

2019

Exploring Public Sector Leadership Through Appreciative Inquiry

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College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Exploring Public Sector Leadership Through Appreciative Inquiry

by

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MA, University of Oklahoma, 2011

BA, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, 1994

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Walden University

February 2019

Abstract

Leadership is an important part of creating effective public organizations. Effective leaders have the potential to produce social change through positive follower and organizational outcomes, the development of important policies, and efficiently implementing public policy. The scholarly literature lacks research concerning how leadership styles translate to the public sector. The theoretical framework used to guide and support this study was Cooperrider and Whitney's appreciative inquiry. The research question explored in what ways public sector leaders affect how followers perceive themselves as social change agents in a local city-county health department. For this phenomenological study, 10 followers employed by a local city-county health department in central Oklahoma provided perception data regarding details of their lived experiences with public sector leadership. Thematic coding was utilized to analyze the data. Key findings included support for transformational and servant leadership theories. Elements of these theories that followers found important included supporting, empowering, and valuing followers. Through good public leadership, important public policies goals can be attained which have the potential to produce positive social change through dynamic public organizations focused on social responsibility, trust in government, and customer service. Public organizations can use the findings to build a motivated, inspired, and committed public workforce.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the public servants, both leaders and followers, around the world who have dedicated their professional lives to the service of others.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the support of my husband, Michael, who has always encouraged me to realize my goals and follow my dreams. Without my husband's support and patience, this dissertation would have remained only thoughts in my head. I would like to acknowledge the three exceptional children that Michael and I share:

Amber, Tanner, and Gareth. Your exceptional natures make me want to do and be better.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of my friends and coworkers who started calling me Dr. Morton before I even wrote one word of this dissertation. If I had failed to see this through to the end, I would have betrayed your belief that I can one day warrant the title "Dr. Morton".

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Leadership has been studied for centuries. However, research findings remain fragmented and inconsistent (Batistic, Cerne, & Vogel, 2016). While research in the field of leadership has grown significantly over the past decade to encompass the many complexities of the phenomenon, there is still no comprehensive paradigm guiding research (Dinh et al., 2014). Burns (1978) noted nearly four decades ago that leadership was a phenomenon that was easy to recognize, but much harder to understand. This statement remains true today. While researchers have produced numerous studies on the construct of leadership, there remain gaps in understanding how leadership styles translate to the public sector and how leadership style impacts social change and follower performance. There have been strides made in the field of leadership with the inclusion of empirical research on new theories, but few of these studies have focused on the public sector (Trottier, Van Wart, & Wang, 2008). More evidence is needed to understand how public leaders affect follower outcomes (Maio, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2014).

While understanding leadership processes and implications has been expanded through recent studies, more research is needed that focuses on variables such as outcomes, values, and the influence of emotions (Dinh et al., 2014). Quantitative research often analyzes leadership at a single level (Dinh et al., 2014). Additional research is needed from different levels of analysis, like qualitatively exploring the perspective and influence of followers. This study helped overcome the gap in the leadership literature that demonstrated a lack of understanding how public leaders influence processes that impact organization outcomes, public policy, and social change.

For the purpose of this study, public leaders should be viewed from the lens of administrative leadership. According to Van Wart (2013), administrative leadership involves the day-to-day leadership in public organizations. Public leaders are those administrators who lead and influence followers and manage processes involving direct services to the public.

To better understand how public leaders impact aspects of follower performance, it is important to explore followers' experiences with what they view as effective public leadership that produces social change. This chapter explores the research problem, the purpose, and the background for the study. A theoretical framework is provided to guide the study and a research question is provided. Definitions and terms used throughout the proposal are included in Chapter 1. Finally, the study's significance, any assumptions made by the author, the scope of the study, and limitations of the study are detailed.

Background

Leadership research in the public sector has lagged behind private sector research. Research that offers real suggestions for how leaders can apply behaviors that positively influence outcomes is needed (Van Wart, 2013). Additionally, leadership research is often quantitative and focused on the leader's perspective (Dinh et al., 2014). Research is needed that focuses on the follower's viewpoint, the specific leadership mechanism that positively impacts follower performances, and how effective administrative leadership impacts social change both at the organizational and community level. Researchers have called for more research exploring how specific leadership styles apply and correspond to the public sector (Miao et al., 2014; Weinstein, 2013). Qualitatively exploring public

employees' experiences with what they consider good leadership provided valuable information with practical applications for public administrators.

