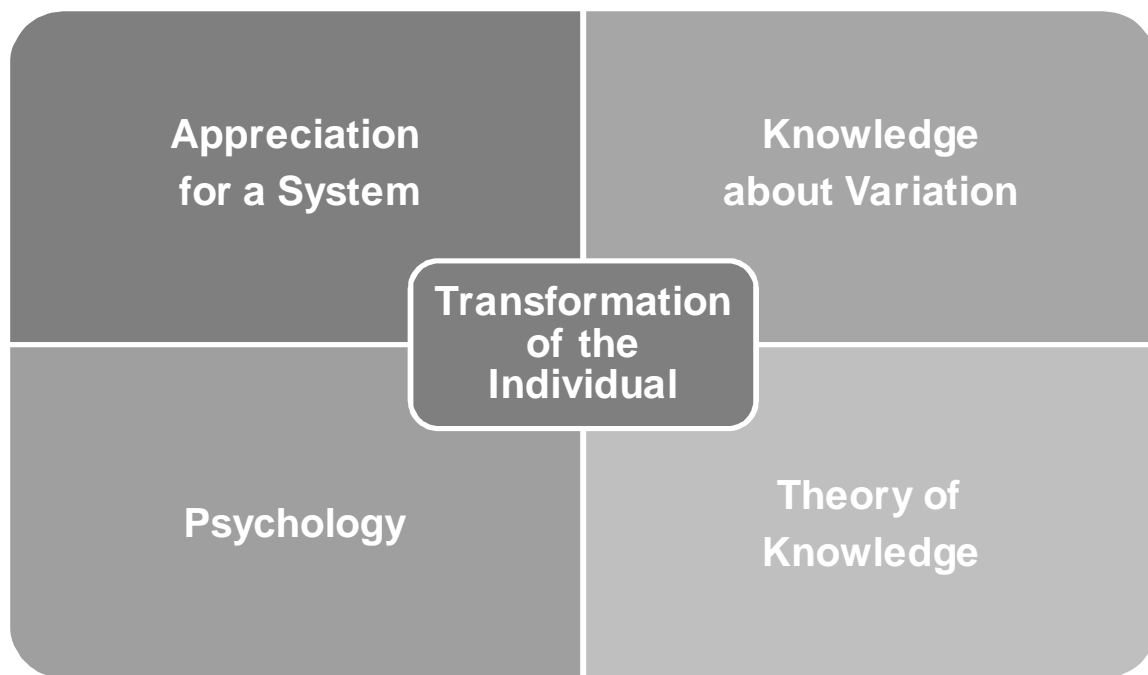


Figure 3. The transformation of the individual.

Sensemaking and Storytelling in Organizations

An organization is a collection of stories told by its members. Organizational culture is carried by stories (Colville, Hennestad, & Thoner, 2014; Maclean et al., 2014). Many researchers contend that organizations are narratively constructed (Brady & Haley, 2013; A. D. Brown & Coupland, 2015; Erbert, 2014). Individuals create these narratives through sensemaking frameworks (M. Miles, Francis, Chapman, & Taylor, 2013) and stories (Steinbauer et al., 2015). Therefore, successful organizational change occurs when individuals change their mental models (Lagrosen & Travis, 2015; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). Storytelling provides a process to guide people's interpretation of their experiences. The stories that people tell themselves are the key to transforming an organization's culture.

Organizations Are Narrative Constructions Developed Through Sensemaking

Activities

Researchers define the characteristics of an organization in many ways. Deming (2013) did not specify what he meant by the term *organization*. He advised managers to treat organizations as a system (Deming, 2013). Näslund and Perner (2012) saw organizations as a collection of systems as did Colville, Hennestad, and Thoner (2014) although Näslund and Perner phrased their identification in terms of constantly running processes. Weick (1995) offered several definitions for organizations. He called organizations entities (Weick, 1995), described them as frail (Weick, 1993b), and stated that organizations were created by people talking (Weick, 1995), who extended their personal ideas outward (Vogus et al., 2014). Therefore, the individuals gathered together are the organization: consequently, the stories they tell to themselves and each other create the organization.

The narrative nature of organizations has been supported empirically as well as theoretically. Organizational identity arises from the collective narratives of its members (Sato, 2014). While Boje (2014) did not explicitly call an organization a collection of stories, he did provide guidance on how to use storytelling to support organizational change efforts. Changing the stories people tell about their experiences has the potential to alter the organization. During her study of Arla Foods, Johansen (2012) demonstrated that organizations were a collage of narratives of both members of the organization and people outside of the organization. These narratives used language that may or may not

have had the same meaning to observers and participants. This variation in meaning affects how people make sense of a story.

Stories are crucial to sensemaking. Weick (1995) maintained that sensemaking is retrospective. Retrospective stories use a beginning, middle, end (BME) construction to show the necessary actions a person will take to deal with the disruption. Boje (2008, 2014) leveraged Weick's work in Boje's study of organizational storytelling. Boje (2008) added two forms of sensemaking to Weick's list. Boje (2008) added *here-and-now sensemaking* and *prospective sensemaking*. Prospective sensemaking offers a way to change the organization by exploring how something might be before an interpretation jells.

Dominant Language Controls Organizational Sensemaking and Storytelling

The control of language represents a basic method of regulating sensemaking, storytelling, and identity. Sensemaking cannot occur without words or what Weick et al. (2005) called labels. Weick (1995) emphasized the possibility of sensemaking being a hostage; whoever controls the language in an organization directs the meanings that people develop, that is, how people frame and develop meaning from their lived experiences. Weick (2012) went so far as to declare that organizational change hinges on the organization's prevailing story. A rich vocabulary provided sensemakers with more ways to engage reflectively with the reviewed event (Weick, 1995). Words are the focus of sensemaking and a vocabulary drawn from a small number of social groups can limit possible event interpretations.

People develop understandable and effective stories from shared meanings. Sensemaking is at its core interpretive (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is also a social activity (Weick, 1995). The interpretive aspect of sensemaking explains why people at the same event express so many different points of view. Another way of describing these equally valid, divergent points of view is equivocality. Equivocality comes into play when people use different meanings for the same word.

Vocabularies come from a larger collective: the social group. It might be that one of the factors in failing to implement a successful QMS lies in the organization's vocabulary. Humans use language to construct reality (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). If an organization is a socially constructed narrative, then the group which dominates word meanings will control the organization. Näslund and Perner (2012) explored what happened to identity and stories through the restriction of word meanings during a consulting exercise. Groups within an organization have the power to disallow commonly held word meanings, thereby influencing the conclusions reached during member sensemaking activities and affecting people's understanding about an event.

Controlling the vocabulary meanings available to organization members is an exercise of power. By focusing on the semantic meanings of the words used to describe the projects in an organization, Näslund and Perner (2012) discovered that the word meanings had been hijacked by a dominant vocabulary that did not allow alternative interpretations. The words used by the external consultants did not match the meanings held by the audience, so the audience rejected the meanings used by the consultants (Näslund & Perner, 2012). Näslund and Perner speculated that some organizational

inertia may be “narratively constructed” (2012, p. 106). Their finding has important implications for storytelling and the language used in the stories to support or obstruct changes in the organization and its environment. Controlling the meaning of an organization’s vocabulary is not always negative, sometimes the control supports a positive outcome.

People construct organizational and personal identities through storytelling by incorporating selected elements or meanings from many categories. Weick et al. (2005) reasoned that individual identities were at risk of being controlled by others when other people control category definitions. Self-identity is affected when the meaning (and value) of those categories change. These changes can provide either positive or negative impact on the self-image of an individual or an organization. Storytelling is how people identify who they are (Boje, 2014; Kadembo, 2012; Weick, 1995). Therefore, the meaning of those categories evolves from the language the people hear or use: in turn, these words can be used to reshape and redescribe an organization (and the members within it).

Change Meanings to Change Behavior

Indeed, changing the meaning of commonly held terms may be necessary as part of an organization’s change management program. Organizational leadership should take care when redefining meanings to reduce members’ resistance to change. Filstad (2014) looked at how managers in a bank provided sensegiving as part of a change management event. She discovered that while the corporate office had a clear understanding of the new meaning attached to providing (i.e., selling) bank products, the field offices did not

see themselves as sellers (Filstad, 2014). Agents in field offices did not sell bank products; they offered security to customers through the products sold by the bank (Filstad, 2014). The resulting mismatch in meanings contributed to the resistance of field offices to business practice changes (Filstad, 2014). Perhaps the transition between meanings of the same term is one of the reasons that quality management initiatives fail. Given that possibility, leaders overseeing quality management initiatives should examine the language used to describe the new ways of working.

One goal of a change management initiative is to change the organization's ideology by changing the meanings associated with the organization's vocabulary. Weick (1995) noted that ideology supplied an influential sensemaking framework within organizations. The social aspects of sensemaking provide tools for organizational performance and organizational change (Weick, 1995). People assign different meaning to the same ideological content. These dissimilar meanings further transform the content as the ideological material is transmitted during socialization and resocialization (Weick, 1995). Locally, meanings stabilize. These pockets of local meaning contribute to the difficulty of forming effective cross-functional teams.

People Use Storytelling to Understand Their Experiences

Storytelling affects how people think and react. The role of storytelling in sensemaking (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Dawson & McLean, 2013; Erbert, 2014) has been well-documented. Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) explored how a rugby player went from hero to villain and back to hero. Erbert (2014) looked inside an American workplace to understand how employees made sense of unusual workplace events in

terms of the employee's self-identity. These perspectives offer insight into how people create and modify their self-identities and ultimately the identities of their organizations through storytelling and sensemaking.

Sensemaking is one of the functions performed by storytelling. Stories entertain (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012), transfer knowledge (Caminotti & Gray, 2012), solve problems (Dailey & Browning, 2014; Weick, 1987), develop personal identity (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015), and persuade the audience (Fuglsang & Jagd, 2015; Kadembo, 2012). I explored three of these functions in this dissertation: sensemaking, knowledge transfer, and identity. Knowledge transfer and identity are not separate from sensemaking. Rather they are outcomes of sensemaking, and they occur through storytelling.

A good story is important to sensemaking. Events, situations, moments happen without a break in their flow. Having a framework helps the person make sense of the situation. This framework of "myths, metaphors, platitudes, fables, epics, and paradigms" (Weick, 1995, p. 61) function as templates to guide how people make sense of their experiences. Sensemaking activities use storytelling to create understanding, to share visions of the future, and to transfer knowledge (Caminotti & Gray, 2012) therefore; storytelling is how people make sense of quality management practices. People share stories as they attempt to make sense of a situation and how the situation may affect them as an individual and as a group.

People create organizations through their relationships with each other. Boje (2014) noted that storytelling is not separate from sensemaking. The power of narration

lies in its ability to capture the sense, reason, emotion, and imagination factors embedded in a complex experience. Table 6 matches storytelling activities to sensemaking functions. Boje (2008) identified seven storytelling activities. These storytelling activities correspond to seven sensemaking functions named by Weick (1995). The table illustrates some of the difficulties in separating storytelling and sensemaking out from the flow of daily experiences.

Table 6

Storytelling Activities Matched to Sensemaking Functions

Storytelling Activity	Sensemaking Function
Connecting old story to new event in order to predict, understand, or control	Reduce disruption
Causal order for events previously perceived as unrelated	Facilitate diagnosis
Enable people to talk about absent things and connect them with present things in the interest of meaning	Allow the rehearsal of implausible sequences
Act as mnemonics that enable someone to reconstruct earlier complex events	Provide tools for diagnosis
Guide action before routines can be formulated and to enrich routines after routines are formulated	Reduce arousal that can interfere with sensemaking by simplifying the task
Create a database of experiences a person can draw upon for inferences	Reduce arousal that can interfere with sensemaking by slowing rate at which pressure builds
Transmit and reinforce 3 rd order controls	Reduce arousal that can interfere with sensemaking by reducing the element of surprise and act as a forewarning.

This difficulty in separating storytelling and sensemaking affects how changes in language may or may not change people's behavior. Weick et al. (2005) insisted people revise their beliefs and actions when they saw and accepted new evidence about an issue

or situation. This evolutionary aspect of sensemaking offers a key tool in understanding the mechanisms behind the success or failure of a quality management initiative. Thurlow and Helms Mills (2015) studied how the president of a Canadian community college used rhetorical strategies to develop, promote, and sustain the legitimization of a change narrative. The rhetorical strategies allowed the storytellers to portray the plausibility of the changes. Successful organizational changes require storytelling practices that persuade people to believe in the requested changes because the reasons for change resonate with the listener.

Storytelling Shapes an Organization's Culture

The premise that an organization is a narrative construction offers implications for culture, sensemaking, and identity. Dailey and Browning (2014) examined narrative repetition in organizations. They focused their study on narratives with a distinct beginning, middle, and ending. These fully constructed narratives did not allow the audience room for interpreting the event, in contrast to the antenarratives studied by Boje (2014), in which the antenarratives function as explorations of the material. Dailey and Browning's perspective supports the argument that an organization is constructed of narratives (Johansen, 2012; Maclean et al., 2014). It is therefore not surprising that storytelling has a powerful impact on an organization's culture.

Stories have the ability to encapsulate the essence of a change initiative; thus, storytellers shape an organization's culture. Briody, Meerwarth, and Trotter (2012) studied culture in GM manufacturing plants during an ethnographic study lasting several years. They found that stories held power to initiate and sustain changes in the

organization (Briody et al., 2012). Other researchers have explored how the members of an organization used storytelling to establish personal connections to the changes occurring in the organization (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). The stories became part of the organization's new culture (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). These studies support the premise that organizational culture and stakeholder storytelling are bound together. Listeners and tellers must believe the stories for changes to become mainstream ways of working.

The most believable stories are plausible. Plausibility is an essential sensemaking property (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015; Weick, 1995, 2012). According to Steinbauer et al. (2015), plausible stories have the potential to be used so often that the material functions as an unconscious schema. This condition may influence how someone feels about an issue. In their examination of emotion and sensemaking, Maitlis et al. (2013) proposed a link between plausibility and emotion. They argued that managers need to take emotion into account whenever changes were made in the workplace (Maitlis et al., 2013). Their model (Maitlis et al., 2013) provides an explanation of Ingelsson, Eriksson, and Lilja's (2012) finding that an employee's personal values and TQM values were compatible in successful quality initiatives. Plausibility and personal value alignment also explain Haffar et al.'s (2013) finding that TQM values matched the values of members in adhocratic or group culture organizations. Matching personal values and a plausible story for adopting quality-focused behaviors can assist the adoption of a successful QMS.

People are whom they tell themselves that they are; so, if people tell themselves that they support quality management practices, then quality management becomes part

of their identity. Identity development is inseparable from storytelling (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Kadembo, 2012). Language, that is vocabulary, plays a vital part in storytelling and sensemaking. Whoever controls the language controls the stories told in the organization (Näslund & Perner, 2012), the meanings ascribed to events (Weick, 2012), and the identity of the organization (Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015) and its members (Filstad, 2014). This power can be used responsibly, for example, to help members in organizations develop and sustain quality-focused behaviors. This power can also be used irresponsibly, for instance, to quell points of view that contradict the way leaders choose to support quality management initiatives. Either way, the meaning of words affect how people see themselves.

People cannot separate personal identity into buckets like work, home, volunteer, or parent. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss work-life balance except as the concept pertains to self-identity. Ramarajan and Reid (2013) pointed out that the separation of identities is a myth. They declared that three conditions demonstrated the fallacy of this myth: (a) declining job security, (b) increasing demographic diversity, and (c) proliferating communications technology (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). In their model, Ramarajan and Reid developed a schema for how people negotiate their nonwork identity states. People's identities are a mixture of work and nonwork constructions. As shown by Weick (1995) identities evolve from reflection and are expressed as frameworks or mental models. The greater the degree of separation between the values of the individual and the organization, the less likely the individual will express their nonwork identity in the workplace environment (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013), thereby affecting how people act

at work. Managers need to understand how people see themselves; identity is part of human psychology.

Understanding human psychology is important when facing the need to change an organization's culture as part of adopting TQM practices and behaviors. Moving an organization to a culture of quality-focused behaviors will not happen overnight (Deming, 2013; Moosa et al., 2010; Soltani & Wilkinson, 2010). Some researchers believe that an organization's culture cannot be changed (Wetzel & Dievernich, 2014) only worked with (Bolboli & Reiche, 2014; Green, 2012). Bolboli and Reiche (2014) proposed matching organizational culture to business excellence practices to achieve the benefits of a TQM program while reducing cultural resistance. There may be value to a company when managers partially adopt quality management practices to seek market advantages. The partial adoption may confuse the employees. Employees become uncertain of when to follow quality management practices. This uncertainty further reduces the value gained from using quality management practices. Another problem lies in the possible confusion of who in the organization is responsible for quality management practices and programs.

The fundamental disagreement among researchers for creating a quality-focused culture lies along a spectrum of responsibility running from the organization, through leaders, to individuals. Gondo and Amis (2013) placed the responsibility for change in the hands of the organization with their call for change management plans to be practical and specific. They did not assign ownership of the change management plans to a specific group within an organization's structure (Gondo & Amis, 2013). Likewise,

Mosadeghrad (2014) called for a change management plan that comprehensively identified structural, procedural, and contextual changes without explicitly naming who would be responsible for the change initiative. This disagreement on change management program ownership illustrates the challenges an organization faces in implementing a successful quality management program.

Personal Identity Develops Through Sensemaking and Storytelling

Sensemaking occurs in context and is a tool used to answer the question ‘Why?’. The meaning someone assigns to a disruption depends on the setting of the disruption and preexisting beliefs developed from lived experiences (Weick, 1995). These frameworks are called mental models. Many researchers use the term *mental model* or *mental framework* to describe how people reach a conclusion and how they choose their next action. People develop their mental models from experience and knowledge (Colville, Pye, & Brown, 2016). People around the sensemaker influence these mental models (Weick, 1995). The language meanings that are available to the individual affect both the outcomes of sensemaking and the person’s identity ((Näslund & Perner, 2012). In summary, the wealth or paucity of word meanings determine a person’s identity.

Mental Models Form the Framework of Individual Identity

The concept of mental models is fundamental to sensemaking. Mental models are constructed from the beliefs, experiences, training, and knowledge held by someone (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). People create their mental models from their lived experiences. Without a framework, whether the term used is a *mental map* (Weick, 1995) or *framework* (Weick et al., 2005), sensemaking will fail because there is no way to

organize environmental input. Furthermore, these mental models are hostage to a person's vocabulary. The meaning of an event is described using language, therefore, when an outside entity constrains the meaning of the words used to describe the event then the meaning people derive from the event is also under the control of that entity (Filstad, 2014; Johansen, 2012). Understanding how people build their mental models from their lived experiences is critical to developing a successful quality management initiative.

Mental models control learning or the gathering of knowledge. Venselaar and Gruis (2016) used a phenomenological approach to examine an organization's approach to supply chain partnering (SCP). They argued that while managers may propose a strategy, it is impossible to foresee the practices used to execute the strategy. Part of this difficulty may be due to language. They found that none of the participants could describe SCP and that each participant believed their coworkers defined SCP differently. These different definitions affected the way that the participants worked. As a result, the development of SCP did not proceed the way that managers had envisioned the process. These findings illustrate the importance of shared definitions during an organizational change event.

Significant misunderstanding can develop when word meanings differ between groups. Weber, Thomas, and Stephen's (2015) study of divergent sensemaking demonstrated the importance of shared vocabulary meaning. Weber et al. (2015) interviewed key participants from the U.S. Coast Guard Midwest District (MWD). Like Venselaar and Gruis (2016), the members in the MWD filtered out discordant material

and kept what matched their reality. Unlike the Dutch housing association (Venselaar & Gruis, 2016), the MWD was forced to amend its position in the face of public opposition. Mental models play out on the individual level, as well.

Personal identity is informed by mental models because mental models govern how people think, feel, and behave. Obodaru (2012) wondered if people could envision themselves as being someone else or somewhere else in their lives if they had made different choices. She performed a literature review and developed an *alternative selves* construct (Obodaru, 2012). The construct demonstrated that a person could change their self-identity by redescribing themselves by using terms that described possibilities, who they would be ideally, or whom they ought to be (Obodaru, 2012). This construct has implications for transforming the individual and then transforming the organization because of the changes in behavior wrought by the changed mental model. People explain mental model changes to themselves and others through storytelling.