Effective public leadership impacts organizational outcomes, employee performance, social change, and effective policy development and implementation. Leaders must consider individual and situational contexts that effect policy implementation (Werts & Brewer, 2015). It is important to understand how public sector employees view constructs such as leadership, social change, public policy, and organizational goals. Effective leaders who demonstrates the ability to inspire, motivate, and foster commitment among followers have the potential to positively impact public policy at both the policy development and implementation level. Leaders who effectively influence the performance of subordinates and positively impact organizational outcomes can translate this ability to leverage public policy and social change.

Public health leadership is one area that could benefit from improved understanding of the mechanics of good leadership. The organization studied is located within Oklahoma City. In Oklahoma, health outcomes routinely rank among the lowest in the nation. Oklahoma is ranked 46th in the nation in terms of the health of its citizens (Oklahoma State Department of Health [OSDH], 2018). Current public health challenges stem from chronic diseases like obesity that are linked to poor lifestyle choices (OSDH, 2018). Research indicated that effective leadership positively impacts public health outcomes (Weiss, Lillefjell, & Magnus, 2016). In this study I explored what effective public sector leadership looks like to those that experience it daily.

To improve health outcomes in Oklahoma, leaders must engage in population based or community health activities. The Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan (OHIP) provides suggestions for activities that engage communities to develop policies in the larger social context (OSDH, 2018). Partnering with community stakeholders will allow public health leaders to develop effective policies to address social problems associated with unhealthy behaviors and produce real social change. Social change that encourages healthy lifestyles and addresses health inequities will benefit the citizens of Oklahoma on physical, personal, and economic levels (OSDH, 2018). Through population-based approaches, we can realize social change to improve poor health related to issues like obesity, tobacco use, and poor child health (OSDH, 2018). Effective public leaders are better able to build public health partnerships, meet community needs, improve public policy, and realize social change.

Problem Statement

The problem is a lack of research relating to how specific behaviors and styles are perceived as examples of good public leadership by employees in local public organizations. A review of the pertinent leadership uncovered three variables that are often associated with effective leadership: motivation, inspiration, and commitment building. While researchers have investigated how leaders impact aspects of motivation, commitment, and inspiration, more work is needed exploring these factors from the followers' perspective and within public organizations. This problem negatively impacts the performance of government agencies and their ability to develop and implement effective public policy. The study focused on a local government agency, a city-county

health department, to determine what followers perceived as effective public sector leadership.

Oklahoma continues to rank low in terms of health outcomes when compared to other states. Oklahomans use more tobacco products, exercise less, and have limited access to primary care when compared to citizens in other states (OSDH, 2018). This demonstrates a social problem that requires effective leadership to improve organizational performance and public policy development. Effective leadership has been positively linked to both public health outcomes and policy implementation (Fraser, 2013; Weiss, Lillefjell, & Magnus, 2016). Focusing effective leadership behaviors within the organization will allow administrators to apply these behaviors to policy development, policy implementation, and social change activities. From a phenomenological tradition, I sought to appreciate the experiences of public sector followers and translate that information to leader behaviors that have the greatest potential to effect change.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to build understanding and knowledge of what leader behaviors, attitudes, and actions are perceived as positively impacting performance and social change in local public health organizations. Understanding the meaning of good public leadership has important implications for improving professional practices in the field of public administration. The study findings offer insight to improve human resource policies and practices for developing both leaders and followers. More leadership research is needed that offer public leaders'

guidance on how to motivate and inspire followers (Van Wart, 2013). Effective human resources policies help improve leader, follower, and organizational performance.

Beyond merely improving human resources and organizational policies, understanding effective leadership in the public sector has important implications for policy making and positive social change.