Adopting a Total Quality Management Mindset, One Person at a Time

Changing an organization, which is a collection of stories, means changing the stories that people tell about the organization. People use storytelling to communicate organizational values (Boje, 2014; Brady & Haley, 2013). Stories act as a vehicle or as a bridge between a quality management event or subject and the person having the experience. During sensemaking activities storytelling creates understanding, shares visions of the future, and transfers knowledge; therefore, storytelling is how people make sense of quality management practices. The stories people tell and their personal

identities must change for the organization's identity to change. One way to change a mental model is through learning. Learning changes the stories people tell.

Storytelling Is How People Share Knowledge

People use stories to share knowledge. Caminotti and Gray (2012) examined the role of storytelling in adult learning. They found that adult learners have a repertoire of stories derived from their personal experiences (Caminotti & Gray, 2012). This fund of stories could explain why teams with an experienced team leader did better than teams that relied on archived information (Easton & Rosenzweig, 2012). These stories can act as bridges between new material and what the person already knows. Stories bind facts together so that people could understand the material (Yang, 2016). Storytelling helps people integrate what they have learned with their past experiences. Sometimes, what people have learned can change what they believe.

Learning precedes changes in behavior. Lagrosen and Travis (2015) maintained that learning affected the core values of the learner. People learn how to behave at work through stories (Boje, 2014; Vaara et al., 2016). Thurlow and Helms' (2015) investigation into plausibility and sensemaking showed that stories transmitted organizational knowledge and culture. Continuing this perspective, Steinbauer et al. (2015) suggested that plausible stories created frameworks that organizational members used to understand their roles in the organization. Thus, storytelling provides the framework for personal identity and interpersonal behavior.

Transforming the Individual and the Organization

Organizations which seek to implement quality management practices need their members to change how they solve problems. In organizations, stories hold the keys to what worked in the past. Sometimes this information describes how a leader is supposed to behave (Humphreys et al., 2012; Steinbauer et al., 2015) or how something similar worked out in the past (Ito & Inohara, 2015; Wetzel & Dievernich, 2014) or where a particular set of pipes go (Yeo & Marquardt, 2015). These stories act as a shorthand that becomes reflexive (Steinbauer et al., 2015). Some organizations rely more on getting things done quickly than on getting things done right (Myszewski, 2015). Organizational stories frame the members' mental models. To change people's actions, the organization's managers must change how the managers react when employees follow the guidance held in the old stories that produced the historical environment.

The premise that people's choices create their environments has powerful implications for using sensemaking to change individual and organizational behaviors. Weick and others (1995; 2005) contended that people invent their realities through sensemaking. The form of this reality depends on the meanings (Filstad, 2014; Maclean et al., 2014) available to a person. For example, the word *coached* could have a positive and supportive meaning in one organization because the person was learning a new skill. In another organization *coached* could be a euphemism for being written up for violating an organizational rule. These changes can provide either positive or negative impact on the self-image of an individual or an organization and the stories the individual creates

about their identity and their place in the world. People need to be able to see themselves working effectively in the proposed environment.

Several researchers have identified the importance of the individual in changing an organization's culture. Malhi (2013) stated that organizations could not change. He argued that until the mindset of the employees changed, the existing culture of the organization would remain (Malhi, 2013). Haffar et al. (2013) offered a middle ground linking individual readiness to change to the type of organization adopting TQM. They found that members of organizations with strong hierarchical or market cultures were less likely to value TQM principles and, therefore, were less likely to adopt TQM principles (Haffar et al., 2013). Metaxas and Koulouriotis (2014) echoed Malhi's (2013) position that individuals changed, and then the organization changed. For individuals to change, their mental frameworks must change (Alabi, 2012; Lagrosen & Travis, 2015; Weick, 1995) and the stories that they tell as they make sense of the differences lend support to the reforms (Kadembo, 2012; Thurlow & Helms Mills, 2015). Deming's (2013) work offers a way to transform people initially and the organization's culture ultimately. Table 7 shows each element in Deming's (2013) management theory and selected characteristics of someone who, according to Deming, followed the theory's tenets. Businesses will fail to adopt successful quality management practices as long as the organization's members refuse to change the way they work.

Table 7

Deming's System of Profound Knowledge and the Characteristics of a Transformed Person

Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3	Pillar 4	Characteristics of Quality-focused Behavior
Appreciation for a system	Knowledge about variation	Theory of knowledge	Psychology of individuals, society, and change	Post-transformation
<i>System</i>	<i>Variation</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Psychology</i>	<i>Selected points</i>
a system of functions or activities within an organization that work together for the aim of the organization (Deming, 2013, p. 72).	exists naturally occurs in processes that are within and without statistical control is predictable in processes within statistical control	has temporal spread comes from theory differs from information requires the use of data for prediction	helps people understand interactions with each other, their environment, and with management systems helps leaders understand the distinction between intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, suggesting methods to show appreciation appropriately	2. People as components not cogs 4. Continuous learner (Deming used <i>unceasing</i>) 5. Coach and counsel not judge 6. People's skills <i>will</i> reach a stable state 10. Creates trust 14. Understands the benefits of cooperation and the losses of competition.
<i>Aim characteristics</i>	Accurate judgment rests on the knowledge and understanding of whether the variation arises from a process which is in control or out of control.	Deming contended that "Management is prediction" (2013, p. 62).		
Understood by everyone				
Included plans for the future				
Is a value judgment				

Organizational change begins with changing how organizational members act.

The goal of the system of profound knowledge is to transform individuals (Deming, 2013). Throughout his life, Deming (2013) made the point that change in a process, system or organization begins with the transformation of the individual. Deming never wavered from his position that a person could not see themselves clearly enough to make

a change without outside input. This view from the outside suggests the type of disruptive event identified by Weick (1995) as a prerequisite for sensemaking. Alabi (2012) reviewed Deming's work on the system of profound knowledge regarding its relevance to a modern environment. Alabi's (2012) description of Deming's theory of knowledge could also be used to describe a mental model. Learning occurs when mental models shift. These shifts change the person and can alter the organization and its culture.

Gap in the Literature

Several opportunities to add to the body of academic knowledge emerged from the literature review process. Briody, Meerwarth Pester, and Trotter (2012) noted that employee storytelling as a means to understand and to drive culture change is a rarely studied area of scholarship. Several researchers believe that organizational transformation is a critical part of a successful quality initiative. They acknowledge the importance of soft quality management factors and call for qualitative studies (Gondo & Amis, 2013; Kim et al., 2012; Wetzel & Dievernich, 2014; Wu et al., 2011) to explore the relationship between successful quality initiatives and organizational transformation. Researchers have not studied sensemaking in the context of organizational change in an organization's quality culture, nor have they studied sensemaking as a background for the development of individual quality-focused behaviors. Finally, researchers have not studied storytelling in the context of a quality initiative, nor in the context of quality-focused behaviors.

Several researchers called for studies on soft quality management factors. Soltani and Wilkinson (2010) called for studies to examine management's orientation toward and commitment to TQM. Their study did not include frontline managers nor floor level

employees. Calvo-Mora, Picón, Ruiz, and Cauzo (2013) called for research that looked at how to identify differences in the way people oversee soft quality management practices in companies with and without a quality management certification. Hietschold, Reinhardt, and Gurtner's (2014) systematic literature review of TQM critical success factors called for studies that focused on soft quality management factors. The way managers handle soft quality management factors influences whether the organization's practices change.

Some researchers have called for future research on organizational change, sensemaking, and storytelling. Erbert (2014) has called for future research to explore links between organizational change efforts, storytelling, and sensemaking. Islam (2013) called for an investigation into open (storytelling) sensemaking devices after examining the connections between how people make sense of their environment and how they construct macro-level social structures of meaning. This qualitative study increased knowledge on sensemaking and storytelling, soft quality management factors, and the development of a successful QMS.

Furthermore, researchers have not examined the sample population: Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) recipients. Also, none of the reviewed researchers used a phenomenological approach to their studies. Several researchers did use a case study methodology based on Yin's work. Using van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology allowed a fresh look at the soft quality management factors in an organization. The research study sample offered a look across organizations of many

sizes, in varying degrees of maturity, and which used a variety of hard quality management tools and systems.

The assortment of industries, organization sizes, and quality systems gave me the opportunity to study employee experiences under different conditions. Understanding how employees' experiences affect the adoption of quality-focused behaviors can lead to higher adoption rates for QMSs. The value of a QMS has been well established (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013). This study examined the lived experiences of employees in Arkansas in companies that received an AGQA to find out if there is a relationship between their lived experiences and the successful implementation of quality initiatives. These experiences emerged from interactions with soft quality management factors. Therefore, managers need to consider participant experiences when implementing a QMS.

Summary and Conclusions

Businesses use quality initiatives as a strategy to increase their competitiveness, sustainability, and profitability. When a quality initiative succeeds, the business, its employees, and its customers benefit. Unfortunately, most quality initiatives fail. Researchers have conducted studies around the globe and in all kinds of organizations to find out why there is a high global failure rate of quality initiatives within businesses. The work of quality management researchers examined during the literature review used a variety of research designs and analytical methods to examine geographically dispersed organizations of varying sizes and in a wide array of business sectors. Researchers concluded that the success or failure of a quality management initiative rested on the

degree of adoption of soft quality management factors, such as people, culture, leadership, training, and continuous improvement.

Combining theories offers a fresh way to look at soft quality management factors and successful quality management initiatives. The conceptual theories for this study provide opposing opinions of how people make sense of their environment. Weick (1995) posited that people understood an experience as the person talked about what the experience meant to them. Deming (2013) took the counterpoint that people understood something after he or she tested a theory about what had happened. People use their prior experiences and knowledge to understand an incident, often by telling a story to themselves and the people around them about the experience.

The words used and the meaning of the words used to understand an incident affects people's understanding. When the meaning of words differs among the people in an organization, then a quality initiative will likely fail. Successful quality initiatives require people to adopt new ways of behaving, in essence, changing their personal identities. The organization itself changes as the individuals in the organization choose to act in a manner that supports quality-focused outcomes. Each choice creates personal and shared experiences.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of purposively selected employees at companies that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award. New information from this study can show the relationship between organizational transformation and a successful quality initiative. The study findings will contribute to storytelling in the context of a quality initiative, and storytelling in the

context of quality-focused behaviors. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research design, methodology, sample population, and analytical process for the data gathering phase of this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees in Arkansas companies that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015. The goal was to discover whether their lived experiences contributed to the successful implementation of quality initiatives; for instance, meeting the requirements for the award. The study used a hermeneutic phenomenological model (van Manen, 2014) to capture the lived experiences of employees. I sought participants' thick, rich, descriptions (van Manen, 2014, p. 355) to provide the stories of their experiences in my exploration of successful quality management initiatives.

This chapter contains an explanation of the research methodology, including the role of the researcher, the sample composition and size, and the semistructured interview guide. The chapter covers the data collection and analysis procedures including the methods used to provide credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The chapter ends with a description of ethical issue management and participant protection during and after the study.

Research Design and Rationale

Participants' lived experiences formed the foundation of the study. People deliver these recollections through the medium of storytelling (Yang, 2016). Therefore, these verbal recollections represent stories about what happened based on each participant's sensemaking framework. Examining their experiences can suggest how participants' storytelling influenced their choices about quality management and continuous improvement. To be chosen for the study, participants are currently or previously

employed in an organization with an AGQA. Recognition with a business excellence award such as an AGQA demonstrates that the organization has an effective company-wide QMS. Other researchers have studied quality award recipients (Calvo-Mora et al., 2013; Fu et al., 2015; R. A. Jacob et al., 2012; G. P. Zhang & Xia, 2013) on the value of having a QMS. The researchers (Calvo-Mora et al., 2013; Fu et al., 2015; R. A. Jacob et al., 2012; G. P. Zhang & Xia, 2013) used quantitative methods, while this study used a qualitative method. The study's design as a hermeneutic phenomenological study is appropriate for examining participants' lived experiences.

Research Design

Qualitative research designs are appropriate for research topics that examine human experience such as the participants' experiences in organizations with an AGQA. Tomkins and Eatough (2013) contended that the words in the story conveyed the participant's experience of the studied phenomenon. Phenomenology represents a preferred method of studying human experiences (Gill, 2014; Sloan & Bowe, 2014) without trying to explain why someone experienced something in a particular way (Gill, 2014). The research questions focused on how the participants' experiences contributed to the organization, the stories told about the award, and how storytelling influenced organizational transformation through quality management and continuous improvement experiences. The research questions did not ask why the participants experienced the phenomenon the way that they did.

Phenomenology has changed since its inception in the early 1920s. Husserl has been credited with creating phenomenology as a philosophy and a method (van Manen,

2014). Throughout his life, Husserl constantly revised his approach to phenomenology (van Manen, 2014), which gives modern day practitioners some discomfort if they are seeking the one-true-way. Van Manen called phenomenology a “tradition of traditions” (2014, p. 72) because researchers have used phenomenology in different ways.

Consequently, critics of phenomenology argued that the method is imprecise because researchers may come to different interpretations of the same human experience (van Manen, 2014). Yet, human beings are imprecise; therefore, phenomenology offers the best approach for gathering information that answers the research question.

There are many ways to conduct phenomenological studies. Gill (2014) created a spectrum of phenomenological approaches in his examination of how organizational researchers could use phenomenological methods. The spectrum ranged five phenomenological methods from descriptive to interpretive. Van Manen’s approach combined elements of descriptive and interpretive (Gill, 2014) phenomenology. This blend of descriptive and interpretive elements enhanced the appropriateness of selecting van Manen’s approach for this study. Participant experiences, captured through the stories they told about those experiences in the form of interview transcripts, offered an insider’s view of a successful organizational transformation and the prospect of identifying positive social change opportunities.

The research design required participant material to be elicited, recorded, and transcribed. The language people used to describe their experiences and how they spoke about their experiences were critical to interpreting their experiences in an organization with an AGQA. In van Manen's (2014) method, lived experiences exist in the wording

from the interviews. I interpreted these texts through reflection about the meaning of the words and how the words are linked (Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 1990, 2014). These interpretations could offer an explanation about the lived experience that resonates with the reader. The reason for this resonance is that the participant, the researcher, and the reader are all part of the same world (Boden & Eatough, 2014). People's word choices describe their personal experiences and from these experiences people determine their place in the world. Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology method focuses on experiences with relationships, items, time, space, and the body. Thus, it was the most logical approach for gathering and analyzing participant experiences.

Research Rationale

Walden University students are scholar-practitioners. Van Manen's (2014) approach to phenomenology is pragmatic, thereby representing a fitting choice for a Walden University scholar-practitioner. People share their experiences through storytelling. Van Manen's approach specifically elicits and examines the stories told by participants, which is exactly the data collection mechanism that I wanted to use. Language is a cognitive construction as van Manen noted. He postulated that the limitations of this cognitive aspect were balanced by the capacity to express complex emotions using language. The theoretical framework used Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking. Stories are an integral element in sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Therefore, van Manen's approach was the most relevant way to examine the topic of the research study.

Theorists have grouped phenomenological methods based on approaches to the phenomena. Some researchers broadly lumped phenomenological approaches into interpretive or descriptive (Gill, 2014; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Vagle, 2014). For example, methodology experts classify hermeneutic phenomenology as an interpretive approach. This method requires a researcher to be skilled at reading and interpreting texts (Sloan & Bowe, 2014) since it is the participants' words that the researchers use to study how people experience a phenomenon. Researchers can use many techniques to study human experiences and the words people use to describe their experiences.

Qualitative research designs used by researchers to explore lived experiences and storytelling include ethnography, case study, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology. Sometimes researchers use a mixed methods approach. For example, Gibson et al. (2014) used three different methods, standardized questionnaires, qualitative methods, and physiological measures to study disabled youth's experiences of activity settings. Polkinghorne (1988) argued that no absolute rules exist for developing a research design. A research design is appropriate for a study when the data type, sampling method, data gathering, and analytic processes support answering the research question (Patton, 2015). I considered ethnography, case study, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology as possible methods. Patton's advice to "first the question, then the methods, and then back to the question" (2015, p. 251) guided my evaluation of potential qualitative methods for the study. I began with ethnography.

An ethnographic study required more time than I had available to complete the study. Case study designs offered the opportunity to learn about participant experiences

in an organization with an AGQA. Several researchers have used case studies to examine quality management issues (Goh, 2015; Ingelsson et al., 2012; Sampaio, Saraiva, & Monteiro, 2012; Steiber & Alänge, 2013). However, I wanted to learn about participant experiences in many organizations, and I did not have the time available to obtain permission from multiple organizations. I would have also needed to show in my IRB application that I had permission to conduct on-site research. The last two potential approaches, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology could be carried out in the time available and were appropriate ways to gather information that would answer the research questions.

Researchers have used narrative inquiry in conjunction with case study designs or phenomenology to explore stories and storytelling in many organizational management environments. Thomas (2012) argued that narrative inquiry complements other research approaches. She makes a cogent case for including narrative inquiry when exploring the meaning of experiences. Zurlo and Cautela (2014) examined the role of narratives and narrators in organizational identity and operating processes in their case study. The term *narrative analysis* covers several ways to investigate stories in a study. Riessman (2008) offers four ways to study narratives: (a) thematic analysis, (b) structural analysis, (c) dialogic/performance analysis, and (d) visual narrative analysis. Both thematic analysis and structural analysis offered ways to examine participant stories in this study. Patton (2015) noted that narrative inquiry involved comparing a story against other stories; however, experiences, not stories, represent the study unit of the research design. The narrative analysis method focuses the content in a story, for example, the frequency of

specific words or themes in the data pool (Krippendorff, 2013) while phenomenology focuses on the experiences (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013) portrayed by the words in the story. This research study design focused on lived experiences; therefore, I chose to use a phenomenological approach.

Research Questions

The research questions emerged from the selection of a phenomenological study design and the problem statement: the impact of employee lived experiences on quality initiative success has not been studied. I used the research questions to develop the semistructured interview questions used to gather data from the participants.

Research Question: What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award?

Subquestion 1: What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award?

Subquestion 2: How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation?

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of the study, therefore, I interviewed participants to collect information about their experiences. Afterward, I organized and analyzed the data, and interpreted the results. Peredaryenko and Kraus (2013) identified four human instrument states in their study of novice researchers. These four states, (a) knowledge about the phenomenon, (b) informant response, (c) types of information sought by the researcher, and (d) the kind of information provided by the

participant place the researcher on a continuum between being researcher centered or informant centered (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). They noted that researchers with strong links to the phenomenon being studied can find it difficult to properly conduct a study. I am a seasoned business manager and experienced in quality management processes, so I strove to be aware of shifts in my perspective.

Therefore, my experiences could affect my openness toward the participants and their information. I discovered that as I conducted the study that my calibration as an instrument changed when I interviewed participants and analyzed the data (Xu & Storr, 2012). Reflective journaling helped me develop awareness of this shift. By using Peredaryenko and Kraus's (2013) continuum during the interviews, I tried to improve my understanding of the lived experiences of employees in organizations with an AGQA. This activity helped to support the validity of the study. Epoché and reflexivity represent the two conditions required for successful phenomenological research (van Manen, 2014). A researcher meets these conditions when he or she can identify preconceptions, acknowledge the influence of the preconceptions (epoché), and then examine the item of interest with an open and wondering mind (reflexivity). Per phenomenological research guidance (Vagle, 2014), before the interview, I recorded preconceptions and expectations. Immediately following the interview, I recorded impressions and responses to the participant's responses. During the analysis phase, I reviewed these recordings alongside the interview material.

Some potential participants belonged to the local American Society for Quality (ASQ) section. During the participant recruitment, preinterview briefing, and

postinterview sessions, I reminded participants that my research role stood apart from any professional relationship or friendship. The preinterview briefing included the purpose of the study in accordance with the Belmont Report's guidance (1979). There was no supervisory or instructional relationship with any potential participant. In the role of participant-as-observer, I recorded observations about the participants' behavior, vocal tone, and body language as they responded to the interview questions in field notes. The next section identifies the methodology used in the study.

Methodology

Phenomenology holds the distinction of being both a philosophy and a methodology. Philosophically, phenomenology owes its formation to Husserl. Most researchers (Gill, 2014; van Manen, 2014) divide phenomenological approaches into two types. The first type is the descriptive phenomenology developed by Husserl, Giorgi, and others. The second type, interpretive phenomenology, branches from Heidegger's disagreement with Husserl's approach. Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach can be traced from Heidegger, through Gadamer, with influences from Ricoeur. According to van Manen (2014), curiosity and wonder drive researchers who use phenomenological methods in their studies. Researchers use the phenomenology of practice articulated by van Manen to examine the experiences found in everyday life as described by the people having the experience.

A direct relationship exists between an experience description and the experiential framework of someone. The conceptual framework for this study blends Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking with Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge. These

theories addressed how people made sense of an event, learned, developed and maintained personal identities, and shared their experiences. The words used to perform these activities affect the meanings made and shared about the event. Data was collected through semistructured interviews to provide the text used in the analysis phase.

Participant Selection Logic

The study required recruiting people who are or who have been employed by companies which received an AGQA between 2010 and 2015. I recruited participants through personal network connections, professional associations, LinkedIn, and letters sent to organizations with an award. People naturally tell stories to describe their experiences (Erbert, 2014). Furthermore, people tell stories to make sense of their experiences (Weick, 1995; Weick & Daft, 1984; Weick et al., 2005) and to share their experiences with others (Colville et al., 2012, 2016). Businesses change procedures to meet award application criteria. The purpose of the study was to explore employees' experiences during and after the changes through the stories they told about their experiences.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling represented the primary sampling method based on the research question. Singleton and Straits (2010) classified purposive sampling as a nonprobability sampling model based on the expert knowledge of the researcher. Singleton and Straits (2010) emphasized that one of the weaknesses of purposive sampling is that the researcher requires extensive knowledge to obtain an appropriate sample. I provided the expert knowledge needed to select the sample. During the

participant briefing, criteria sampling through demographic questions confirmed that the participants worked at an AGQA organization during the award process. Snowball sampling produced one participant; a prospective participant referred the person as a potential participant for the study.

The participants selected for the study were not random. Phenomenological studies use purposive sampling methods because the researcher is interested in a specific phenomenon experienced by the participant (Gill, 2014). Qualitative sampling methods use participants who provide detailed information about the research topic. Unlike the numerically driven quantitative approaches, no uniformly accepted model for qualitative study sample size exists. Patton (2015) declared that sample size rules do not exist for studies that use qualitative methods. Students using qualitative methods frequently use Mason (2010) as a benchmark for identifying sample sizes. In fact, Fusch and Ness (2015) cautioned that Mason's 2010 article did not substantively update his earlier article and that the references relied heavily on textbooks. Since, qualitative methods are inductive and use varied approaches, identifying the precise number of interviews represented a problem.

Researchers who use the same phenomenological method do not agree on sample size requirements for a valid study. Van Manen (2014) sidestepped the issue of an acceptable sample size. Therefore, a researcher using his method cannot select a preapproved sample size. Van Manen argued that the term *sample* implied that the study outcome could be generalizable. Van Manen dismissed even purposive sampling by relegating it to an ethnological approach. He urged researchers to seek participants who

can provide the rich examples of the studied phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). For van Manen, a successful researcher used rich experiential material to deliver a study that offered a reflective treatment of the phenomenon. In summary, the right number of participants varied in keeping with the research topic.

In general, researchers use smaller sample sizes to explore details of a phenomenon. Maxwell (2013) emphasized that the study question phrasing would determine the sample size and selection criteria. Research questions that seek to understand a group in a specific location with a specific set of characteristics allowed researchers to use a smaller sample size (Maxwell, 2013). When researchers did not intend to generalize the results of the study, a smaller sample was also supportable (Maxwell, 2013). While useful, these general guidelines fail to identify the size of a small sample.

A quantifiable sample size model would provide qualitative researchers with a uniform approach for selecting a specific sample size for their study. Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2015) proposed a model for determining a suitable sample size for a qualitative study. In their model, smaller sample sizes are acceptable (a) for narrowly focused studies, (b) when the participants can provide ample information about the phenomenon, (c) when the study applies an established theory, and (d) when the researcher can obtain abundantly detailed information from the participants (Malterud et al., 2015). This model allows researchers to identify their sample size range. Applying Malterud et al.'s (2015) model to this research study supported using a small sample. First, this study had a narrowly focused topic. Second, the participants were very

knowledgeable about the phenomenon. Third, I applied established theories to the research question. Fourth, the interviews provided detailed information about the participants' experiences. There was no need to seek additional interviews because the minimum number of participant interviews produced thick, rich material about their experiences in a variety of organizations and industries.

Participants responded to different recruiting methods. I recruited the purposive sample of people through networking; emails sent from the AIPE or ASQ sections 1413 and 1407, LinkedIn, or through letters sent to organizations that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015. Appendix B contains the participant recruitment letter and email. The sampling strategy yielded 11 participants from eight organizations, exceeding the required minimum of eight participants. Van Manen (2014) cautioned researchers that too many transcripts may make it difficult to consider the material in each transcript deeply. In van Manen's method how many people or how often the researchers speak with the study participants was up to the researcher.

Saturation

Some researchers question the value of data saturation in a study that is not a grounded theory study design. Malterud et al. (2015) argued that data saturation was part of the constant comparative method and provided little value outside of grounded theory study designs. They proposed replacing *saturation* with *information power*. Information power is part of a study's internal validity and is satisfied when a study has sufficient participants to meet the aims of the research (Malterud et al., 2015). Whether the

condition is called saturation or information power, the data must be thick, rich, and meet the criteria of the study.

Researchers agreed that successful phenomenological studies achieve data saturation. Researchers have disputed the point at which data saturation occurs (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Malterud et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). Fusch and Ness (2015) recommended that interview research designs use semistructured interviews to reach data saturation. For Fusch and Ness data saturation was linked to data triangulation. Merriam (2009) stood with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) recommendation of sampling until no new information arises from the material; in effect, saturation has been reached. Successful phenomenological studies present thick, rich experiential material about the topic (Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2014). Large sample sizes may impede data saturation by discouraging deep reflection on the material. Rich, thick descriptions require researchers to be reflective and reflexive when reviewing data.

Participants' detailed answers to the interview guide questions provided the rich thick detail required for phenomenological studies. Van Manen's (van Manen, 1990, 2014) hermeneutic phenomenology method uses interview transcripts for reflecting on the phenomenon and then developing an interpretation. Each pass through the transcripts yielded new insights. Failing to achieve data saturation would have required additional interviews.

Instrumentation

I gathered the data through a researcher produced interview guide, field notes, and audio recordings. M. B. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) declared (a) that when the

phenomenon being studied needed to be set within a context, (b) generalizing was not a concern, and (c) when the concepts were expressed through location specific terms and meanings, then it made little sense to use a predesigned instrument. The study met these criteria. Van Manen (2002) reflectively reviewed interview transcripts as part of his data analysis process (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). I tailored the interview questions to the study to obtain rich, thick experiential descriptions. Audio recording participant responses allowed me to concentrate on taking field notes. Both the field note observations and the audio recordings contributed to the development of thick, rich experiential descriptions.

Data collection relies on the researcher to conduct an effective qualitative interview. Maxwell (2013) cautioned that interview questions and research questions are not the same. A phenomenological study does not begin with data analysis; the interview must elicit the participant's lifeworld so that the researcher can place the phenomenon in context (Bevan, 2014). Researchers disagreed on the amount of detail appropriate for an interview guide. Singleton and Straits (2010) advocated a subtopic approach that listed a few key questions under each topic. M. B. Miles et al. (2014) recommended listing probe questions after the interview questions. Merriam (2009) argued that qualitative interviewers should use a few broad questions that explored participant experiences, opinions and values; feelings, knowledge, and sensory impressions. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) took a structured approach to qualitative interviews, likening the process to a script. The interview guide presented in Appendix C was developed based on these researcher recommendations and IRB reviewer feedback. The interview guide also helps the interviewer maintain the tone of the interview.

It is important that the researcher does not become an interrogator. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) advised novice researchers to construct an interview protocol. A well-constructed interview guide allows the researcher to obtain detailed descriptions focused on the phenomenon. Høffding and Martiny (2015) saw the interview guide as a way to establish a pragmatic approach to developing data in a qualitative study. For van Manen (2014), an effective interview meant that the researcher guided the participant through reliving the experience. Seidman (2013) cautioned researchers to avoid manipulating participants if the researcher chose to use an interview guide. The interview guide developed for this study used open-ended questions in a semistructured interview format and provided a consistent approach and structure for the interviews. The design encouraged participants to share their experiences as part of a conversation.

An interview cannot produce usable data if the questions do not elicit information about the phenomenon. The interview questions used common quality management and sensemaking concepts identified through the literature review. Several researchers recommended a practice run (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) urged researchers to use the language of the interviewee and that in some cases, this may mean asking the participant to define a term. To ensure that I used common business terms, I asked two subject matter experts to review the interview guide and participant materials in a field test. Chapter 4 contains information on the field test. As the instrument, I collected the data from the participants in the study.

Data Collection

Participant recruitment began when the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study on July 25, 2016 (Approval # 07-25-16-0043183). The semistructured interview protocol ensured a consistent procedure for each interview. This design helped support the dependability of the study. A semistructured interview of approximately 25 to 55 minutes was used to collect experiential information from participants. Doody and Noonan (2013) noted that careful preparation improved the likelihood of collecting useful data. Before meeting each participant, I recorded my thoughts, anticipations, and preconceptions on a digital recorder. At the beginning of the meeting, I briefed each participant about the interview's purpose and their rights in the study. I asked participants if they had any questions about the topic or process, and then offered them the opportunity to withdraw from the study. Signed participant agreement forms and demographic information were confirmed before I asked the interview questions.

Each participant had the opportunity to review the questions before the interview. All participants received a copy of the demographic questions and interview questions as part of the interview meeting date/time confirmation. The interview guide contained demographic information about years of quality management experience, the participant's experience with the employer, whether this is the only time the participant has worked for a business with an AGQA and the participant's professional quality certifications. The face-to-face interviews were recorded using two audio recorders, one for the interviewer and one for the participant. The interviews took place at the research

participant's site, via Skype, or through Freeconferencecall.com. The Skype interview was recorded on digital recorders because the Call Graph software failed.

Freeconferencecall.com provided a recorded conference call service.

I asked the interview questions in the guide's sequence and recorded field notes in a binder during the interview. Successful interviewers blend observation with recording participant responses (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I observed participant body language and other non-verbal cues in face-to-face and Skype video interviews. Rather than capture participant responses verbatim in the field notes, I summarized their statements using keywords and phrases. The notes included topics to explore with the participant as time allowed during the interview period.

After the interview, I debriefed the participant, and confirmed permission for a follow-up meeting of about one-half hour to review a member experience summary. After each participant interview, I recorded a personal debrief to capture any thoughts, anticipations, and preconceptions about the material on a digital recorder. These pre- and postinterview files served as brackets during the analytical phase.

The follow-up meeting with the participants functioned as a member check. The member check helped support the research design's credibility. A digital recorder or the recording capability of Freeconferencecall.com made a record of each member check meeting. Van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenology method is interpretive. Therefore, it was vital to match the interpretation of participant experiences to what the participant meant to convey. The second meeting functioned as an opportunity to clarify any questions that arose during the transcription and interpretation phases. The second

meeting also offered the opportunity to ask questions about participant experiences that evolved from interviews with other participants.

Data Analysis Plan

Language is the key to a hermeneutic phenomenological study. The examination of the text provides the keys for understanding the experience (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The hermeneutic circle represents the back and forth movement of the analyst from the particular to the whole when examining texts (Gill, 2014; Patton, 2015). Vagle (2014) used the phrase, “whole, part, whole” (2014, p. 96) to describe the conduct of a phenomenological analysis. The analysis plan combined guidance from van Manen (2014), Gill (2014) and Vagle (2014). The analyst makes retrospective sense of participant experiences. This retrospective aspect reflects how people make sense of an experience and how stories are developed to explain an experience (Weick, 1995). The interviews captured participants’ experiences in the form of an audio recording.

The participant’s interview audio file provided the primary data source. Each interview was transcribed word-for-word. If the participant’s audio file was unclear, then the interviewer’s audio file would be transcribed at the unclear portion. The preinterview researcher bracketing files were transcribed word-for-word. I converted the field notes from the journal into an electronic document file. Each file received a unique tag to associate it with the participant interview and examination.

The words in the transcripts required several examinations. Van Manen (2014) developed a reflective interpretation of a phenomenon from reviewing interview transcripts. He argued that thematic analysis as used by grounded theory, ethnography, or

content analysis researchers did not produce phenomenological insights (van Manen, 2014). Thematic analysis for a phenomenological study required examining the text for meaning as an entire story, paragraph by paragraph, and at the level of the sentence, phrase, expression, or single word (van Manen, 2014). Van Manen called his themes existentials. These existentials are (a) Relationality—lived relation, (b) Corporeality—lived body, (c) Spatiality—lived space, (d) Temporality—lived time, and (e) Materiality—lived things and technology (van Manen, 2014). I evaluated the transcripts against these themes. Each examination used a clean copy of the interview transcript.

The transcripts were duplicated three times. I did not annotate the original transcript for each interview. I reviewed the first copy of each transcript as a whole. The first copy was annotated with the insights developed from the comparison. I developed a phrase that expresses the theme of the text as a whole. The second reading was a selective reading of the transcript. I read the material silently. The second copy of each transcript was reviewed to identify selections that were essential to understanding the phenomenon or reveal something about the phenomenon. I highlighted these selections. As suggested by Vagle (2014), I noted my presuppositions or assumptions about the material in a separate document. He called this process *bridling*, a term he lifted from Dahlberg et al.'s (2008) work (Vagle, 2014). During the selection highlighting phase, I wrote a descriptive-reflective memo about the selections. The third reading focused on the details. Each sentence or sentence cluster was explored to identify what the material reveals about the described experience. Each sentence or sentence cluster was annotated

with the result of the analysis. A descriptive-reflective memo captured questions, reflections, and insights during this analysis.

Each level of analysis was reviewed to identify commonalities and divergences. After completing the analysis of the interview transcript copies, I examined the pre- and postinterview transcript copies and field notes. Any questions that arose during analysis were captured for possible follow-up during the member check meeting.

Based on the insights from the review, I developed a descriptive-reflective memo (member experience summary) that described the participant's experiences. This memo was shared with the participant. The meetings with the participants were recorded through Freeconferencecall.com's services. The member check meetings were very short, so the calls were not transcribed. Some participants did not have changes to their experience summary; therefore, there was no need for a final descriptive-reflective memo that incorporated the participant feedback. Other participants pointed out misinterpretations or suggested clarifications to the material. Any changes made to the member experience summary were made collaboratively with the participant during the member check telephone call. Appendix D contains the approved member experience summaries.

Originally, I intended to compare the participant descriptive-reflective memos with the other participant memos at the same level. After the data was collected and analyzed, this step did not make sense. The aim of this step, to identify existentials commonly found across the interviews and to note which existentials were missing or rare was met by the existential coding of the transcripts. I also planned to compare

participant memos across industries and award levels to identify any commonalities based on those factors. This information emerged from the transcript codes.

The use of codes in phenomenological research is a subject of contention. Vagle (2014) advised researchers to use analytical software if the researcher found it useful. Van Manen (2014) recognized the value of coding in qualitative methods other than phenomenology. For van Manen, themes emerged through the process of reading and reflecting and writing. In keeping with van Manen's (2014) preference, I created a codebook of existentials at the beginning of the study. The codebook expanded with descriptive codes during the analysis phase. The codes allowed grouping of similar material for analysis and reflection. I used HyperRESEARCH, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program, to analyze existentials, best practice recommendations, and other topics that arose during the analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Establishing the trustworthiness of a phenomenological study can require different measures than studies using other qualitative methods. Van Manen (2014) disagreed with commonly accepted measures for qualitative research studies. He offered seven criteria for evaluating a phenomenological study's quality. These criteria are (a) heuristic questioning, (b) descriptive richness, (c) interpretive depth, (d) distinctive rigor, (e) strong and addressive meaning, (f) experiential awakening, and (g) inceptual epiphany (van Manen, 2014). A valid phenomenological study, according to van Manen, (a) elicited a sense of wonder, (b) contained detailed descriptions that the audience understood, (c) offered reflective insights, (d) remained focused on the phenomenon, (e)

resonated with the audience, (f) used vivid language that encouraged the audience to examine their own experience, and (g) possibly provided a new insight or clarification. I kept these criteria in mind as I conducted the study, analyzed the participant responses, and wrote about the participant experiences by actively checking my assumptions, processes, and interpretations against these criteria.

Measures of rigor establish the trustworthiness of a study. Unlike quantitative studies, the criteria for defining the characteristics of a trustworthy qualitative study is a matter of contention. Yin (2016) urged researchers to build measures of trustworthiness into the research design. Most qualitative studies use Guba and Lincoln's (1981; 1985) translation of quantitative characteristics. Researchers must establish the study's truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) called these characteristics (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. The following sections contain the actions I took to meet these characteristics.

Credibility

Phenomenological studies seek to understand a phenomenon from the participant's perspective. Therefore, credibility has been established when the participants believe the results of the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Triangulation is a popular method of providing qualitative study credibility. Yin (2011) noted that with the use of audio recorded interviews, that the need for triangulation diminished. This piece of advice is absent from Yin's 2016 book. Triangulation is a nautical navigation term that denotes the use of three points to determine location. In qualitative research, the term refers to seeking confirmation/disconfirmation from a source outside the original

data. Patton (2015) observed that researchers realized in several ways: (a) triangulation of observations with interview data, (b) triangulation by comparing interviews, and (c) review by participants. Two of Patton's (2015) methods, comparing observations with interview data and review by participants were met during the follow-up meeting with the participants for their review of the descriptive-reflective memo developed about their experiences. Comparing participant interviews helped identify conflicting and inconsistent experience accounts, as well as confirming data saturation.

Data saturation also supports the credibility of a phenomenological study. Participant experiences were detailed through thick, rich descriptions developed through the "whole-part-whole" (Vagle, 2014, p. 96) analysis process. In addition to supporting the credibility of the study, thick, rich descriptions that use evocative language meet two of van Manen's (2014) criteria for a good phenomenological study: detailed descriptions understood by the audience and vivid language. The participants recounted similar experiences, another supporting factor for data saturation.

Transferability

Transferability describes the study's degree of relevance to other populations and settings. Phenomenological studies are not generalizable. When a phenomenological study resonates with the reader, uses vivid language that provokes introspection, and provides insights about the topic (van Manen, 2014), it is probable that the reader will find the material useful. Trochim and Donnelly (2008) assigned the responsibility of deciding the usefulness of the material to the reader. To enhance the ability of readers to apply the findings to their own lifeworlds, M. B. Miles, et al. (2014) advised researchers

to (a) describe sample characteristics in detail, (b) specify sample limitations, (c) examine sample diversity so that the findings can be used in more settings, and (d) lots of thick, rich descriptions to allow readers to find matches with their experiences. I used these characteristics to guide the execution, analysis, and write-up of the study.

Dependability

Dependable qualitative studies contain the information required for another researcher to determine if the study processes were consistent. Yin (2016) advised researchers to develop and use a consistent set of research procedures so that other researchers could review the study research design, evidence, and analysis. I have described my data collection methods and data analysis in detail. M. B. Miles, et al. (2014) listed five recommendations for meeting study dependability requirements, (a) clear research questions, (b) explicit description of my role in the research, (c) the study is clearly connected to theory, (d) data collection matches research question needs, and (e) the researcher checks for data quality. The study design meets these criteria. I used field notes and journaling to record the process of gathering and analyzing data. These documents captured variations and changes that occurred. The qualitative data analysis software, HyperRESEARCH, provide code use reports that used to track changes to code meaning, use, and assignment.

Dependability relies on the maintenance of data integrity as well as the development and use of a consistent set of procedures. Data formats include paper, audio files, and computer program files. Paper files, digital recorders, flash drives, and field notes were locked in a fire proof safe. Password protected portable memory storage

devices (flash drives) hold back up files and scans of the paper documents. The computer used for the study has virus-detection software and is regularly upgraded to maintain operational integrity and security. Password protected folders hold the subfolders of data and data analysis. In agreement with the law, I will dispose of all data using the recommended method after five years.

Confirmability

Confirmable qualitative studies contain the information required for another researcher to reproduce the study framework and to determine if the study findings are supported by the gathered data. Confirmability protocols provide a check against unrecognized researcher biases. Trochim and Donnelly (2008) advised researchers to use data audits to identify potential instances of bias or distortion. M. B. Miles et al. (2014) recommended that researchers (a) provide detailed methods and procedures, (b) identify the sequence steps for collecting, processing, analyzing, and displaying data, (c) clearly link conclusions with gathered data, (d) clearly identify biases and how personal bias affected the study, (e) consider other possible conclusions, and (f) retain research materials for reanalysis as required by review boards. The research study design and procedures met these recommendations, including measures to identify researcher bias.