This study gained knowledge of leadership practices that promote social change and motivate, inspire, and encourage commitment among employees in a city-county health department in Oklahoma. Leaders who display behaviors that increase commitment, motivation, and inspiration can translate these characteristics to policy making and social change activities. Improved understanding of effective public leadership can positively impact local policy making connected to the 10 essential public health services endorsed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Key among these crucial services is policy making activities focused on improving community health and building a competent public health workforce (CDC, 2014). Good leaders can positively impact local policy making and social change activities that improve the health of the community. Additionally, good leaders help produce well trained, committed public health employees.

Research is needed to determine how specific leadership styles impact followers in public organizations (Trottier et al., 2008). This qualitative study focused on follower perceptions of effective leadership. The participants of the study were organizational members of a city-county health department in Oklahoma. The participants were nonsupervisory employees that had worked at the organization for at least two years.

Nonsupervisory employees included both professional and nonprofessional employees. By understanding leaders' best practices through the eyes of followers and how these practices align with specific leadership styles, the research offers practical contributions to professional practice within the fields of public policy and public administration.

Theoretical Framework

Appreciative inquiry was used to structure the study and to frame the leadership phenomenon within the current literature. Appreciative inquiry provided a lens through which to positively approach followers' experiences with their leaders. This positive emphasis is demonstrated in transformational and servant leadership styles.

Transformational and servant leaders show appreciation for what their followers think and how they approach work. By focusing on best practices, achievements, and values, organizational members create an optimistic and encouraging vision of the future organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

In this study, appreciative inquiry was utilized as a framework focused on leadership strengths through the discovery of what leader behaviors followers deem as producing social change and positively impacting motivation, inspiration, and commitment. Appreciative inquiry derives from social construction theory and positive psychology. Positive emotions increase an individual's flexibility and openness to innovation (Whitney & Frederickson, 2015). Through appreciative inquiry, organizational leaders and change agents gather information on the organization's assets. The positive approach will complement a research question focused on perceptions of good public leadership.

Research Question

The following research question was addressed in this study:

Research Question: In what ways does public sector leadership effect how followers perceive themselves as social change agents in a local city-county health department?

Nature of the Study

Qualitative

The study was qualitative in nature. This improved understanding how leadership styles translate to the public sector from the perspective of followers. The study utilized a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a method of inquiry that allows the researcher to gather information and assess the meaning of individual lived experiences (van Manen, 2014). The study gathered information about leadership best practices in a local government organization. Exploring individual lived experience with public sector leadership provided needed understanding and meaning for the behaviors that followers perceived as producing social change and building commitment while being inspiring and motivational.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from interviews with followers in a local city-county health department in Oklahoma. Interview questions asked followers to describe specific times when leaders positively impacted their performance and ability to be a social change agent. Interviews took between 15 and 40 minutes to conduct. The lengthy nature of the interview process and the detailed, rich data collected from the process limited

participants to a sample size of 10. The participants were selected from the appropriate population within the organization. Once data were collected, they were transcribed and analyzed for significant themes and patterns. Themes and patterns were compared to established leadership styles that reflect strong components of social change, commitment, motivation, and inspiration. The themes helped to determine if public administrators can utilize established leadership theories and styles or whether research is needed to develop a new public leadership paradigm.

Definitions and Terms

Administrative leadership: Government administrators who are tasked daily with leading people, managing processes, and providing governance (Van Wart, 2013).

Appreciative inquiry: Appreciative inquiry is an organizational development and change process that focuses on organizational successes, best practices, values, and strengths to improve performance across the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Governance: The authority to or the act of governing (Van Wart, 2012).

Leadership: The process of influencing an individual or group of individuals to realize common goals (Van Wart, 2012).

Phenomenology: A qualitative method of inquiry focused on the study of individuals' lived experience with a phenomenon (van Manen, 2014).

Phenomenon: An observable occurrence (Creswell, 2013).

Public administration: An academic discipline focused on the implementation of public policy (Van Wart, 2012).

Public policy: Public policy encompasses the laws, regulations, budgeting processes, and processes enacted by a government around specific concerns or issues (Van Wart, 2012).

Servant leadership: A theory or style of leadership focused on serving people first to improve organizations (Greenleaf, 1977).

Transformational leadership: A theory or style of leadership focused on positive change in people and organizations (Burns, 2003).