I used bracketing and bridling to capture my preconceptions and provide material for assessing my personal biases. Data will be held on file for five years before being destroyed in accordance with the current procedures. Each step of the research design and analysis plan have been identified. A process checklist was developed to assure that data collection, and data analysis events were consistently conducted.

Ethical Procedures

Qualitative research has been called human science research. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 45 Part 46 govern the actions of researchers who conduct human science research. These regulations provide participant protections, irrespective of the participant's location. Legislators enacted these regulations because of the Belmont Report findings (1979). The Belmont Report (1979) established three ethical principles for the conduct of human science research: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. The Belmont Report listed three conditions that researchers must meet for the conduct of a human science study: (a) informed consent, (b) assessment of risks and benefits, and (c) selection of subjects. Walden University requires researchers to be trained to conduct human science research projects. I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Human Subjects Protection Training Module as part of the preparation to carry out this study.

I obtained Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (July 25, 2016, Approval # 07-25-16-0043183) before collecting any data. The Walden IRB protects participants' well-being by overseeing student research. These actions meet Patton's (2015) recommendations for conducting human science research. I used an informed consent document which provided background information about the study. Participants learned that participation is voluntary. The letter listed the risks and benefits of participating in the study, and the measures taken to assure participant privacy. Finally, the document contained contact information for the IRB, my Chair, and myself. I used the interview guide to maintain a consistent process for informing participants of their

rights and the conduct of the interview. Participant interviews, researcher field notes and other material which may provide identifiable information are safeguarded. Electronic data is held in the password protected media. Paper data, digital recorders, and flash drives are locked in a fire-resistant safe. Data will be destroyed five years after the granting of the degree.

Summary

Researchers can conduct phenomenological research in several ways. This research study design used van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic method to explore the lived experiences of employees who are members of organizations with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award. Chapter 3 began with a description of the research design and rationale which presented the reasoning for the study method, the role of the researcher, and the study research questions. The remainder of the chapter covered the research methodology, data collection and analysis procedures, the methods used to handle issues of trustworthiness, and finally the ethical procedures that I followed.

I sought research participants from organizations that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015. Phenomenological studies can be conducted with small sample numbers since the researcher focuses on a limited phenomenon, the material is not generalizable, and the phenomenon has strong ties to theory. The detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedures provide support for the four conditions of a trustworthy qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Per Walden University requirements, I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Human Subjects Protection Training Module. Research began upon receiving approval from the Walden University IRB. The IRB safeguards participants' safety and oversees student research projects. Chapter 4 provides the research finding presentation and describes the processes used for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of employees in companies that received an AGQA between 2010 and 2015 to discover how employee experiences contributed to successful quality initiatives through the stories they told about the quality management initiatives. The impact of lived experiences on the success quality initiatives has not been explored. Interviews with 11 participants in eight organizations yielded the necessary data. The research question and subquestions were:

Research Question: What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award?

Subquestion 1: What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award?

Subquestion 2: How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation?

The interview questions arose from the research questions. Interview responses provided participants' experiences data for analysis by van Manen's (2014) hermeneutic phenomenological approach. The method is interpretive and focuses on the participants' language. According to van Manen, lived experience can be classified into one or more existentials: corporeality (lived body), materiality (lived material), relationality (lived self-other), spatiality (lived space), and temporality (lived time). This chapter includes a description of the field test, the research setting, participant and organizational demographics, data collection and data analysis procedures, and a discussion of the measures taken to assure trustworthiness.

Field Test

An interview cannot produce usable data if the questions do not elicit information about the phenomenon being studied. Some researchers recommend a practice run (Campbell, 1999; Patton, 2015), such as a field test. The field test for this study was completed prior to IRB submission. Patton (2015) urged researchers to use the language of the interviewee and that in some cases, this may mean asking the participant to define a term. Following Patton's advice, I recruited two subject matter experts (SMEs).

The first SME is a former executive in a company with an AGQA. She had over 30 years of experience in quality management and was active in the application process for the award. The second SME was a quality organizational learning consultant and held an ASQ Certified Quality Auditor certification. He had over 18 years of experience in understanding corporate culture and developing change management programs.

Each SME received copies of the documents during a face-to-face meeting. They were asked to review the interview protocol, the letter of invitation, and the consent form. Their review evaluated information clarity, word choice, and the kind of response the research questions would evoke from the participants. The first SME suggested that I substitute business language for academic terms. She observed that that the letter of invitation was long and hard to understand. Hence, she advised reformatting the material using a business letter model since the sample group consisted of business professionals. She suggested adding a probing question under IQ1 to elicit more detail from the participant.

The second SME was unable to complete his review during the time available for our face-to-face meeting. He took the material with him and e-mailed his analysis. He responded that he felt the approach would provide valuable information. The interview protocol questions would get at the emotional and motivational states of the participants. He recommended expanding the questions through probes to get at the difficulties, resistance, and roadblocks that may have occurred during the award process. Additional probing questions were developed for the interview protocol in response to the feedback. In summary, each SME understood the questions. Both SMEs believed that the interview protocol would produce the thick rich answers required for a phenomenological study. The interview protocol, interview and probing questions, and the letter of invitation were revised in accordance with their recommendations.

Research Setting

Data gathering occurred through face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews. Four participants chose face-to-face interviews. One of the face-to-face interviews used Skype. Two interviews occurred in participants' offices with the doors closed. One participant interview happened in my study for privacy. The remaining seven participants chose telephone interviews. Each participant received a copy of the consent form and interview questions before the interview meeting. The participant interviewed in my study is legally blind. I read the consent form and interview questions to him before the interview. The telephone participants returned signed copies of the consent form through email before the interview.

Before each face-to-face interview, I tested the two digital recorders. I relied on the reputation of Freeconferencecall.com to record the telephone conversations. The Skype call was recorded using the digital recorders due to the failure of Call Graph, a software program used to record Skype calls. Participants chose telephone interviews for two reasons. First, the telephone interviews were convenient. Second, the participants' geographic dispersion made it impractical to travel to their locations. The in-person face-to-face interviews were conducted because participants were located within a 15-mile radius and they asked me to meet them at their offices. There were no personnel changes, budget cuts, or other trauma that could have influenced participants at the time of the study or which could have influenced the interpretation of research results.

Demographics

The research study involved examining the lived experiences of employees who worked in organizations that received an AGQA. The demographic information collected from participants identified their experience with the award process, their experience with QMSs, their quality management certification, the length of time they were employed by the organization and their job title. The target sample size for this study was eight participants. Eleven participants provided information for the study. Two organizations had multiple participants from the organization. Tables 8 and 9 contains information about the organizations. Table 10 presents information about the participants and the conduct of the interview.

Table 8

Organization Demographics

Organization Alias #	Organization Type	For Profit/Non-profit	Industry	Ownership	24 x 7 Hours of Operation?	Multiple Sites
1	Government	Nonprofit	Education	N/A	N	N
2	Government	Nonprofit	Service	N/A	N	N
3	Education	Nonprofit	Education	N/A	N	Y
4	Food Science	For Profit	Food Service	Publicly Traded	N	Y
5	Health Care	Nonprofit	Healthcare	Privately Owned	Y	Y
6	Health Care	For Profit	Healthcare	Privately Owned	Y	N
7	Manufacturing	For Profit	Manufacturing	Privately Owned	N	Y
8	Manufacturing	For Profit	Manufacturing	Privately Owned	Y	Y

Table 9

Organization Quality Demographics

Organization Alias #	Award Level (if multiple awards, the highest award)	Awards received for multiple years in study timespan	Quality Management System
1	Achievement	Y	Baldrige Excellence Framework AGQA
2	Achievement	Y	Baldrige Excellence Framework
3	Commitment	N	Not identified
4	Governor's	N	ISO 9000 AGQA ISO 17025
5	Governor's	Y	PDSA (Rapid Cycle)
6	Commitment	N	AGQA
7	Governor's	Y	ISO 9000 - non-certified
8	Challenge	N	ISO 9000 - non-certified

Table 10

Participant Demographics

Organization Alias #	Participant Alias #	Award Journey Decider/Influencer	Interview Method	Job Level	Quality Certifications	Examiner
1	P1	N/Y	Telephone	Mid-level Manager	Lean Six Sigma Black Belt	Baldrige
2	P2	N/Y	Telephone	Mid-level Manager	Six Sigma Black Belt, CMQOE	AGQA & Baldrige
3	P3	Y/Y	Skype	Executive	N/A	N
4	P4	N/Y	Telephone	Executive	CQA, Lean Six Sigma Green Belt	AGQA
5	P5	Y/Y	Telephone	Executive	N/A	N
6	P6	Y/Y	Face-to-Face	Executive	Governor's Quality Award, Senior Examiner	AGQA
7	P7	Y/Y	Face-to-Face	Executive	N/A	N
7	P8	N/Y	Telephone	Mid-level Manager	CQM, CQE, CQA	AGQA
8	P9	N/Y	Telephone	Mid-level Manager	CSSBB, CSSGB, CPGP, CQA, CQIA	AGQA
8	P10	Y/N	Telephone	Executive	N/A	N
8	P11	N/N	Face-to-Face	Worker	N/A	N

Data Collection

A semistructured interview protocol provided the primary method of information collection. Interview data collection sites varied: seven telephone interviews (64%), three face-to-face in-office interviews (27%), and one face-to-face Skype interview (9%). The member checks were conducted through telephone calls. Eleven employees from eight organizations which had received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015 took part in this study. Each participant received a unique identifier.

Participants are referred to by number, using the forms P1, P2, and so forth. P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P9, and P10, were interviewed using a telephone in my study. The participants chose the date and time for the telephone call. Total call minutes ranged from 30 minutes to 67 minutes. The interview question portion of the calls varied between 25 and 53 minutes. The calls were recorded using Freeconferencecall.com's services. The member check telephone calls took place in my study. The member check calls were recorded using Freeconferencecall.com's services.

P6, P7, and P11 were interviewed in face-to-face interviews that took place in a physical location. The participants chose the date and time for the interview. I met with P6 and P7 in their organization's offices. P11 was interviewed in my study. The face-to-face interview with P3 used Skype. The Skype call was placed using video and audio capability from my study to his office.

All participants had received a copy of the demographic and interview questions prior to the interview. P1, P4, and P9 prefilled the demographic information and emailed it to me. P6 and P7 prefilled the demographic information and gave it to me before the

interview. Demographic information was collected before asking the data interview questions if participants had not provided the demographic information prior to the interview. In the case of face-to-face interviews, the field notes contain a description of the office and participant. For all the interviews the field notes were used to identify topics to follow up on during the interview or points to clarify.

I sent the interview questions to the participants when the interview time and date were set up. Providing the questions to the participants allowed them the opportunity to read and reflect on the material. The purpose of this study was to gather information about the participant's experiences. Providing the questions in advance reduced the amount of time the participant would have needed to recollect the events and experiences of seeking an AGQA. Participant 6 wrote out his responses to the interview questions before the interview.

Prior to and immediately after all meetings but one, I recorded my thoughts about the interview on a digital recorder. The preinterview bracketing questions for the P7 interview occurred after the interview as I was late after taking a wrong turn. Each pre- and postinterview bracketing session followed the same set of questions. Using the same set of questions helped provide a consistent framework for assessing my preconceptions and my reactions. Appendix E contains the bracketing questions for the interview and member check phases.

Data collection began after I received permission from the Walden University IRB on July 25, 2016. Data collection lasted approximately six weeks. Participants were recruited using email sent to specific people, an email sent on my behalf, Facebook

messaging, LinkedIn, referrals, and physical letters. Not all outreach efforts to recruit participants were successful. No one responded to the email sent by the AIPE. No one responded to the Facebook message. Two people were referred by the recipients of physical letters. One referred person agreed to participate: P1. The second referral did not respond to a request to set up an interview date and time. A professional colleague recommended P10. One participant volunteered when they received an email from ASQ section 1407. One participant was a friend another a professional colleague. The remaining six participants volunteered when they received a physical letter or a LinkedIn email. Table 11 identifies participant recruitment activities.

Table 11

Participant Recruitment

Method	Total Contacted	Agreed to Participate	Declined or Did not respond
Email (Direct)	2	0	2
Email (Sent by ASQ sections or AIPE)	Unknown	1	Unknown
Facebook Messenger	1	1	0
Face-to-Face	1	1	0
LinkedIn Email	6	4	2
Physical Letter	11	2	9
Referred	4	3	1
Total	25 or more	11	14 or more

The participants and organizations received two aliases, a working alias, and the reporting alias. The working alias used city names beginning with the first 20 letters of

the alphabet for organization names. The organizations received a randomly selected city name. The participants received a matching gender name selected from the associated participant name list. The proper names reduced the possibility of confusing participants and organizations. The second alias, the reporting alias, uses the form of P1 and Organization 1 to identify the participant and the organization. These aliases are included in the file names of each interview and data file.

After each interview, I downloaded the audio file from Freeconferencecall.com or the primary digital recorder into the computer. I used Researchware's HyperTRANSCRIBE to create the interview transcripts for P10 and P11 manually. Dragon Individual Professional version 15 transcription software autotranscribed the remaining interview recordings. I reviewed the Dragon transcriptions in HyperTRANSCRIBE. I added emotive sounds such as laughs, chuckles, mmhm, and so forth. Comments in square brackets identified any long pauses or background sounds. The completed transcription was exported into a MS Word document with line numbers. For ease of analysis, I broke the transcript material into blocks based on logical groupings.

After completing the hermeneutic circle analysis of a transcript, I synthesized the information from each pass into an interpretive description. This experience summary became the member check. I contacted each participant to set up a date and time for the member check. The confirmation of the date and time had the experience summary document attached to the email. I followed the same process of pre-and postbracketing

for the member checks. Freeconferencecall.com recorded each member check telephone call.

Only one instance occurred where data collection did not go according to plan. The CallGraph software failed at the beginning of the Skype Interview. I placed the primary digital recorder in front of the speaker and the backup digital recorder on the desk. The digital recorders captured the interview audio. The internet connection signal varied in strength resulting in lag and some missed audio.

Data Analysis

Hermeneutic phenomenology uses a circular analysis model. Vagle (2014) described the process as looking at the whole, looking at specific parts, and looking at the whole again. Researchers use this process (Vagle, 2014) to understand the participant's experiences with the goal of interpreting the individual's experiences in the context of the phenomenon being studied (Boden & Eatough, 2014; Wilson, 2015). I performed five separate analyses on the study data.

First, I used the hermeneutic circle to develop the participant experience summary. Second, I used the descriptive codes developed during the first reading of the transcript to identify dominant descriptive codes. Third, I used HyperRESEARCH's word cloud function to identify words that frequently appeared in the data. Fourth, I coded the transcripts with van Manen's (2014) existential themes rather than creating themes from the descriptive codes. This choice aligns with van Manen's phenomenological method. Finally, for each existential code section, I identified the existential elements. For example, a segment that is relational could have references to a team or a department.

Often a single section such as corporeality could have several elements, such as *happy*, *proud*, or *afraid*. I analyzed the relational elements by the participant, research question, and frequency. These various analytical perspectives follow the whole-part-whole concept of the hermeneutic circle (Vagle, 2014; van Manen, 2014).

Hermeneutic Circle Analysis for the Member's Experience Summary

I collected the data for the study through an interview guide, written field notes, and revisions to the member experience summary. Hermeneutic phenomenology aims to get at the lived experience of the participant through the analysis of material such as transcripts. I made three copies of each transcript. Each pass used a clean copy of the transcript printout. The transcripts were analyzed in three passes to produce the member experience summary.

The first pass involved reading the transcript and not making any notes. The reading provided a sense of the conversation. The first pass continued with re-reading the interview transcript and highlighting phrases and material that seemed essential to the described experience. I assigned descriptive codes to the highlighted material. While van Manen (2014) does not advocate coding, Gill (2014) saw van Manen's approach as a bridge between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology. Vagle (2014) advised researchers to use coding if they desired. The hand-written codes were added to HyperRESEARCH and linked to the electronic copy of the transcript. After completing the first pass analysis, each transcript received a brief description of the participant's experiences as I interpreted the material. I exported the codes from HyperRESEARCH

into an MS Excel sheet and sorted the codes from most to least frequent. This list served as reference material.

During the second reading, I looked at the text selectively. Line numbers were highlighted to identify the material with first pass codes. I wrote out interpretations of the material and codes assigned to the section. The goal of this analysis was to develop an interpretation of the described material. I assembled my handwritten interpretations into a Word document that contained the interpretation matched to the page and line numbers.

During the third pass, I looked at the language used by the participant through reading and reflecting on each sentence in the transcript. The analysis was guided by trying to understand what the material said about the participant's experiences. I used bridling to explore my responses to the material. I assembled my handwritten interpretations into a Word document that contained the interpretation matched to the page and line numbers.

I used the descriptive codes, the interpretation of the codes, and my understanding of the participant's experiences as depicted through their language to develop the participant's experience summary. Participants reviewed the experience summary for the member check. The member checks were written in the third person because feedback from P1 showed the participant was uncomfortable with first person language. I rewrote P1's member check into third person language. P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, and P9 requested minor changes to their experience summaries. P1, P3, P6, P10, and P11 did not request any changes to their experience summaries. Appendix D contains the finalized participant experiences summaries.

Descriptive Codes

I created codes to link the interview questions to the research questions to facilitate a cross comparison of responses. Coding is a form of analysis (M. B. Miles et al., 2014) that I used to parse the interviews into chunks. These codes and their source material were exported into an MS Excel file for analysis. The descriptive codes allowed me to group similar interview material for additional analysis. I developed the descriptive codes iteratively by working from a base of descriptive codes. To this base, I added codes developed from the words used by the participant, paraphrases of interview content, and interpretations of the content. HyperRESEARCH provided a list of codes by frequency and a matrix showing which codes appeared in the organizations.

Three descriptive codes appeared the most times. Members in seven of the eight organizations believed that *the attempt improves your organization*. All participants felt that seeking an AGQA *was worth the effort*. Members in seven of the eight organizations *used the feedback report to improve organizational procedures*.

Word Cloud

HyperRESEARCH has a tool that produces word clouds from text. The tool can be set to create cloud sizes from five words to 200 words. I culled the interview question words, emotive sounds, and so forth from the review list so that the participants' words could be evaluated. With 11 transcripts, the larger clouds did not provide much information about the participants' word choices. Some words appeared only once. I created and analyzed clouds of five words, 10 words, 15 words, and 30 words. The cloud sizes were chosen based on the number of meaningful words that appeared in the source

material. Table 12 contains the 10 most used words in the 11 transcripts. The most important word, *know*, ties into the participant's identity. By knowing, the participant can form judgments.

Table 12

Word Cloud Counts

Word	Count
know	694
quality	434
award	317
how	313
think	251
people	243
all	220
things	187
process	181
management	173

Van Manen's Existentials

People share experiences of being in a body, having relationships, being timebound, interacting with things, and living in some kind of physical space. Van Manen (2014) called these experiences *existentials*. Each transcript was reviewed through the lens of Van Manen's existentials.

As I examined the transcript material I asked myself:

- How are self and others experienced with respect to the phenomenon being studied? (Relationality)

- How is the body experienced with respect to the phenomenon being studied? (Corporeality)
- How is space experienced with respect to the phenomenon being studied? (Spatiality)
- How is time experienced with respect to the phenomenon that is being studied? (Temporality)
- How are things experienced with respect to the phenomenon being studied? (Materiality).

I assigned existential codes to the transcript material based on the answers to these questions. In some cases, the material received multiple codes. The coded segments were exported from HyperRESEARCH into a MS Excel workbook for analysis. In the experiences of the participants, relationships with people represented the most important aspect of their experiences. The information in Table 13 represents the count of coded blocks in the transcripts.

Table 13

Count of Existential Code Blocks

Existentiality	Count
Relationality	119
Materiality	107
Corporeality	94
Temporality	77
Spatiality	27

Organizations 1 through 6 had one representative. Organizations 7 had two representatives and Organization 8 had 3 representatives. Table 14 presents the existential breakdown by organization.

Table 14

Existential Code Blocks by Organization

Organization	Corporeality	Materiality	Relationality	Spatiality	Temporality
1	13	13	15	3	13
2	7	12	13	1	10
3	10	6	8	2	8
4	10	11	7	5	13
5	7	9	13	3	3
6	12	8	14	5	9
7	12	20	26	1	9
8	23	28	23	7	12
Total	94	107	119	27	77

Relationality. Members of each organization found relationships with people, departments, or teams to be the most important part of their experience. These relationships could be to a group. P1 said: “I honestly the biggest benefit I think is that partnership with civilian entities within Arkansas.” While P3 saw the application process as an opportunity for organization-wide involvement, “kind of under the premise that many hands make light work. That’s why we had such a big team put together.” P7 declared the importance of people to his organization. “...very high on my list of priorities is investing in our people. I require the staff to go to continuing education classes every year. I don’t care what it is but something that will benefit you.”

Materiality. Each participant talked about the importance of the feedback report. P3 said, “we learned a lot from those feedback reports.” P7 recognized the need to target their efforts, “each of those areas we we picked out the most important one or sometimes two with the feedback from those who were going to be doing it. And went to work on it.” While P8 stated, “we’d take the feedback reports and work on those items that they said we were deficient in and beef up our systems.”

Without the report, participants felt there was not much value to the award. P1 talked about the withdrawal from the AGQA program. “We...the last set of feedback that we got. We did not think that it with the caliber of what we needed to progress anymore.” P2’s organization received the Governor’s award in 2011. “the last feedback report we got in 2011 was not a very good feedback report. It didn’t give us a lot of direction to go forward.”

The award provided tangible outcomes such as business success. P7 displayed a binder of graphics and declared, “any metric that we have that we’ve measured has gotten better.” A member of Organization 8, P11 took a more cautious tone. “we wanted it to be good, high-quality, consistent quality if we can do all of those, then our products will do well.”

Corporeality. Emotions were an important part of the participants’ experiences. Emotions ranged from positive to negative. Participants talked about how they felt when they learned about the award. P8 stated, “something I’m very proud of,” while P4 announced that “it’s a sense of accomplishment.” P7 reminisced, “at the end of the seven-year journey, it was well worth it and everybody’s very proud and we speak of it a lot.”

Participants also expressed the uncertainty they felt about the journey. P5 said, “I think people felt like there was no way we were going to win it. So why even try? and I I guess my response to that was ‘Well if you don’t try, you never.’” In somber tones, P11 stated, “we didn’t know if we were going to make it or not. We didn’t know.”

Temporality. Participants generally talked about time in terms of years spent in the award program. According to P7, his organization began six years before they entered the AGQA program, “our seven-year journey actually goes back 15 years when I hired a young man to start a quality program and manage our quality program here.” P4’s organization fast-tracked to the Governor’s award, “Well for us it was a...4-year process.”

Spatiality. Participants rarely spoke about where they had their experiences. The assumption seemed to be that the experiences occurred in the work area. There were two exceptions where the participants talked about the banquet. P1 said, “I think one of the...most beneficial elements that I have from participating in Arkansas...Governor’s quality award was actually going to the banquet and seeing what all kinds of organizations that participate in this.” P3 talked about his experience at the banquet,

It’s hard to explain the feeling but it’s just it’s really satisfaction I guess you see all those hours that you put in and help bring people along with you when when you get to stand with the governor and...receive that for your your staff and then we have a big meal and a cake and you know Recognition Day. And that’s what’s that’s when it all comes together.

Discrepant Case

This research study was not a case study; phenomenological studies focus on the lived experiences of the participants. Participants provided responses to all the interview questions I asked. No one declined to answer a question. During the transcript review, codes were created to identify instances where the participant's statements ran counter to the beliefs of the majority. One instance was the participant's statement that he did not see value in the AGQA except as a sales tool.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Member checks during the interview used the format of clarifying questions. Member checks of the experience summary enabled participants to correct any misapprehensions that I had about what they said or about their experiences. This action meets the guidance of Trochim and Donnelly (2008) that the participants accept the study results. Yin (2016) discussed several ways to conduct triangulation in a qualitative study. Three participants came from a single organization; this condition offered the opportunity to triangulate their experiences of the same event. Additionally, I compared the accounts of the two participants worked at Organization 7 against each other. Finally, I compared interviews against each other, a form of triangulation recommended by Patton (2015). In keeping with the credibility strategies listed in Chapter 3, the face-to-face interviews allowed me to compare observations with interview data for P3, P6, P7, and P11. Thick, rich descriptions provided details of participant experiences. These descriptions support the credibility of the study and meet Van Manen's (2014) criteria of detailed descriptions

understood by the audience and the use of vivid language. In conclusion, the study meets the requirement for internal validity.

Transferability

This research study contains thick, rich descriptions that readers may match to their life experiences. Phenomenological studies cannot be generalized; however, a reader may find that the insights are transferable to the reader's environment (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The 11 organizations in the study represent manufacturing, education, healthcare, and service organizations. Furthermore, these organizations represent a diverse ownership model with some of the organizations being privately owned, publicly traded, or a government agency. The participants in the study, all volunteers, provided a lens into what an organization looks like if it has an Arkansas Governor's quality award. There were six executives, four mid-level managers, and one worker. Four organizations received multiple awards during the research time span. Within the organizations, five participants were either AGQA examiners, Baldrige examiners, or both an AGQA and a Baldrige examiner.

Dependability

A reliable research study has clearly described consistent research procedures. These procedures cover participant selection, data gathering, data analysis, and data integrity maintenance. M.B. Miles et al. (2014) listed ten points for evaluating qualitative research study dependability. This study meets five points. First, the research design emerged from the research questions. Second, I explicitly described my research role to the participants. Third, the study is clearly connected to theory. Fourth, the data

collection matched the research needs. Finally, I checked the transcripts for data quality; while, field notes and journaling captured the process of gathering and analyzing data.

An auditor would find a clear process for following the study from data collection through data analysis. A MS Word document was used to capture reflections about the material while I worked. A manila folder holds all printed or hand-written material associated with a participant. This information includes pre- and postinterview bracketing, marked up interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials. The data management log contains a tab which identifies the code, the code meaning, and when the code entered the HyperRESEARCH codebook. Loh (2013) noted that several researchers recognized the provision of an audit trail as a factor in determining dependability. All physical and electronic files are readily available in the case of an audit.

Confirmability

I followed the confirmability strategy proposed in Chapter 3. The data will be held for five years and then destroyed per the plan approved by the IRB. M.B. Miles et al. (2014) advised qualitative researchers who wanted to produce a confirmable study to created specific methods and procedures for collecting, processing, analyzing, and displaying data. Study conclusions clearly emerge from the data. I maintained a journal about my experiences, my analytical choices, and my methodological choices during this research study.

Due to the interpretive nature of this phenomenological study, I used bridling to capture the reflections evoked during the analysis of the material. Bridling is a term

proposed by Vagle (2014) instead of bracketing. I used bracketing when I answered a set of pre- and postinterview and pre-and postmember check questions to record how I felt and believed.

Study Results

The Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) refers to an award at any level. The Governor's Award is the highest level of award. Appendix A contains a description of the AGQA levels. The four AGQA levels use the Baldrige criteria. An organization must provide someone to be trained as an examiner at the two highest award levels. The first level requires the least work. Each award applicant pays a fee when they submit the application. Choices made by organizations sometimes reflected the number of resources that the executive managers chose to invest in the AGQA program.

Eleven participants from eight organizations took part in the study. Each interview was transcribed word-for-word, including emotive sounds, background sounds, and pauses. The analysis phase occurred in two parts: the member experience summary development through the hermeneutic circle, and the use of coding to identify van Manen's (2014) existentials. Appendix D contains the approved member experience summaries. I analyzed each RQ to explore how participant experiences reflected van Manen's existentials. Within each code segment, there could be multiple examples of relationships, things, or feelings. The RQ response analysis appears under each of Van Manen's existentials. The existentials represent the stories participants told about their experiences.

Stories take many forms. The participant stories are the answers to the research questions because the responses are the linked events (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997) about the award. The stories about the AGQA award are oral and interpretive (Boje, 2008) as well as pragmatic (Boje, 2014).

Relationality

Participants talked about the relationships with people during the award process. These relationships were the most important part of the experience for the participant. Sometimes the relationships were with people inside the organization. Sometimes the relationships were with people outside of the organization. Table 15 identifies the top five relationships for all RQs.

Table 15

Top Five Participant Relationships

Who	Count	%
Frontline worker	19	11%
Team	16	9%
All employees	15	9%
Executive management team	14	8%
Unidentified employees	12	7%

Research Question. What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 7)? Each participant felt relationships were important. The focus of the relationships differed by job level. Executives such as P4, P5, P6, and P7 described their relationships with frontline workers (11% of the total described relationships) more often than mid-

level managers or workers. Frontline employee relationships were vital to a successful award application. Front-line employees held the authority to make changes. P4 talked about the award criteria's effect on her organization:

So it didn't affect our our didn't affect how people you know like our managers, you know it didn't end there. And we already had pushed authority down to the lowest level or started that process and so it helped us to continue that process so it it didn't impact people like on that level where you don't want somebody messing with your job.

Several participants talked about how frontline employees bought into the changes because they (the frontline employees) were invested in the solutions. P4 said, "Once people got an idea of that 'Oh wow, hey if we say something they're actually gonna change that.' People were...you know willing to speak up and make a difference and we literally have hundreds of of change requests." P5 observed that management imposed solutions failed, but "the frontline staff got involved in trying to resolve, fixed the process, ended up sticking because they were more effective solutions." Talking about the need to gain support for changes, P6 cautioned that managers needed to "involve them (frontline employees) in the process and not just saying, 'this is a thou shalt and you will do it.'" Continuing the discussion of the importance of having the people who do the job drive the process improvement change, P7 said,

Each of those areas we we picked out the most important one or sometimes two with the feedback from those who were going to be doing it. And went to work on

it. And so they had some buy-in in that piece of it and saw where there was improvement.

Overall, team relationships were the second most important relationship described at 9%. Team relationships were more important to P1, a midlevel manager and P11, a worker. P1 talked about teams four times when she answered this research question. In her resource-lean organization, having a team was important to completing the application accurately, “I had my own team to dedicate towards writing some of the categories.” P11 always shifted the work of earning the award from himself to others in the organization. “it was everybody working to get through that. It was not just me, it was everybody working. There was a lot of stuff being done.”

Two executives, P3 and P6, discussed team relationships twice in their responses. For P3, it was a manpower issue, “under the premise that many hands make light work. That’s why we had such a big team put together.” While P6 tackled the application process holistically,

The part of I think that helped the most was trying to include the whole staff...our teamwork is the key where we all have disciplines that go together to create that environment where the patients are taken care of.

Six of the 11 participants described their relationship with all employees (9%): four executives (P5, P6, P7, P10), a middle manager (P8), and a worker (P11). The relationships described encompassed behavior, communication, and employee retention. Four of the 11 participants, evenly split between executives (P5, P7) and middle

managers (P8, P9) talked about their relationships with the executive management team.

P5 felt

So really challenging the group to think through what we're trying to accomplish and I think we started to improve our own improve our own perception and expertise in quality and understanding we're that we got to continue to push the organization beyond where we were to get to where we wanted to be. So it was it was a teamwork. I think we it was a group working well together, at times there was...a conflict of ideas...that we worked through, but I think that all in all it was a great team building experience for the group that worked on it and and for the organization helped us improve our quality program as well as our outcomes...in many areas of the organization.

Subquestion 1. What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview question 6 and 7)? Six of the 11 participants talked about relationships for this research question. Three midlevel managers (P2, P8, P9), two executives (P2, P7), and a worker (P11). The midlevel managers told stories to business colleagues, the executive management team, and to themselves.

P9 talked about the value of the program. "If I'm talking to the colleagues or friends I I mention what a great program it is. And especially on the examiner's side for personal and professional development. I I would definitely recommend the Governor's award program." P3 and P6 talked about how they saw themselves. P6 saw himself as "I felt that this kind you know I I am supporting all this and I call it the champion. I was the

champion and this is our goal.” P3 cast himself in a different role. “I that I kind of had had a a kind of a coach’s role in in the process just just kind of encouraging and supporting the work everyone else was doing.”

P3, an executive, told stories about the benefits of the award experience to prospective applicants. He said, “I mean that it is definitely worth the effort if you can get a sense of where you are on that continuum of quality....” P7, another executive, told customers how the award benefited them not only through the quality of the product, but through how employees were treated. “you know it’s not just the end of line quality but it’s how we deal with you customer and our employees and our vendors and all that stuff.”

Subquestion 2. How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation (Interview question 4, 5, 7)? Eight of the 11 participants talked about relationships for this RQ: executives (P5, P6, P7, P10), three midlevel managers (P1, P2, P8), and the worker (P11). Executives focused their stories on frontline workers, teams, what it takes to earn an award, and employees in general. P5 talked about how the frontline staff did not receive the information they needed.

We thought we had communicated that you know where I think the that our process was plan-do, PDSA but we found that that really did not get all the way down to the frontline staff. That they didn’t know what initiatives were going on in their departments even though the directors were... We knew that they had

processes going on in their department, but...you know process improvement initiatives going on in their areas.

According to P7, he tells organizations thinking about an AGQA that they need the right person in place if they want an award:

If you don't have somebody that's that their passion if you want to get better as an organization, you want to get to EARN the Governor's quality award you've got to have somebody in place that can lead you through that process. And and it's not a production guy, or an accounting guy, or a sales guy it's got to be a quality guy. That that's their passion.

Without teams working together, Organization 6 would not be recognized with an AGQA. "We try to keep everything team and that our teamwork is the key where we all have disciplines that go together to create that environment where the patients are taken care of." He continued, "We involved the staff by sharing data...we as a team sat down, we call it the interdisciplinary team...but we have those representatives from each...discipline set in uh to help us on our journey."

Executive managers did not always identify a specific audience. P10 shared advice about making changes to processes. He said,

...first need to walk in the shoes of the hourly associates who do the job every day...you know it is one thing to to sit in an air-conditioned office and you know...and profess what needs to be done versus...understands the challenges of making those...you know those changes that that actually provide impact.

The middle managers focused on prospective award applicants (P1, P2, P8) and unidentified employees (P1). To gain the best chance to earn the award, P1 advised,

Send a variety of people. So figure out who their team effort is going to be. Make sure that they have those people but also involve...the executive....level people.

At least one or two of those people who have you know the yes/no button, so that they understand what's going on. So that they have buy-in and that they can influence and motivate the organization to move forward.

Not everyone has the resources to write a good application said P8. P8 is also an AGQA examiner. He recommended,

If you have problems, contact somebody that's been through the process and have them...help you walk through the system so they find out how to write the exam or the application and how to prepare for the examiner or an auditor or whatever.

The role of middle managers can be more difficult when not everyone in the organization understands the importance of the AGQA criteria. P1 stated,

Not everybody understands what we're doing, even if we tell them, even if we have town halls...to say you know we won this award and things like that. Not everybody is on board with it. Not everybody understands it. So it's it's one of those, unless everybody went through the training and they understood what we're looking (at), there still a a misnomer about what it is and how much it could help.

Materiality

Experiences with things were the second most important existential for participants. Four items are separated by a single count: (a) AGQA framework, (b) feedback report, with (c) QMS and (d) business success having the same number of instances. The AGQA framework was the most frequently mentioned because the framework cannot be separated from the award. The framework enables the behaviors that earn the award. Table 16 identifies the items, counts, and percentages. Percentages were rounded to a whole number.

Table 16

Top Five Items Identified as Part of Participants' Experiences

Item	Count	%
AGQA Framework	13	9%
Feedback report	12	9%
QMS	11	8%
Business success	11	8%
AGQ Award	8	6%
AGQA applications	8	6%
Culture	5	4%
PMO Tools	5	4%
Documentation	5	4%

Research Question. What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 7)? The 11 participants described 95 item experiences for the RQ. All participants reported a relationship with some type of item. The worker, P11, focused primarily on his

relationship within his immediate environment: databases, documentation, process maps, and product safety. P11 also talked about business success and culture. Two of the executives talked about the AGQA framework as a framework. P4 called the AGQA framework a “customizable approach” and P6 called it a “recipe for success.” P3 matched his organization’s state with the award descriptions to determine which award to seek. P4, who is an examiner as well as an executive, sees the ISO 9001:2015 requirements and Baldrige criteria aligning. Another examiner, P2, did not have favorable first impressions of the AGQA framework.

It’s kind of weird (laughs) but I was kind of opposed to Baldrige and my opposition was because it was an award. You know, the other Governor’s Quality Award and I thought we didn’t need to be going down that path. Uhh so I was not particularly supportive of it, but we didn’t really have a have [laughs] better alternative.

The feedback report appeared eight times in the RQ. For P7, the feedback report held the details for improving Organization 7. They “did the feedback reports and looked at what we were doing and what and where we needed to improve” and “we’ve used that feedback. We have shared that information back at at the different departments and gotten better.” For some organizations, the in-house teams working on the application might discover things that later appear on the feedback report revealed P1. These discoveries allow a head start on improving the organization’s processes. P8 saw the feedback report as the key for improving the organization. P1 and P2 mentioned poor

feedback reports being a source of disappointment. Organization 1 chose not to seek the Governor's Award because of the feedback report received for the Achievement award.

Organizations used different QMS frameworks, such as ISO 9000, AGQA/Baldrige, or Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA). P4, an executive, used the QMS to fill out the third award application. Because of previous feedback reports, the QMS contained process maps, SOPs, and other documentation. One mid-level manager, P8 said that after receiving multiple awards, Organization 7's QMS is stable, but still the organization will be "working on systems, and uhh trying to improve process flow, and different things like that. It's a continual process...."

Business success was important to three executives and one mid-level manager. P4 felt that meeting the award criteria moved the business into an efficient mode. She said, "There's criteria that you should address and if you address those criteria it takes you beyond requirements into efficiency." Both members of Organization 7 agreed on the value of the award. P8 noted that customer complaints stopped and satisfaction soared. Per P7, going through the process improves the organization. He shared how man-hours to complete product was down, recordable accidents were down, and other metrics were positive.

AGQA Award and AGQA Applications had the same number of instances: eight. Seven of those instances appear in the RQ. Only the executives and mid-level managers talked about these material relationships. P7 did not know much about the award when he first started. P10 called earning the award "a salesman's tool" because he did not see much change in his organization. Receiving the award at the banquet impressed P1 while

P2 cautioned that receiving the management award did not guarantee future management support. Earning an AGQA, especially at the upper award levels is challenging and can be time-consuming. P7 advocated for a dedicated person to write the application and follow-up on the required feedback changes. P9 of Organization 8 wrote the application herself. She said there was no need to make changes to the organization's processes to meet the award criteria.

Culture, Project Management Office (PMO) Tools, and Documentation occurred the same number of times in the participants' experiences. PMO Tools and Documentation appear only in the RQ. Organization 2 used project management tools and staff from the PMO during their first AGQA applications. P10 used the award process to improve the documentation process. "We're doing the right thing, but we've never documented that we were doing it so I believe our first efforts were really more of a documentation phase."

Subquestion 1. What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview question 6 and 7)? Only executives talked about the QMS and business success as stories. P7 demonstrated that business success arose from the knowledge provided by data. He shared several metrics to prove his point: increased retention, service call tracking, and whether the order's details were correctly recorded. Both P4 and P7 focused on the QMS. P4 placed the organization's documents, not just the ones required by ISO certification requirements into the QMS, while P5 saw that using a QMS process such as PDSA improved an organization; "we

just felt like it was a simple process improvement methodology that people could understand.”

Subquestion 2. How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation (Interview question 4, 5, 7)? Executives and mid-level managers shared their experiences with materiality in SQ2. Participants at each job level had something to say about their experiences with the AGQA framework. P6 saw the framework as a way to avoid inventing something, while two mid-level managers, P8 and P9 viewed the framework as the starting point for building a QMS from scratch. P11, the worker, shared how having external standards made the business better. “Internal standards aren’t necessarily as high, as hard to reach as external standards sometimes because external standards were this a higher level.”

Participants valued the feedback report for different reasons. P5 and P9 saw the feedback report as a means of having fresh perspectives identify blind spots. P1 noted that the feedback report was an outcome of the application review process while P9 felt that the feedback report represented the best value of the award. The examiners providing the feedback offer unexpected points of view. P9 talked about the feedback,

It is really interesting because you have people that are not involved in industry you’re in. You have people, if you’re in manufacturing-you have people from healthcare, maybe from government, from military, and so you just get so many different perspectives and it’s interesting when you work in the same industry,

you...see those perspectives, and realize you know 'I never thought of it that way, or look at it that way.' It can be very eye-opening.