Assumptions

For this study, there were several assumptions. An assumption in research is axiomatic or self-evident; there is no clear evidence that the assumption is true (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing, 2004). It was assumed that the study participants were interested in being agents of social change and improving the effectiveness of their leaders. If followers want more effective administrators that positively impact social change and performance, it was assumed that participants answered interview questions honestly and provided examples of the leadership phenomenon that are authentic. It was also assumed that the participants would be able to provide examples relevant to the interview questions. It was assumed that leaders within the organization found the premise of the study to be useful and did not coerce participants to respond less than honestly. Gathering data that are credible and accurate enhances the study's credibility and reliability. It was also assumed that taking part in the phenomenological interview would help participants better understand the aspects of good public leadership. These

assumptions were made because the items listed above could not be verified as true during the research design phase.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a study are the things covered in the research. The delimitations of the study limit the scope of the study; delimitations included the theoretical framework and research questions (Simon, 2011). This study focused on understanding what followers perceived to be good public leadership. Specifically, the study focused on gathering followers' perceptions of how their leaders produce social change and motivate, inspire, and build commitment. Empirical studies have linked organizational commitment, employee motivation, and employee inspiration to improved performance. For this reason, these three constructs were selected as important variables to guide the study and the literature review. Phenomenology allows the researcher to gather rich data to understand the essence of complex phenomena. Because phenomenological interviews can be lengthy, the participants were limited to 10 nonsupervisory staff. Because this study focused on the public sector, participants worked in the organization at least two years. To provide examples at different levels of the organization, both professional and administrative staff were selected to take part in the interview process.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are potential weaknesses in the study (Patton, 2002). This study had limitations associated with generalizability and researcher bias. The study focused on one local city-county health department in Oklahoma. The study focused on a city-county health department to provide more robust knowledge of leadership at the

local level of government. However, because the study included only one agency, there is the possibility that the data collected will not be transferable to other agencies and at other levels of government. Future research focused on using other local governments and different levels of government could help mitigate this limitation.

The researcher brings some level of bias to qualitative inquiry. Qualitative research incorporates the researcher into the process and allows the researcher to act as the data collection tool (Creswell, 2013). Biases in this study included predispositions, assumptions, and viewpoints developed over two decades in state government and this influenced beliefs about what good leadership entails. To recognize and overcome bias, it will be critical to clearly state bias and make every reasonable effort to compartmentalize bias. The ability to recognize and compartmentalize bias will allow the research to let the findings be driven by the data. One possible tool to overcome researcher bias during this study is the use of bracketing. Bracketing was used as a technique to shelve personal beliefs so that I was more open to understanding participants' experiences and beliefs regarding public sector leadership (Creswell, 2013). By articulating and controlling bias, the study provided significant understanding of public sector leadership.

Significance

The leadership phenomenon is a well-researched but misunderstood phenomenon. Empirical research has produced a plethora of inconsistent findings (Fernandez, 2005). The lack of consistent findings suggests there remain substantial gaps in understanding how leadership impacts follower and organizational outcomes. Social scientists continue

to explore the concept of leadership, but a limited number of studies focus on the public sector (Trottier et al., 2008). Leadership studies that focus on the public sector have focused on the federal level of government (Oberfield, 2014). More research is needed to understand the leadership dynamic at the local level of government. Additionally, much of the current research is focused on quantitative inquiry. Qualitative studies offer the chance to understand the public sector leadership phenomenon more fully (Van Wart, 2012).

The study helped bridge the gap in understanding how leadership style impacts follower outcomes in local government organizations (Maio et al., 2014). The study gathered data on follower perceptions of their leaders' best practices specific to positively influencing social change, commitment, motivation, and inspiration. Data gathered were analyzed for common themes and patterns. As data were compared and important themes evolved, findings were then compared to specific leadership styles. This analysis provided valuable information on whether established leadership styles represent the characteristics of good public leadership or if a new public leadership model warrants development.

Research findings from this study can help scholars develop comprehensive frameworks for public sector leadership. Research focused on more comprehensive frameworks that can be tested and measured is needed to help illuminate the essence of effective public leadership (Van Wart, 2013). By understanding what specific leader behaviors stimulate follower commitment, trust, and motivation, public administrators can adopt and apply specific leadership styles to improve performance. Effective public

leaders have the potential to provide significant social change within their environments through engaged employees, high performing organizations, and effective policy making.

Summary

Public sector leadership has lagged behind the mainstream leadership literature in terms of understanding how specific styles of leadership impact employee and organizational performance. The study discussed in this chapter helped bridge this specific gap in the literature. A better understanding of the mechanisms of good public sector leadership can improve measurable outcomes in public organizations and improve policy development and implementation. Through qualitative inquiry, this study aimed to provide important data that has practical significance for public administrators and policy makers.

To provide important, needed information it is critical to understand the current nature of the leadership literature pertinent to the public sector, the specific variables being explored, and the appreciative inquiry tradition in relation to public sector leadership research. Chapter 2 addressed the gaps in the leadership literature. In addition to gaps in the leadership literature, the chapter will detail the search strategy to locate studies pertinent to the topic. The literature will be organized into five broad themes. These themes will then be connected to the present study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to address gaps in the leadership literature specific to the public sector. While there have been advances in understanding public sector leadership, there remains much work to be done to improve our understanding of the phenomenon (Van Wart, 2013). Van Wart (2013) suggested that additional research is needed that provides specific recommendations on how public sector leaders motivate and inspire followers. Miao et al. (2014) contended that future research is needed focusing on specific leadership styles and their applicability to the public sector. This qualitative study helps bridge the gap in understanding what leader actions positively impact social change, motivation, inspiration, and commitment. The following review of the literature will explore the pertinent literature on the topic and analyze gaps that need to be addressed in future research.

Leadership across organizations, sectors, and situations share many common characteristics. Leadership scholars and experts have suggested that, at its essence, leadership is about influence (Van Wart, 2012). Despite the shared principles underlying its core, leaders and leadership is impacted by the nature of the organization and its context (Van Wart, 2012). Leaders and the leadership phenomenon vary across sectors. I focused on organizational or administrative leadership in the public sector. There are different types of leadership and it is critical to understand the type of leadership you are seeking to understand (Van Wart, 2013). I sought to understand the essence of good public leadership and focused on public administrators instead of political or social leaders.

Van Wart (2012) also indicated that it is critical to define the context of leadership analysis (p. 26). Werts and Brewer (2015) supported this stance in terms of understanding how policy implementation is influenced by both aspects of the individual and the specific situation. To frame the importance of the study, this chapter is focused on analyzing and synthesizing the current state of the leadership literature specific to the public sector and public administrators. The research focused on leading followers and positively impacting performance or understanding dyadic leadership. Dyadic leadership is the two-way dynamic between leader and follower (Van Wart, 2012). Thus, much of the leadership literature reviewed focuses on the relationship between leader and follower. Understanding how the public leader influences follower performance is important to understanding the mechanisms of leadership. It is also critical to recognize the limits of the current literature so that future research builds knowledge in the field of leadership. The review of the literature addresses five broad themes. These themes include a summary of leadership theories that demonstrate an appreciation for the beliefs and needs of followers, the importance of leadership in organizations, leadership research focused on aspects of motivation, inspiration, and commitment, and using appreciative inquiry in leadership research.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review was completed using a variety of sources, including the work of recognized leadership experts, books specific to the topic, and a thorough search of databases offering peer reviewed, scholarly journal articles. Most the literature review is from recently published, peer reviewed journal articles. Databases like Academic

Search Complete, Business Source Complete, and SAGE Premier were utilized to find current articles. While multiple databases were used to gather scholarly articles, Thoreau was the major database used to search for articles relevant to the study. Thoreau allows the researcher to peruse multiple databases and utilize numerous search techniques.

A variety of terms were used to search for appropriate examples to use in the review. An example of terms used include: public, public administration, public policy, leadership, management, administration, government, municipal, servant leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, trust, commitment, motivation, inspiration, performance, outcomes, and organization. Another technique used was to scrutinize the reference list of studies that closely corresponded to the research topic. This technique provided additional sources including several important books, studies, and theories. The research strategy provided results that consisted of seminal research in the literature, the importance of leadership in organizations, theories relevant to the question, variables associated with the research question, and studies that utilized appreciative inquiry.