Culture, QMS, and AGQA applications had the same number of reported experiences. P5 made three points about the QMS and organizational culture. First, the QMS must fit the organization. Second, everyone needs to understand how to use the tools in the QMS. Finally, everyone must know their role in the QMS process. P8 argued that the AGQA was more than a quality award, rather the AQGA represented a total management system. "The Governor's Quality award is kind of a misnomer because it is not just based on quality it's a management system that produces quality." Furthermore, according to P8, no system performed reliably without documentation because "if you have documentation as to how things was changed and why they changed for good or bad...changes can just devastate a company too." P4 noted that having a framework made arranging organizational knowledge easier. As an examiner, she's seen applications from organizations that did not have a QMS. She suggested using something like ISO 9000 as a framework. P5 commented that the AGQA applications are not forms that an organization fills out and sends in. Each application requires data and intentional planning.

Corporeality

Research Question. What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 7)? In corporeality, the participant describes how they feel or what they believe. All participants described their emotions. In accordance with the interpretive nature of the

study, I assigned emotional tags to some material. *Belief* appeared the most often. I classified *belief* as a corporeal existential because what someone believes affects the body (Maki, Janssen, Uemiya, & Naka, 2013). Table 17 lists the top five words participants used to describe how they felt or what they believed. Participants used similar language, so several words appeared the same number of times.

Table 17

Top Five Words Participants Used to Describe Feelings

Feelings	Total	% of Total
Belief	20	17%
Satisfaction	8	7%
Pride	8	7%
Determination	8	7%
Relief	6	5%
Pleasure	6	5%
Happy	6	5%
Excited	4	3%
Validated	4	3%
Sadness	3	3%
Assurance	3	3%
Uncertainty	3	3%
Ignorance	2	2%
Honesty	2	2%
Fear	2	2%
Wry	2	2%
Hope	2	2%

Participant 11 described the largest number of emotions, ranging from *determination* (4) to single instances of *wry*, *fear*, and *happy*. In contrast, P8 had three words that appeared once apiece: *belief*, *validated*, *relief*. Everyone except P4, P7, P8, and P10 used *pride*, *satisfaction*, or *determination* to describe their experiences with the AGQA. The executives, P3, P5, and P6, used *satisfaction* and *determination*. The middle managers, P1, P2, and P9, used *pride* and *satisfaction*. The worker, P11 used *pride* and *determination*.

Subquestion 1. What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview question 6 and 7)? Two middle managers (P1, P2) and one executive (P3) used corporeality to answer SQ1. P1 described herself as a "why" person in a happy tone of voice during the interview. P3 felt impelled to look at all organizations through an examiner's lens,

You know and anytime once you start doing this it's almost an affliction, you know when you walk into an organization you start looking at you know as soon as somebody well in any customer and service interaction. You start looking at what's behind that interaction.

The only executive in this response, P3, told me that it was worth the effort if you figured out where you were on the continuum of quality. He said,

If you're trending towards improved or are you trending to stagnating or you know stepping back because organizations are dynamic and sometimes you're ebbing and flowing and sometimes even even with the best efforts, you know

you're you're kind of stagnating. Hopefully you're not. You're not lowering, but even when that happens it does happen, and you can see it if you're looking at it.

Subquestion 2. How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation (Interview question 4, 5, 7)? Six of the 11 participants, five executives and the worker, used lived body experience descriptions for this RQ. All of the executives and the worker described their beliefs about quality, the value of the award, how to set up a QMS, the kind of person needed to oversee the award application process, and who is the first line of quality defense. P4 said going to the examiner's class changed her; "after after kind of shooting and failing on the first one...I was adamant to be better." P6 combined uncertainty with determination when he described his decision about going for the award; "I took a look at the criteria and think we can meet that and so...fortunately we got recognized for that and we're going to still continue on." P7 spoke with quiet determination when he talked about changing things to meet the award requirements. He said, "Attitude would be a good one. Would probably (be) the thing that had to change the most and did."

Temporality

While time was present in all participants' reflections, the units of time varied from days to years to just a few hours in the case of the banquet. While some time spans occurred multiple times, the descriptions associated with the time spans were unique.

Research Question. What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview questions 1,

2, 3, 7)? Common descriptions such as *changes to an organization* had the values of before award received and an undetermined time span. First time applications were written in a two- to three-week time spans according to P4 and P2. Organizations spent different lengths of time in the program. Organization 4 spent four years in the program, while Organization 1 spent five to six years in the AGQA program according to P1. Organization 7 spent seven years in the program and Organization 2 spent 8 years in the program.

Rather than compare time spans between organizations, a more meaningful look explores the time frames each participant used during the interview. For P1, 3 years marked the time that she had overseen the program. She talked about her first year of being in charge where she did the entire application by herself. In the second and third years, she had a team that she assembled based on the feedback report from the first year. At the banquet, she looked around at the diversity of organizations represented as AGQA recipients and applicants.

All of P2's time descriptions are unique. Organization 2 began looking at process improvement in 2003. He became an examiner the third year of applications. Learning to become an effective examiner took about three years because it was the common time span to 'not get' the criteria.

Subquestion 1. What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (Interview question 6 and 7)? P6 was the only participant who described a timebound experience for this RQ. Organization 6 was the first site of the parent organization to receive an award. P6 "We were the first in

our...The owners...have 30 (facilities) in Arkansas and so we were the first to accomplish this goal, both nationally and state statewide.”

Subquestion 2. How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation (Interview question 4, 5, 7)? P6 was the only participant who described a timebound experience for this RQ. He talked about the facility “with a 24/7 and weekends and nights” when he described putting together his inter-disciplinary team. After earning the award, he told his team,

We’re like the Alabama football team. They win every year. So everybody’s, everybody is trying to beat you every game. They want to beat Alabama and we have to stay focused and not being complacent or it’s really easy to get, you know, go backwards.

Spatiality

Participants did not talk much about where the experiences occurred. The assumption being that the experiences occurred in the work areas. This was the smallest of the participants’ existentials, suggesting that participants focused on workplace locations rather than the community at large or their homes. Table 18 identifies the top four locations. Everything after these locations appears once in the eleven transcripts.

Table 18

Participant Experience Locations

Location or Space	Count	%
Manufacturing facility	5	18%
Health care facility	5	18%
multiple sites in other states	4	14%
business unit	3	11%

Research Question. What are the lived experiences of employees contributing to organizations receiving the Arkansas Governor’s Quality Award (Interview questions 1, 2, 3, 7)? Organization 5 had multiple buildings. P5 noted that many people were involved in patient care in a health care facility. When P10 talked about life after the award, he related that the business owners have multiple sites in other states, but did not require the managers from those plants to use the best practices identified in Organization 8.

Subquestion 1. What stories are told in organizations recognized with an Arkansas Governor’s Quality Award (Interview question 6 and 7)? P11, a worker, believed that everyone in the manufacturing facility was responsible for quality. Another member in the same organization, P10 felt isolated from the other manufacturing plants in the organization,

We have a very unique, different businesses and business units. So we’re allowed to be autonomous and act in our own best interests... we have many best practices other than quality arena...but like I say we’re allowed to act autonomously, so most of the general managers do and a few...interact and share.

In contrast, P11 appears to have an active relationship with members in those plants: “we are actually improving that database to make it more reactive and more flexible so it works with multiple plants.”

Subquestion 2. How does storytelling influence quality management and continuous improvement choices and thereby influence organizational transformation (Interview question 4, 5, 7)? Two participants, one a mid-level manager, and the other an executive talked about other spaces in their response. P1 talked about the diversity of businesses she saw in the banquet room for the AGQA presentations. P4 noted that there were work groups in other locations that use the same QMS system as her facility. Any changes made at Organization 4 are immediately reflected in the other work groups.

We have work groups in other parts of the nation that we’re kind of the mothership for the QMS system that I designed. They use the exact same QMS and the exact same LIMS, so that we’re all perfectly aligned with each other. So that when we make change...the whole fleet turns at the right time, basically.

All Research Questions

The final interview question (7) asked what information did the participant want to share about their AGQA experiences that had not been requested during the interview. In some cases, participants clarified or expanded on information shared earlier in the interview. These responses cannot be readily compartmented into a research question. Here is what the participants had to say.

Relationality. Five of the 11 participants talked about relationships. There were three executives (P3, P5, P6), a middle manager (P8), and the worker (P11). The

executives described relationships with unidentified employees (P3), all employees (P5, P6), and the executive management team (P6). The middle manager (P8) focused on his experiences with the executive management team, while the worker talked (P11) about the importance of teams.

Materiality. Only two items showed up more than once: AGQA framework and business success. Both the participants are from the organizations that had multiple participants in the study. P9, a middle manager, used the framework to pick the award level that Organization 8 would apply for. She observed that the framework helped you look at the big picture of an organization. P7, an executive, talked about business success being based on giving employees the tools, authority, and accountability to do their jobs. P4 summed up the award, “You know the Governor's Quality Award just like the Baldrige Award is not is not a symbol of achievement as much as a symbol of you have everything that you need to start learning.”

Corporeality. Six of 11 participants used lived body descriptions for their experiences. All the participants were either executives (P3, P4, P6, P7) or mid-level managers (P8, P9). P3 combined hope with sadness as he described the changes to the attitude toward quality in Organization 3. P6 blended pride, satisfaction, and selfishness when he talked about how his staff rose to the challenge and how the experience personally benefitted him. P4 talked about her belief. She said, “Good program. It definitely brings value if you embrace it.”

Temporality. Six participants talked about time-based experiences for interview question seven. The diversity of organizations made an impact on her experience with the

award. P2 felt that his organization had lost some of the gains they had made since leaving the program in 2013. P3 argued that organizations go through highs and lows and that hope always exists for the future.

Quality may not sustain that, but I still think they learned a lot from the experience and I hope that that at some point in time and again (in the) ebbs and flow of organizations that they can recapture the value of that and continue to improve themselves.

Spatiality. Two participants, one a mid-level manager, and the other an executive talked about other spaces in their response. P1 talked about the diversity of businesses she saw in the banquet room for the AGQA presentations.

Summary

Eleven people from eight organizations in a variety of industries, sizes, and ownership models participated in the study. Seven interview questions explored participant experiences related to the three research questions. The most significant experiences for the participants involved people. Of people-related experiences, working with front-line employees and teams, topped the list. Participants recounted their experiences with the items such as the AGQA framework, feedback reports, and QMSs. People experience events through their senses; that is their body. Participants used words such as *satisfaction*, *pride*, *regret*, or *fear* to describe their emotions. Experiences are timebound. However, participants placed importance on different temporal spans. Finally, the participants' experiences occurred in a location. This space was often

assumed to be the workplace because participants rarely described a location as part of the AGQA experiences.

The chapter contained a discussion of the field test used to improve the interview protocol, interview and probing questions, and the letter of invitation. The research was carried out in face-to-face interviews or through telephone calls. The interview material was transcribed and analyzed using the hermeneutic circle of looking at the material as a whole, as a collection of parts, and as a whole, again. The material was further analyzed using descriptive codes before re-coding the transcript with van Manen's existentials. The chapter contained a discussion of trustworthiness and the research study results. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of key findings, recommendations, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of participants in organizations with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) to discover if a relationship existed between their lived experiences and the implementation of successful quality initiatives. Eleven participants in eight organizations shared their experiences with the AGQA program. Understanding participant experiences in organizations with a successful QMS may help managers successfully implement a QMS. Organizations with a QMS outperform their competitors regarding financial performance (O'Neill et al., 2016) and customer satisfaction (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013).

A semistructured interview protocol with seven questions guided participant experience recollection. In this phenomenological approach, their language revealed their experiences with the phenomenon. The transcripts were analyzed against van Manen's (2014) existentials. According to the findings, participants' experiences ranked from most to least important: (a) interactions with people, (b) materials, (c) their feelings (d) time, and (e) space.

Interpretation of Findings

People changed themselves first and their organizations afterward. These changes sometimes arose from external forces, such as being told that the organization would be seeking an AGQA or from a desire to improve profitability. Sometimes people changed because they felt there was a better way to serve customers and looked for a way to fulfill this desire. In each case, the transformation of the participant affected other people in the organization, and ultimately the organization's structure and culture. These changes

occurred because people are part of the organization's collections of systems.

Furthermore, organizations are narratively constructed (A. D. Brown & Coupland, 2015; Erbert, 2014) by people and it is the stories that emerged from participant experiences that affected the organizations' identities and ways of working.

Eleven people from eight organizations varying in size, industry, and ownership model participated in the study. Jayaram, Ahire, and Dreyfus (2010) in their study of contingency relationships found that TQM practices were affected by the size of the organization. Murphy (2016) examined quality management research for small and mid-sized enterprises (SME). The organizations in the study fit the SME classification as the organizations varied in size from approximately 50 employees to over 1000. Executives, mid-level managers, and a frontline worker took part in the study. Some of them started out as skeptics. They changed, others in the organization changed, and eventually, the organization moved to a new normal. The new normal earned the organization recognition as an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) recipient.

The study findings showed that adopting quality management success factors changes organizational culture. This change does not happen rapidly: as confirmed by the length of time the participants spent working with people and systems in the organization before the organization received an AGQA, especially at the upper award levels. Several participants shared stories about how people will resist the changes, and that sustained behavior change did not occur spontaneously. Participants acknowledged that resistance can arise from ignorance, from fear, or from personal beliefs and that people must want to alter the way they behave. These findings support Weick's (1995) argument that

people changed when they compared an experience to a framework composed of previous experiences and the beliefs associated with those experiences. For a person to change, his or her mental model had to change first (Weick, 1995). Interestingly, because sensemaking is retrospective, changes in information available to a person, can cause them to re-evaluate earlier judgments. This type of re-evaluation occurred when P2 moved from being a doubter about the value of the AGQA to a believer in the program's benefits including the value of having a formal QMS.

All the organizations in the study had a structured QMS. Organization 4 used Deming's PDSA model because it was simple and a "natural way to solve problems" (P5). Deming's (2013) system of profound knowledge was designed to change people's behavior. These study results emerged from the participant's experiences. Deming's system of profound knowledge has four pillars. The first pillar, appreciation for a system, is demonstrated by the AGQA criteria. Each award level examines the systems in an organization. This activity supports the contention that organizations are collections of systems. Process management and continuous improvement rest on a platform of knowledge about variation. Through benchmarking processes and states, leaders can develop the metrics the organization needs to increase its success. The metrics emerge from forming hypotheses about the processes and seeking answers to the hypotheses. Finally, Deming's first three pillars cannot be used effectively if senior managers and leaders do not understand human psychology, including emotions in the workplace.

Emotions are part of the human experience. Humans are hardwired for emotion (AbdulSabur et al., 2014; Chow et al., 2014). The language the participants used in the

study described how they felt. Some participants revealed the bittersweet nature of success when asked how he or she felt when they received the award. P3's response shows the mixed emotions people can feel.

We were pretty happy about receiving it. I mean, there was a sense of—I was glad that we were finally recognized for what we had done. (Clears throat.) There was probably a part of me that was a little bit sad because I was afraid we wouldn't make the changes that I knew we still needed to make and then there was...a fair amount of just relief knowing (laughs) that I wasn't going to have to do this again. [Chuckles]. But you know I think the satisfaction that we gotten there was the overwhelming emotion.

Participants became emotional because they relived their experiences as they shared their stories about their experiences. Stories invoke emotional responses (Riolo, 2014). Stories are critical elements in sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Unsurprisingly, the stories did not exist in the traditional BME form, mostly because the participants skipped around in their recollections. As the participants shared their stories, I became a part of the stories, because together we were trying to make sense of their AGQA experiences. Hasson and Frith (2016) demonstrated the neurobiological interactions of people making sense of a shared experience. Weick (1995) emphasized that sensemaking was social, retrospective, used cues, relied on plausibility over accuracy, and integral to creating or maintaining personal identities. People experienced their transformations in different ways, ranging from the transformation of a skeptic (P2) to seeing that the AGQA was just proof of doing business as usual (P11).

Sometimes, skeptics could be converted by sharing the data. P1 works in a government agency. Talking about how she gained executive buy-in, she said,

It's *Show Me*. So it was very much data-driven a lot of things our strategy, at first was not tied to any sort of metrics. We had all of these things that we tracked that had nothing to do with any of our practices that helped us serve our customers or our customer's needs.

Sometimes executive managers sent the skeptics to AGQA examiner training. P2 talked about when the approach worked, "he came back a changed person... But he, you know, started documenting the processes in his area. He started putting real performance measures in place without anybody you know, pushing him to do it." This approach did not work with another executive, according to P2, "he became an examiner, he never did buy into it." Even when general acceptance exists, some people may accede to the change, without adopting the new values. P3 revealed, "I can't say that everybody caught the, you know, drank the Kool-Aid and and caught enthusiasm." Sometimes people change their minds when they see the managers' actions matching the managers' statements.

Frontline employees are more likely to change the way they work when managers' actions match the managers' statements. Greenbaum, Mawritz, and Piccolo (2015) explored leader hypocrisy, that is, when leaders make value statements that they then fail to embody. Several participants recognized the importance of matching actions to words. P6 said, "you know you have some pushback at times and you just have to stay the course and show by action that we're gonna try to do this and continue it." P5 and his

team educated the middle managers before holding them accountable to the changed way of working. P4 noted that employees shared ideas for improving work processes because, “once people got an idea of that ‘Oh wow, hey if we say something they’re actually gonna change that.’” In essence, Organization 4 created a culture of internal champions.

The most successful organizations in the study had internal champions. The criteria for success included multiple awards or working toward another award, active employee engagement, and improved business metrics. Champions can help members in an organization understand why changing their behavior is beneficial. P7 called for a dedicated quality professional when he talked about committing the resources necessary to improve Organization 7. P6 named himself the champion of the AGQA process during the interview. Several champions in the study were former or existing AGQA examiners or Baldrige award examiners. AGQA examiners understood the criteria, so they could interpret the criteria in terms that made sense to their organization. They also advised leadership about ways to solve problems by using their experiences in examining other organizations. Recognized or not internal champions play an important role in maintaining quality management practices in the organization.

Organizations that lose their internal champions may stop improving or even regress. Champions are a resource for their organization. While not an examiner, P3 was the champion of quality improvement for Organization 3. During the interview, he shared his sadness that people in Organization 3 were not as diligent communicating face-to-face and building relationships now that he had left. In P2’s organization, the loss of project managers to support continuous improvement efforts meant that area managers who did

not support quality management practices were free to work the way they wanted, that is without following the QMS. Thus, the quality management practices in the organization were disappearing and the leadership allowed these changes.

Leaders that apply for an AGQA tacitly agree to transform their organization. Tacitly rather than explicitly, in the case of some first-time applications, because the leaders may not realize the scope of the criteria. P8, an AGQA examiner, remarked, “The Governor's Quality Award is kind of a misnomer because it is not just based on quality. It's a management system that produces quality.” Sometimes, the award confirms the success of changes that began before the manager applied for an award.

We thought we were doing the right thing in our quality initiatives and the driving the organization from a quality perspective and the systems and processes that we had in place....But I think having it validated from an external source, kind of helped us feel like ‘ok we’re on the right track, we’re doing the right things’ ...that we need to continue to push in the direction that we were going. (P5).

The AGQA criteria provide a framework for evaluating organizational processes and a frame for changing the organization. The organizations in the study all had some form of QMS. P4 said, “The business excellence framework helps the business stay fresh and modern as opposed to becoming old and stale. She noted that, as an AGQA examiner, she had evaluated application packets from organizations without a QMS. She said that organizations without a QMS, “need to start with a, whether they are accredited or not, they need to start with a with like a 9001 structure. They need to have

requirements to build their foundation from.” She identified the problems that organizations without a QMS encounter.

Without those foundation blocks, I find organizations have a lot harder time coming up with a way to manage organizational knowledge. They don’t because they don’t have a a set of required procedures and stuff and a structure provided. They kind of pull whatever, they you know, pull things out of the clouds and takes longer to arrange their organizational knowledge into something that’s useful.

QMSs in a form that is appropriate to the organization provide a framework for a successful business. The study findings support researchers’ contentions that successful QMSs produce tangible positive values (Ebrahimi & Sadeghi, 2013; Texeira Quirós & Justino, 2013). Organization 7 represented a textbook case for the value of a QMS. The company has steadily gained market share; costs are down, and some costs are below industry averaged minimums; employee engagement is high. Best of all, according to P8, there is a waiting list for jobs at the organization. With low employee turnover, managers can concentrate on other activities.

Managers find improving processes difficult if they spend their time fighting fires. Both participants from Organization 7 commented how firefighting no longer existed. P8 attributed the elimination of fires to continuous improvement. “It gives you the opportunity to work on systems to improve them, rather than fighting fires all time.” One benefit said P8 was, “It just made everything run smoother. It seemed like turnover dropped some.” Frontline workers, especially supervisors, were happier.

Rather than the supervisors spending all their time looking up the right materials and stuff and sometimes have to have it cut before they could use it... They actually improved efficiency about 30%. By just having the right materials at the right place at the right time.... They would spend it (time) with the the people on the line, teaching them what really needed to be do—what they need to be doing and also fabrication. (Be)Cause all all the supervisors there are working supervisors.

P9's job has changed because of the processes at Organization 8. Now he is able to think strategically in long timespans.

If you put a good quality...plan in place for the total organization those crisis go away or or certainly minimized and and you know how to deal with them quickly and efficiently. It makes—there are days now, I can I can honestly say this, and I hadn't really thought about it until this moment, those crisis moments are fewer and farther between, People know how to handle those and that's why they typically don't escalate to me anymore.

Good quality management practices can help an organization weather catastrophic staffing level changes. Organization 1 suffered a 60% reduction in staff without a corresponding drop in productivity. P1 attributed this situation to having effective processes clearly mapped in the documentation. Organization 4 leaders discovered that meeting the AGQA criteria helped them increase productivity over 90% while losing one head count. These organizations had different QMSs, as well.

There is no single best QMS. The selected QMS must match the company culture.

P5 cautioned,

Well I think find something that fits your organization. Find (a) structure or process for quality management that fits your organization. Whether it be lean, whether it be PDSA, whether it be whatever, you know, ISO 9000 or...whatever fits your organization and your culture of your organization.

Once the leaders in an organization commit to a framework, then P5 said they must, “make sure that everybody understands that process, understand the tools that are involved in each one of those processes and make sure that you drive that consistently through the organization.” It is the experiences of the people in the organization that determines whether the changes will remain. The experiences of the workers relate directly to the resources that leaders provide and the actions that the leaders model.

The experiences of the participants in the study contributed to the construction of their identities. This finding extends the literature about identity development and TQM. The study findings demonstrated how participant emotions could not be separated from their experiences with the AGQA program. Dahlgaard and Dahlgaard-Parks (2006) discussed the importance of emotional competence in building organizational cultures that support quality management principles. The study findings demonstrated the value of managers recognizing the importance of soft quality management factors through their awareness of the effect of emotions in creating a culture of quality in an organization.

While not specifically called out in the study, both soft and hard quality management factors were present. Figure 1 in Chapter 2 identified soft quality

management factors developed from the literature review. In order of importance, these soft quality management factors were people, culture, leadership/leadership support training and continuous improvement. The study findings confirmed Hietschold et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis identifying soft quality factors that are also critical success factors for implementing a successful QMS. The participants mentioned the hard quality management factors of process management, strategic planning, information and data analysis as part of the materials used during their AGQA experiences.

Limitations of the Study

I examined the lived experiences of employees in organizations with an AGQA through a lens composed of van Manen's existentials. Researchers who use van Manen's (2014) existentials explore how people experience relationships, items (materials), time, space, and their bodies with respect to the phenomenon being studied. This study has several limitations, such as design, sample size, geographic location, and the data collection environment. The study used a qualitative design of interpretive phenomenology based on Heidegger's work rather than a descriptive phenomenology based on Husserl's work. Interpretive phenomenology relies on the researcher to act as the interpreter for the participant's experiences. The researcher must constantly strive to be aware of bias during the data gathering, analysis, and reporting phases. I kept a journal of my reflections and insights as I worked with the participant data to help me recognize and handle bias.

A minimum of eight participants was needed to carry out the study; eleven people from eight organizations participated in the study. Five of the participants belonged to the

same organization. The remaining six participants were the sole representatives of their organization and therefore, the only window into the organization's activities. While not generalizable, the study results are transferable due to the diversity in size, industry, and ownership models. This study occurred in Arkansas, a right to work state. Managers in companies with union representation may find that some of the recommendations are difficult or impossible to implement.

Data collection represented another limitation. I collected participant experiences through semistructured interviews. The interview locations ranged from face-to-face via Skype to telephone conference calls, so I could not control the environment. It is possible that I might have received different responses if the interviews had occurred in the same environment. The internet connection lagged during the Skype call. The lag caused garbled and missing words. Background noises during the other interviews did not affect the interview recordings.

Recommendations

A qualitative study design offers researchers the opportunity to examine a phenomenon in detail and the eleven participants generously shared their AGQA program experiences. By design, any research study focuses on a specific phenomenon or set of questions. The recommendations for future studies arose from the population, research method, and findings. The recommendations for future studies fall into three groups, (a) location, (b) organization size, ownership model, and employee tenure, and (c) methods. Researchers may choose to combine elements from different groups to produce additional insights.

Location

This study took place in Arkansas. The only other examination of a state-level award occurred in Arizona. Pannirselvam, Siferd, and Ruch (1998) compared the Arizona Governor's Quality Award to the Baldrige criteria. Arizona, like Arkansas, is part of the Alliance for Performance Excellence. Members of the Alliance use the Baldrige criteria for the state-level quality awards. Both Arkansas and Arizona have Right to Work (RTW) laws. Employees in states with an RTW law cannot be forced to join or financially support a union. Future studies could ask questions such as, what would employees' experiences look like in an organization seeking a state-level quality award in a non-RTW state? Are the experiences of the executives, mid-level managers, and frontline employees transferable from this study to an organization in a non-RTW state? What industries are represented in state-level quality awards in non-RTW states? What is the MBNQA distribution in RTW and non-RTW states? What effect does union representation have on the experiences of an employee in an organization with a state-level quality award? Researchers could further segment the study by organization size, ownership model, or other factors.

Organization Size, Ownership Model, Employee Tenure

The organizations in the study represented a variety of sizes and ownership models; moreover, the responses of the participants suggested that the organizational structure, the authority and power of their role, and the ownership model of the organization influenced AGQA experiences. Four of the participants worked in non-profits; while three organizations were government agencies or had government

oversight. The remaining four organizations were for profit, primarily in privately held manufacturing companies. Examining the relationships between organization size and the ownership model could answer questions about leadership commitment, resource allocation, predicting an organization's progress through the AGQA or another business excellence award program. Most organizations required more than four years in the program to achieve the higher-level awards. This gap between the time needed to adopt a new culture and employee tenure may pose a problem in creating a culture of quality-focused behaviors because the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) reported a drop in employee tenure. Wage and salary workers have a median employment period of 4.2 years with the length of employment trending down from a high of 4.6 years in 2014. Workers in professional occupations stayed with employers longer, a median value of 5.1 years in 2016, down from a high of 5.7 in 2015. Researchers studying tenure in organizations with QMSs could evaluate whether employee tenure is related to the success of a QMS. Potential research questions include, is tenure more important at specific job levels, such as executives or front-line workers? How is institutional knowledge transferred in a fluid workforce? Does the use of contract employees affect the quality management profile of an organization? These types of questions might be useful in predicting the potential for a successful QMS adoption.

Methods

The choice of study method affects the findings of a study. This qualitative study used an interpretive phenomenological design. A study using a descriptive phenomenological design would identify different aspects of the participant's

experiences. Research using Q methodology designs simultaneously provide qualitative and quantitative data. One advantage of a Q methodology approach is the development of practical action-oriented outcomes. Leaders could use the finding results within their organization to adjust the quality management initiatives and improve the chances of a successful transformation. Another way to examine an organization is through case studies.

Case studies, both as single and multiple designs, could help researchers understand what's going on in an organization. Case study design could be used to examine and contrast the experiences of several organizations taking part in an award cycle. The participants explained that it takes years to make the changes required to move through the program. A longitudinal case study design would increase the knowledge about how people navigate the AGQA program. Researchers might ask how do employees create and share stories? What is the impact of resource additions or losses? No matter the choice of method, researchers need to study quality management systems, storytelling and sensemaking.

The literature reviewed for this dissertation contained calls for studies. Briody et al. (2012) called for more studies to comprehend how employees use stories to understand and drive culture change. Storytelling and sensemaking cannot be separated from organizational change events. Leaders that seek to implement a business excellence (BE) framework alter the fabric of their organization; therefore, a quality management initiative becomes more than a set of tools handed to the workers. Researchers might ask, are the stories in an organization with a BE framework different from an organization

with a certification? What form do the stories take? Who is telling the stories? Thurlow and Helms Mills (2015) called for researchers to consider using critical sensemaking as a tool for future studies. Integrating the tools recommended by Thurlow and Helms Mills into research study design increase the body of knowledge on organizational identity, personal identity, language ownership, and story forms.

Disseminating Results

The results dissemination plan has three elements: near-term (within six months of receiving the degree), within one year of earning the degree, and one or more years after receiving the degree.

Near-Term. Most of the participants in the study have asked for a summary of the findings. I am a member of the American Society for Quality (ASQ) and I have been asked to present my findings to section 1430 when I receive my degree. I plan to join the Academy of Management; the Managerial and Organizational Cognition Division fits my academic interests. I will set up a profile on Researchgate, obtain an ORCID, and use my LinkedIn contacts to expand my professional network.

Within 1 year. I will seek speaking engagements with Rotary and other business organizations. I am also going to write a blog about quality and storytelling. Once I have some speaking engagements under my belt, I will be reaching out to ASQ conference organizers to present at their conferences. I will have written articles for academic journals, so these articles should be in the peer-review process or published.

After 2017. The study results form the foundation for research studies that I hope to conduct. I will have obtained a role that allows me to continue researching. I will have

completed converting my dissertation to a saleable book. I also plan to speak at quality management and business management conferences.

Implications

Managers who want an engaged workforce, increased market share, and sustainable business practices may discover insights on how to conduct a quality management initiative from these findings. Managers seeking to improve or implement a QMS should look to people first and tools second. Ingelsson et al. (2012) identified compatible personal values as important for successful quality initiatives. This condition supported the creation of an environment that produced an organization capable of receiving an AGQA. This finding may be significant to managers seeking to improve or implement a QMS. Here is how the research might influence society; change begins with the individual and moves outward since participant personal values (demonstrated by the participants' stories) matched the values found in the AGQA framework.

Individual experiences provided the data for this study, and these experiences occurred in organizations that received an AGQA. In their words, participants described how they felt, their relationships with co-workers and management, and the tools they used. Their experiences became the stories the participants told to other members of the organization about what was going on or why changes were needed. Their choice of words and the meanings given to these expressions influenced how other people interpreted the events. The participants who were experienced AGQA examiners used their knowledge about the criteria, how other organizations solved similar problems, and

the ultimate benefit to the organization to persuade the skeptics in the organization.

Organization change moved outward from the personal experiences of the participants.

People felt invested in the success of the organization as they learned new ways to solve problems and saw that managers used those solutions rather than imposing top-down solutions. Furthermore, executives and managers pushed decision-making responsibility down to the front-line, so front-line workers took ownership of their job functions. For example, suggestions from the front-line in a manufacturing facility about hazardous waste produced during manufacturing allowed the waste to be re-purposed, thus eliminating the need to dispose of hazardous waste material, thereby saving the company money. At another organization, in the manufacturing plant, the front-line is the first line of defense for ensuring a safe product and the workers have the authority to stop a production line. This delegation of responsibility and authority promoted worker confidence and engagement. This confidence seemed to transfer from the workplace to people's homes.

As one participant noted, people do not forget their minds at home. Nor do they leave the knowledge and skills to solve problems at work. In an organization that used PDSA, the participant recounted how workers used the method to solve problems at church or other social groups. The study findings support the potential for people to transfer proven problem-solving methods from the workplace to their home and out into the community.

Conclusions

The outcome of receiving an AGQA arose from the experiences of the participants. Every participant in the study said that the effort of making the changes required to receive an AGQA was worth it. Every participant felt that the AGQA assessment added value to the organization. Researchers support this belief in the value of a successful QMS (Dahlgaard-Park et al., 2013; Mosadeghrad, 2014; Murphy, 2016) through meta-analytic studies covering decades of QMS articles. Yet, most quality management initiatives fail (Mosadeghrad, 2014). Some researchers proposed that failures occur because managers failed to consider human and social factors (Abdullah & Tari, 2012; Campos et al., 2014; Talib & Rahman, 2015). The findings of this research study confirm the importance of human and social factors; these factors are not limited to a specific industry or size of organization.

The eleven participants worked in organizations ranging from health care to manufacturing, from privately owned to government-operated. Seven interview questions developed from three research questions elicited participant experiences with the AGQA program. Organizations in the study used different QMS frameworks, including Deming's (2013) Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA). Irrespective of the QMS framework, participant responses demonstrated the problem-solving model in Deming's system of profound knowledge through the stories they told about their experiences. People are natural storytellers (Kadembo, 2012; Riolo, 2014) and they use stories to understand events (Weick, 1995) and share knowledge (Caminotti & Gray, 2012). Researchers can

study stories and storytelling in many ways; in this case, I studied storytelling through the lens of participant quality management experiences.

The stories shared by the participants arose from their experiences when they described their relationships with people in the organization and the examiners who assessed the application. Participants revealed how the AGQA framework and criteria affected the processes and systems in their workplace. How participants felt about the AGQA program, making changes to the organization, and handling skeptics emerged clearly from the data. Capturing the emotional link between the experiences and successfully changing the organization demonstrates the importance of emotion. Managers interested in a successful QMS implementation need to consider how people will feel about the changes and the time it will take to make those changes.

Participant experiences based in time concentrated around the application experience or the years spent in the program. Because the discussion focused on AGQA experiences, most participants framed responses in terms that assumed activity took place at work. One participant talked about how employees in the organization used their knowledge to solve problems outside of work; this observation supports the contention that behaviors learned at work can be used to fix problems at home or in the community. The findings showed how changes in behavior and belief moved from the individual out to the other members of the organization.

The behavior of organizations changes when the behavior of people in the organization change. People's experiences are the reason people change the way they act and believe (Weick, 1995) and the participant experiences in this study support Weick's

contention. Participants told stories themselves, to members of the organization, and to the management teams; these stories shared knowledge and helped co-workers understand the need for and the benefit of the changes. The AGQA framework provided the change criteria for an organization. Successful changes to the organization's systems occurred when participants understood people, could create and test problem solutions, and developed metrics with acceptable levels of variation. In summary, managers need to consider people and their relationships with each other, the tools and materials used in the initiative, and how people feel, if the manager wants to improve the potential for a successful quality management initiative.

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Appendix A: Arkansas Governor's Quality Award

The Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) program has four levels of awards. Each award level is based on material from the Baldrige Excellence Framework. The Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence (AIPE) oversees the AGQA program. The AGQA program is part of the Alliance for Performance Excellence. The award is open to any organization in Arkansas. The award is not a competition. An applicant may receive an award at a lower level than requested in the application. Each organization receives a detailed feedback report on the application. This feedback provides the material for a cycle of improvement in the applicant organization. Examiner assignments are made to avoid conflicts of interest. Managers may select any award level for the organization's application. All applications require the signature of the executive officer in the organization. Each organization pays a fee based on the application award level and whether the award requires a site visit. Organizations seeking an Achievement or Governor's Award must supply a person for the next year's examiner pool.

The Challenge Award is the lowest of the award levels. This award is the starting point for managers in organizations without a QMS or an immature QMS. Applicants fill out a key business factors worksheet and a three- to -five-page profile.

The Commitment Award is for organizations with a functioning QMS. Organizations that have certifications such as ISO 9000 often begin at this award level. The application package consists of the key business factors worksheet, an organizational profile, and a 10-20 page report answering specific Governor's Quality Award Criteria.

The Achievement Award recognizes organizations who demonstrated significant use of quality management principles. The application package consists of the key business factors worksheet, an organizational profile, and a 15-50 page report answering the Governor's Quality Award Criteria. The organization's managers have the option of requesting a site visit.

The Governor's Award is the highest level award. Recipients of this award are eligible to apply for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The application package is the same as the Achievement Award. The package consists of the key business factors worksheet, an organizational profile, and a 15-50 page report answering the Governor's Quality Award Criteria. An examiner site visit is mandatory for this award.

Appendix B: Participant Recruiting Letter and Recruiting Email

Dear Potential Participant:

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Management program at Walden University. I am studying the experiences of people who worked in organizations that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015 to learn how people use their knowledge and experiences to create a successful quality management system. As you are aware, creating a quality-focused culture is hard, and most quality initiatives fall short of expectations. By understanding people's experiences with successful quality management practices, I may be able to identify the experiences that are critical to developing a successful quality management system. This study would provide empirical support for a framework stemming from peoples' experiences, perspectives, and perceptions.

I need your help to complete this study. I would like to interview you to learn about your experiences if you worked in an organization that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015. The interview will take no more than 60 minutes in a location of your preference or through a phone call or Skype. After I have transcribed the interview, I will ask you to review my understanding of your experiences. This follow-up meeting would take no more than 30 minutes. Your participation in this study is strictly confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. You can request a copy of the study findings. If you do not wish to take part in the study, is there one or more

people in your organization who would like to be a part of this study? Would you share this invitation with them?

This study could increase what we know about how creating a successful quality management program. The study may identify the kinds of stories used to solve problems, the kinds of stories used to persuade others to behave in a new way, or the kinds of stories used to pass along knowledge. I am a quality management professional and you may know me as a member of Section 1413 of the American Society for Quality. This study is separate from that role.

Please respond by email (carol.barton@waldenu.edu) or by calling me (479.644.4105) if you would like to participate in this study or would like to learn more about the study. If you respond by email, please include your telephone number and the best time for me to contact you. I will call you to schedule the interview at a mutually convenient time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Carol A. Barton

Ph.D. Candidate

Recruiting E-mail

Carol Barton is a Ph.D. candidate in the Management program at Walden University. Carol wants to interview people who worked in an organization that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award between 2010 and 2015. She is studying the experiences of people who worked in organizations that received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award to learn how people use their knowledge and experiences to create a successful quality management system. This study would provide practical support for using people's experiences, perspectives, and perceptions when businesses create and refine their quality management system. You may request a summary of the study findings if you participate. She is asking for about 90 minutes of your time. If you would like to help Carol or to learn more about the study, email her at carol.barton@waldenu.edu or by calling 479.644.4105.

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Details:

Interviewer	_____
Interviewee	_____
Interviewee Code	_____
Name	_____
Interview Date/Time	_____
Interview Location	_____
Send copy of signed consent form to participant? Address.	_____

Preliminary Actions:

1. Explain the purpose of the interview. Provide a short background of the researcher's connection to the study.

Script

I would like to take a few minutes to revisit the purpose and goal of the study. This study is an attempt to learn how people use their knowledge and experiences to create a successful quality management system.

As you may know, most quality initiatives fail. An Arkansas Governor's Quality Award demonstrates that your business successfully developed and maintained a superior quality management system. The goal of the study is to explore how employees in an organization with an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award feel about the changes the business made to earn the award. Your perspectives, perceptions, and experiences reveal best practices that people in other organizations may be able to use as they seek to implement or improve quality

management practices in their organizations. This is not an evaluation of your quality management practices.

I am conducting this study as part of my doctoral program. I have a background in quality management systems in manufacturing, retail, and, service industries. I am a Certified Quality Auditor. I am the Secretary of ASQ Section 1413. That role has no bearing on my role as a researcher in this study.

2. Explain participant rights.

Script

Your response to my invitation to participate and your signature on the consent form, indicate your formal consent for this interview. Please note that all information will be held in the strictest confidence. This interview will be digitally recorded. I will transcribe the interview. The data collected from this interview will be viewed by me and my dissertation committee. Please note that your involvement is voluntary and you may choose not to answer a question. Also, you have the option to stop the interview at any time. The interview should take no more than an hour to complete. Thank you for agreeing to participate. Please sign the consent form.

3. Collect the signed consent form. Arrange for a signed and data copy to be given to the participant.

Script

Would you like me to send a scanned copy of the form to you? [If yes, record address for copy delivery.] I plan for the interview to last no longer than 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions to cover.