Appreciating Followers: Transformational and Servant Leadership Theories

While it is essential to have a solid understanding of the current nature of leadership research, it is also important to be familiar with influential works that impacted the current literature. Despite the passage of time and considering the contributions of other researchers, some works have remained significant and relevant. Leadership is complex and is impacted by aspects of context, follower's needs and skill level, the leader's personality, the leader's skill, and the leader's style. Two specific

leadership theories, transformational and servant leadership, demonstrate an appreciation of the thoughts and needs of followers. These two theories are closely linked with the variables of motivation, inspiration, and commitment. These theories are also complementary to the theoretical framework of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry is utilized to focus the research through a positive lens.

Burns' Theory of Transforming Leadership

Leadership is a complex relationship between the leader and follower. This relationship is reciprocal in nature. The leader and follower impact each other. The theory of transformational leadership embodies this important element of leadership. The roots of transformational leadership can be found in the works of James MacGregor Burns. Burns (1978) introduced the theory of “transforming leadership” in his seminal book *Leadership*.

As a political scientist and historian, much of Burns' (1978) work in the field of leadership focused on political leadership and extraordinary leaders from this field. This focus on exceptional political leaders who changed the world around them suggests that the great man theory of leadership still influenced scholars who were looking at leadership as more than a mere amalgamation of traits and characteristics. Van Wart (2012) contended that great man theories of leadership suggested that, throughout recorded history, certain individuals have been very influential in moving society and organizations forward.

In personal and professional settings, individuals must have certain basic needs met before they begin to truly engage in higher level functioning. Maslow's (1943)

seminal work on motivation called this ability to meet one's potential self-actualization. Successful leaders' help followers feel safe, connected to the group, engaged in their work, and committed to the organization's goals. Burns' (1977) work supported this premise and he indicated that leaders must understand followers' needs. This appreciation for followers' needs is deeply embedded in the transforming leadership construct. Transforming leadership is a theory focused on developing and empowering followers, being an agent of positive change, role modeling ethical behavior, and meeting the needs of others (Burns, 2003). The leader and follower influence each other to perform at higher levels, align their personal values with the values of the organization, and build better organizations.

Unfortunately, not all leaders and followers aspire to such noble goals. Burns (2003) indicated there will always be individuals who merely do their job for some type of reward. This reward may be as simple as a paycheck, time off, or bonuses. When a leader and follower simply negotiate to broker realizing organizational goals this is a different type of leadership. Transactional leadership is as simple as the title suggests; it is a transaction between the leader and the follower (Burns, 2003). Burns contrasted transforming leadership with transactional leadership. While transformational leadership is the goal for leaders and followers, there will always be instances when the follower is simply uninterested in self-actualization (Burns, 2003). While Burns stressed the importance of meeting needs to attain self-actualization and higher-level performance, it is critical to better understand how followers perceive leaders as meeting their needs. A

phenomenological approach draws on individuals' lived experiences and has the potential to bridge this gap in the literature.

Bass and Riggio's Full Range of Leadership Model

Transformational leadership is a theory that promotes commitment, motivation, and empowerment. While Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership, it still lacked a comprehensive framework and extensive testing. Bass and Riggio (2006) expanded transformational leadership to better encompass the complex nature of leadership. Their model of leadership is called the full range of leadership (FRL) model. The FRL model attempted to capture the variety of ways a leader uses their influence to improve follower outcomes. There are four major components used to explain this dynamic: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation.

A complementary leadership construct, charismatic leadership theory, is based on the idea that the follower admires the leader (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). The leader, through aspects of their personality, appears venerable, knowledgeable, and ethical. Charisma is a key component of transformational leadership. Bass and Riggio (2006) called the leader's ability to use personality to influence follower behavior idealized influence. This tool of influence is dependent on the follower's regard for the leader. To be successful, many organizations may seek to be innovative and find creative solutions to organizational concerns. This component of the FRL model encourages the follower to be an active party in decision making and problem solving. Bass and Riggio used intellectual stimulation to describe this dynamic.