4. Confirm that participant meets required profile.

Demographic Questions:

1. Have you worked for a business that has received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award (AGQA) between 2010 and 2015? _____
2. How long have you worked for this organization? _____
3. Name of the organization _____
4. What was your role in helping achieve the award? _____
5. Have you been an employee in other organizations that achieved an AGQA? Y / N _____
6. What were their name(s)? _____

7. Do you have any quality certifications? Y / N _____
8. What are those quality certifications? _____

9. Have you been involved in a quality management system change before? Y / N _____
10. What type of quality management system changes have you been involved with? (Mark all that apply) _____
 Cellular Manufacturing _____

-
- Lean Manufacturing
 - Kaizen and 5S
 - Lean and Six Sigma
 - Systems Application Products (SAP)
 - Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI)
 - Other (Please Specify)

11. What quality management system does your company or organization use, if any?

(Mark all that apply)

- ISO 9000
- Baldrige Excellence Framework
- AGQA (based on Baldrige Excellence Framework)
- Other (Please Specify)

12. What is your title?

Interview Questions:

1. I'd like you to think about when you found out you'd won the Award. Describe how you felt when you learned your company would receive an AGQA. (RQ1)
 - a. What kind of things changed? (Probe)
 - b. How did your company benefit from the outcomes of earning the award?
(Probe)

2. Describe your experiences during the application process. (RQ1)
 - a. What kind of things changed? (Probe)
 - b. How did you feel about these changes? (Probe)
 - c. How did other people feel about making changes to the way they worked?
(Probe)
 - d. What kinds of changes have been made to the QMS since receiving the award? (Probe)
 - e. How do you feel about those changes? (Probe)
3. Describe how you felt when the announcement was made to seek AGQA recognition. (RQ1)
 - a. Were you part of the discussion about seeking the recognition? (Probe)
 - b. How did inclusion/exclusion make you feel? (Probe)
4. What advice would you give to managers who wanted to create or improve a quality management system? (RSQ2)
5. What advice would you give to managers who wanted to apply for an AGQA?
(RSQ2)
6. How do you use share your experiences with others? (RSQ1)
7. Final Question: Is there anything that you would like to share on your experiences that I have not asked about? (RQ1), (RSQ1), (RSQ2)
 - a. Did your business see sustainable results from the changes required to earn the award? (Probe)

- b. Was earning the award worth the effort and costs of making the application? Why or why not? (Probe)

General Probing Questions:

1. Can you give me an example?
2. Tell me more.

Debrief:

Script

Thank you for helping me with this research study. I will contact you for a brief, no more than 30-minute meeting after I have transcribed our interview. I will have a summary of the interview with my interpretation of your experiences. I would like you to review the summary to confirm that I captured the essence of what you have shared with me or to identify where I did not understand so that I can correct the interpretation. Do you have any questions? Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you!

Appendix D: Member Experience Summaries

Participant 1

P1's prior knowledge about business excellence allowed her to make informed comparisons of national business excellence award criteria and the Arkansas state adapted criteria. She found the opportunity to be a great personal and career experience. Organization 1 and P1 were able to build relationships with Arkansas companies and state government offices and officials.

Hierarchical organizations with the weight of unquestioned assumptions behind business practices can be difficult to change. Arkansas Governor's Quality Award examiners have difficulty understanding the operations of non-revenue producing organizations. This lack of understanding can produce shallow feedback reports that fail to provide continuous improvement insights to the applicant organization.

Writing an effective application can be difficult. P1 found the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award contact person to be unfailingly helpful and patient. Organization 1 worked through several award levels. The feedback from the first award application enabled P1 to present the justification for assembling a team to handle the application's organizational assessment activities and to help write sections of the application. The hand-picked team embraced the business excellence criteria and continuous improvement tools.

New perspectives and attendant improvement in outcomes can arise by teaching people how to ask questions and act on the answers they find. Despite Organization 1 being subject to stringent regulations, the assessment team found ways to improve

business processes while remaining compliant to the regulations. Because of Organization 1's dependence on external funding, it is critical that services can still be provided when limited funds are available. A recent significant budget cut proved the value of the investment in the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award program.

P1 considers the continuous improvement program at Organization 1 to be in its infancy. She recommends that organizations interested in applying for an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award send an executive with decision-making authority to the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award classes along with the team responsible for the assessment. Including an executive reinforces the need for continuous improvement to be a strategic element, helps to secure resources for conducting the assessment and making necessary changes to the organization's way of working. Finally, when executives understand the value of the business process improvements it is easier to obtain support for making everyone in the organization a knowledgeable user of continuous improvement tools.

Participant 2

Improved processes linger as the normal way of working even when internal champions leave an organization. The remaining employees have been exposed to continuous improvement tools and processes. Organization 2 settled on the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award business excellence criteria as a way to develop a culture of quality within their organization. P2 wrote applications for the early award efforts, but gained a transformational insight about what was possible when he attended examiner's training.

One of the key benefits of having as many people as possible trained as an examiner is the knowledge they bring back to the organization. It is possible to improve an organization's performance when only part of the organization accepts and uses continuous improvement tools and processes. Lasting cultural transformation occurs when the changed way of working becomes the norm. Examiners act as internal champions. These internal champions help areas that are reluctant to adopt the changed way of working understand how the changes benefit the area. Examiners are able to frame criteria requirements in terms that their home organization can understand. Guiding the Organization 2 to the highest level, the Governor's Award, was a career high point for P2.

Organization 2 used the criteria to develop usable performance measures. When project managers were assigned to the criteria assessment team, the continuous improvement process took off. The project managers were able to guide the subject matter experts in developing strategic plans with executable action plans. The AGQA and

an organizational directive provided the impetus for strategic planning and developing and defining performance measures. This led to the development of a sheet to guide performance measure development along with examples of appropriate measures.

The experience of P2 and Organization 2 demonstrate that all organizations need some form of a quality management system (QMS). An organization can create a customized QMS by selecting among the focus areas of the Baldrige Excellence framework according to P2. P2 advised that any business interested in an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award to apply. He recommended that the business attend the classes offered on application writing and on becoming an examiner. Successful organizations align their services and core competencies. The Arkansas Governor's Quality Award criteria guide an organization in achieving sustainable excellence.

Participant 3

Organization 3 was recognized with three prestigious awards during the four years P3 guided the organization. The AGQA was the most significant award since the organization was measured against a set of criteria independent of the organization's industry. Earning the award was a career highlight for P3. The feedback report provided several insights to P3 and Organization 3. They had been confident about the robustness of their systems. Non-industry experts outside provided another viewpoint for assessing improvement potential and unrecognized gaps in Organization 3.

As a small organization, it was imperative that the effort of applying for the award not disrupt employees' workload. P3 assigned each section of the criteria to a team which enabled many members of the organization to be exposed to the award's business excellence criteria. This approach also helped to counter resistors who did not see the value of applying for an award outside of their industry or who felt that the organization's limited resources could be put to a better use. Learning drives behavior change and having lots of people involved increased the potential number of minds that could change. Changing a culture, truly changing it, is a slow process.

The team approach provided maximum workforce exposure. If you don't have enough people to fill out the application – wait. P3 wanted to create lots of knowledge holders, not an overworked chosen few experts. A second purpose of the application was a dry run for an organizational certification, so having more people involved meant that there would be a larger pool of experts available for the certification process. Quality involves learning and recognizing people as individual contributors to organizational

success. When people feel valued they show up and work hard. Employee morale improved because they were asked to help.

P3 chose the award level in order to demonstrate to the staff that his belief that the organization's changes were on the right course. He knew that his people had the "right stuff." Leadership and quality are inseparable. Leadership is about thinking ahead and preparing people for future events. P3 advised that organizations serious about having good quality should not let the daily grind cloud their vision. Culture is made of lots of little things, things that cannot be written down, but that are expressed by how the people in the organization work. The organization and its people may not be quality evangelists, but they have changed because Organization 3 applied for and received an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award.

Participant 4

The AGQA criteria can transform a functional area from being perceived as a resource drain to being recognized as a valued contributor to an organization's success. P4 pointed out that small organizations or areas within a larger organization may need to reframe how they view their business processes. The AGQA criteria encouraged a methodical examination of all business processes and areas. The process analysis got rid of "stupid" stuff people had to do, which improved morale.

P4 recommends that any organization interested in an AGQA send someone to examiner training or at the bare minimum attend the classes offered in how to complete an application. Words and concepts have specific meanings in the AGQA criteria. People with AGQA examiner training or experience can explain the criteria and offer advice framed in terms the business can understand. Internal champions with AGQA examiner training support the change process and help establish the new norm.

P4 advises interested organizations to start small and build on their successes. P4 believes that honest efforts to meet the criteria will improve business effectiveness. Organizations need to take the time to act on award feedback because true change doesn't happen overnight.

Certifications can only take an organization so far. They provide a framework. Business excellence processes flesh out certification frameworks. Business excellence practices are successful in organizations open to learning and changing. Otherwise these practices will be culturally rejected and ultimately fail to be adopted into mainstream behavior. The comprehensive nature of a business excellence mindset helps an

organization prepare for changes to the operating environment while certifications offer a focused view into a few areas.

Organizations that try to create things from scratch have a rough time. An external framework, such as ISO 9001 (even if the organization is not interested in accreditation), provides reference points and preset checkpoints. There are lots of ways to meet the criteria. P4 experimented to find what worked best for Organization 4. Ultimately, P4 leveraged improvements across all related work units and areas so that the organization received the maximum possible benefit from effective processes.

Participant 5

Change never comes easily to an organization with a 24x7 operation. Change is also an invitation to be judged and found wanting. Organization 5 knew their systems were pretty good. P5 knew that as good as the systems were, the organization's customers deserved the very best service possible. Through consistent messages and persistent effort P5 began to build support for seeking an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award. Winning the first award changed a lot of minds about what was possible. The examiner feedback provided some wake-up calls to the leadership.

Effective communication between all levels of an organization is critical. Equally important is having everyone in the organization understand the chosen quality management tool. P5 advised matching the quality management framework to the organization's culture. The fit is more important than philosophy or framework because tools that don't fit the organization and culture will not be used.

Don't assume anything, train everyone on the tools and processes. When everyone knows and understands the framework, then hold them accountable for using the framework. The results exceeded expectations. The organization's metrics improved significantly. There was no guessing. The data collected for each award application told the story of improvement and increased employee and customer satisfaction. The people doing the job figured out solutions that worked and management's role changed from solver/permission grantor to resource provider and backer.

The Arkansas Governor's Quality Awards have value independent of industry. No organization is too complex or too simple to receive benefits from tackling the award

criteria. The award uplifts people and organizations. P5 cautioned that the award criteria should not be blindly applied. People should ask and answer the question, “What does quality mean to my company?” P5 led his leadership team in frequent conversations about how the criteria applied to Organization 5. The formal criteria helped the team question their assumptions and led to a transformation of perspective throughout the organization.

Participant 6

In P6's experience three elements are required to earn an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award. First, you need commitment from members in the organization, especially members of management. Second, you need to have attention to detail so that you can look at your data and learn what it means. And finally, you must commit the resources to making the changes you identified as necessary from the data analysis.

P6 filled many roles during the application process: researcher, advocate, and cheerleader. He asked his management team if they would support the effort of applying for an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award. Organization 6 would be able to leverage the work done for an award at the industry's national level. The Arkansas Governor's Quality Award provided a proven recipe for recognizing staff, taking care of customers, and demonstrating their value as a member of the local community. When the going got tough, he reminded everyone of the benefits the changes would bring to their customers.

The management team agreed to apply at the second award level. The AGQA application team drew on members in every area of the business and from all shifts. Frontline staff offered real-world interpretations of data as well as advice in how to improve processes. P6 benefited from have a core team that had multiple years at the facility. The award outcomes furthered the long-term vision held by the management team and helped reinforce a culture committed to doing the right thing.

Organization 6 is not large and P6 did not want to waste time or resources reinventing the wheel. The AGQA framework is straight-forward with clearly stated criteria. An organization will improve their processes by being honest about where they

are starting and then following the criteria, just like a recipe. In fact, P6 believes that the framework provides a recipe for success because organizations who follow the framework join the other successful organizations that have preceded Organization 6.

This is not a solo journey. Everyone in the organization must believe and participate. When people see the data results or contribute to the solutions then they buy-into the changes. P6 modeled the behaviors that he wanted staff to adopt. This consistency prevented the development of a double-standard mindset. Indeed, P6 actively fosters a team mindset because no one person has all of the answers and together, customers receive the compassionate care they deserve. The staff are the heroes. This award helped people outside of Organization 6 recognize what P6 knew.

Participant 7 (Organization 7)

People who do business with Organization 7 know the company will be here tomorrow because the company has positive and sustainable business practices. Success means you never stop trying to get better. The people in Organization 7 took what they had learned from each award attempt, applied the lessons, and kept reaching for the Governor's Quality Award. An excellent company has more going for it than just a good QMS. Quality was only going to get Organization 7 so far. P7 would not be here with most significant award, the Governor's Quality Award, if people all through the company didn't share his beliefs. What they learned during the journey changed their beliefs about how they conducted business. In the seven-year march, every measured metric showed improvement with some risk areas being well below industry norms.

Organizations that want a successful quality management system or an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award need a champion. Arm the champions with resources. Follow their advice. Champions with experience as an AGQA examiner offer actionable solutions. No champion equals "it's a nice idea." Pay for expert help and pay for the resources to make the changes. Business excellence means more than good quality products: who wants to buy a great piece of equipment from someone who is unpleasant?

Before embarking determine where you are and work against that information. P7 wanted to improve the company, he just didn't know where to start. The Baldrige Award was too big, setting an unreachable goal will not improve the organization. The Arkansas Governor's Quality Award program used the Baldrige criteria and it was just the right size for Organization 7. Clear award application packages provided signposts for future

improvement. These signposts gave staff a clear objective and encouraged confidence that the company would earn the Governor's Quality Award. Management consulted with folks doing the work for help on picking the right areas to tackle thereby encouraging employees to buy-in and take ownership of their work areas.

Participant 8 (Organization 7)

P8 had the go/no go button for the Organization 7 award applications. The Governor's Award does not represent an end – but an accomplishment. P8 felt frustrated that the awards use the word “quality” when the award is about how the whole organization performs. Company success or failure is not the role of the quality department. Management must take ownership for company operations rather than pinning everything to do with quality on the quality department.

Without energy wasted on firefighting, organizational change can be intentional. The value is not in the award. The value is in how the organization changed. Organization 7 set its sights high and moved through the award levels because its people didn't quit. Management resistance melted when Organization 7 received its first awards. Once convinced of the value, management embraced the criteria with a whole heart. Better management planning and process improvement cut floor drama and smothered fires.

Definitely the “bad old days” of when supervisors had to expedite (or liberate) parts and materials are gone. On the floor, knowledge began to be transferred since the supervisor was on-hand to see mistakes/defects when they happened. Supervisors are able to share their experience; to train and teach as well as work on units. Problems are caught before a unit goes to paint and final inspection.

Award applications are life-changing in a good way. Organizations get better when they apply for awards. They learn about themselves. Award applications provide a way to open a conversation with senior management, especially when senior management

believes that it is only the quality department that is responsible for quality in the organization. P8 advised that an organization needs to be ready for inspection when they submit their application. It is important to have a well written application. It is also a good idea to ask for help from someone who has gone through the process if this is an organization's first attempt.

Documentation provides a record of decisions made. A good documentation system can help identify sales issues and more. Companies that reach the upper award levels understand there is no end to the journey. At the lower award levels, companies who are serious about improving take the feedback report, solve for the gaps, and apply again.

Participant 9 (Organization 8)

Seeking an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award forces an organization to look at how they do business and not just how they manufacture products or provide services. P9 persuaded leadership to apply for an award by demonstrating how the application criteria improved the company. All businesses benefit from applying for an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award even if they apply at the lower levels. Applying for an award reinforces quality-focused behaviors in employees. Quality products happen by design and not by accident.

Obtaining buy-in for any type of change is difficult. Projects such as applying for an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award need champions like P9. The facility operates on a 24/7 schedule. Senior managers had always talked about the importance of quality. Managers of every level have taken part in the product audits which occur on all shifts as part of the demonstration that quality is non-negotiable. P9 saw employees respond strongly and positively to management's stance that quality is nonnegotiable.

At Organization 8, P9 wore two hats. As a trained Arkansas Governor's Quality Award examiner she understood how other examiners would assess the company application. She worked with members throughout the organization as part of meeting the award criteria. The examiners for the award were so impressed by the application that they asked why the organization had not sought a higher level award. P9 felt proud of how her efforts helped her company shine.

Anyone who wants to improve personally and professionally should become an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award examiner. Learning about the Baldrige business

excellence criteria makes you look at the company as a whole rather than focusing on a single area such as the quality management system. Examiners have the opportunity to learn how businesses at all award levels are constructed and perform. The skill to zoom from details to an overview and back to details can be used both personally and professionally. Examiners come from all industries. P9 had the chance to participate in examining an organization seeking the highest level of award.

Participant 10 (Organization 8)

P10's primary role was to enable the project leader to complete the applications. The project leader did the work of confirming that the company met the criteria and writing up the application. Continuous improvement is a journey. Organization 8 applied for the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award knowing that it had a strong foundation. Seeking the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award at the Commitment level reinforced quality-focused behaviors within the facility. Examiners identified some minor gaps during the two-year back-to-back applications, mainly in documentation. One of the benefits of meeting the award criteria is that now customer audits are a routine event rather than something that represents an exceptional event. Overall, there was very little change to how the facility runs.

Companies seeking an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award must have a clear understanding of their operating state. It is best to match the reason the company seeks the award to the award level being sought. Receiving this recognition has assured Organization 8's customers that the product is safe and of high quality.

Organization 8 already had a very strong culture of safety. In fact, the company is recognized statewide for its safety record. Unfortunately, the other business units in the parent organization have not, nor are they required to, visit Organization 8 to learn about the practices that have made Organization 8 recognized at the state law wide level for both its quality and safety practices.

Participant 11 (Organization 8)

Meeting the requirements for an Arkansas Governor's Quality Award was a lot of work. By a lot of work, P11 meant it was a lot more work than what he envisioned when he was told "it was going to be a lot of work." In his workplace, everything is dynamic, from how the production lines are laid out to the products that they create based on customer contracts. Working through the Award requirements made them take a hard look at what they did. And as they took that look, they rose to the challenge and found out it was kind of fun to beat what was accepted as "that's impossible".

First of all, P11 had to make sure that all of the SOP's and work instructions actually matched what people were doing. Today P11 is confident that what is written matches reality. For him, that meant he didn't have to keep all the details in his head about the databases that he created and maintained. It means that Organization 8 has a consistent way of transferring knowledge when people join. Everyone is working off the same playbook.

Second, the Arkansas Governor's Quality Award review process underscored the importance of constantly improving the database that Organization 8 uses to produce safe customer products. During the review process, P11 tried all kinds of different ways to break the system, to speed it up, and most importantly to reduce the opportunity for human error. Flawed or out-of-control systems endanger customers. A quality product is a safe product. It took a lot of patience, to do all of this testing and to make all of these changes, but the outcome was worth the effort.

Third, these changes have become part of the culture. P11 can no longer imagine working in a different way. When P11 received news of the award he was jubilant and relieved. It took everyone in the company, not just the quality department. Meeting the requirements for the award showed people in Organization 8 that the guy on the line probably knows how to fix the problem and he doesn't need a fancy degree. He is our Number 1 safeguard against dangerous product leaving the site. Improving the way Organization 8 does things never ends and as one area become stable they look outward to see where else they can improve the systems and ways of working. Quality means that Organization 8 produces safe products for customers to use.

Appendix E: Bracketing Questions for Interview and Member Check

Pre-Interview Bracketing Questions

- What are my thoughts about this interview?
- How well do I know this person?
- How do I feel? (anxious, bored, tired, ??)
- Do I believe that the information in the interview will support my values about this subject? Why?
- Why am I interested in talking to this person?
- Will this person help me find other people to talk with?
- Am I really interested? Am I curious? Am I looking just for “confirmation”?

Post-Interview Bracketing Questions

- Did the interview go the way I anticipated? Why or why not?
- What resonated with me?
- Did I obtain material that will produce thick rich descriptions?
- What can I do better on my next interview?

Member Check Pre-and Post-Meeting Questions

Pre-member check

- What makes me confident that I captured the participant’s experiences?
- What will I do if the participant disagrees with me?
- How willing am I to revise the description?

Post member check

- How do I feel about the participant's reaction to the interpretation?
- Did the participant request changes? Disagree with the sense?
- What are my next steps?

Member Check Interview Protocol and Questions

Thank you.

- Do you feel I accurately captured your experience?
- Do you feel I accurately interpreted your experience?
- Do you have anything to add or change?
- Thank you for participating in my study.
- You will receive a summary of the findings when my degree is granted.