Ineffective leaders approach every situation and treat each follower in the same ways. Both Maslow (1943) and Burns (2003) stressed the importance of meeting individual needs to realize higher level functioning. Public sector employees may have different needs than followers in private businesses. By viewing followers as individuals, leaders recognize and understand the specific needs of their follower and help them realize self-actualization. Bass and Riggio (2006) called this leadership element individualized consideration.

In the public sector, followers may require a different type of motivation. The public sector needs leaders who show followers that they are producing meaningful work. Leaders motivate and inspire followers by demonstrating the importance of the job performed. Bass and Riggio (2006) characterized this phenomenon in the inspirational motivation aspect of the FRL model. Appreciative interviews gathering followers' experiences have the potential to illuminate how leaders stimulate commitment, motivation, and inspiration among followers. These types of interviews provide valuable information about the ways in which the leader build commitment to organizational goals, motivate higher performance, and provide a source of inspiration for followers.

Elements of Bass and Riggio's (2006) Transformational leadership include:

- Idealized influence: Leading by example, articulating a compelling vision, and focusing on values
- Intellectual stimulation: Followers are an active party in problem solving and decision making

- Individualized consideration: Leaders understand individual follower needs and show concern for the follower
- Inspirational motivational: The leader helps the follower realize the importance of meaningful work

Greenleaf's Theory of Servant Leadership

The public sector is driven by providing goods and services to citizens. Van Wart (2012) indicated that a service mentality is a critical trait for public leaders. It is sensible to suggest that a service mentality is especially important for leaders in government and other public organizations. The servant leader is a type of leader who has a heart of service and serving others is a priority for this type of leader. Greenleaf (1977) introduced the concept of servant leadership in his book by the same name. Like transformational leadership theories, servant leadership is often focused on empowering others, ethical action, and building community. At its essence, servant leadership is appreciative of the needs and ideas of others.

Greenleaf's (1977) theory of servant leadership is predicated on the idea that individuals who seek to serve others often find themselves spring boarded to leadership roles. Servant leaders have several important characteristics. The servant leader is a relationship builder who listens to others, shows empathy, displays a firm ethical foundation, demonstrates an ability to be a good steward, and who exhibits self-awareness (Greenleaf, 1977). This type of leadership is compatible with public leadership. Public leaders must be good stewards of the public trust and listen carefully to the needs and desires of followers and the public.

Bringing it all Together

At the heart of both transformational and servant leadership is concern about the needs and desires of others; an appreciation for the experiences and needs of others. Transformational leaders seek to help followers realize needs and reach self-actualization. Charismatic leaders use aspects of their personality to create vision and create change. Charisma is an important feature in transformational leadership. Creating change is a theme found in both transformational and servant leadership theories. Focusing on the needs of others, being an influential role model, and creating a compelling vision for change are themes shared in servant and transformational leadership theories. These characteristics correlate to the variables of motivation, inspiration, and commitment.

The Significance of Organizational Leadership

Prior to embarking on a thorough review of the leadership literature specific to the research question it is important to explore the importance of leadership in organizations. Does leadership really matter? Are there substitutes for leadership in organizations? Is the phenomenon worthy of serious inquiry? Van Wart (2003) clearly stated that leadership, regardless of the setting, is very important in terms of employee satisfaction, establishing the organizational mission, influencing the organizational culture, producing quality products and services, and encouraging innovation. More studies are needed that provide rich detail on how leaders influence follower and organizational outcomes. In what specific ways are leaders important to the organization? How do leaders impact followers?

Leadership is a phenomenon that has garnered much research attention and scholarly debate. Unfortunately, researchers have not given public sector leadership as much attention as research in the private sector. The rigid, tightly controlled nature of many public agencies suggest that the abounding rules and regulations replace real leadership. When explaining the focus on mainstream research, Van Wart (2008) contended that there is a viewpoint that leadership in bureaucratic public organizations and government agencies does not warrant serious study because these types of administrative leaders have limited impact on overall organizational performance. However, there are many studies that support the importance of effective leadership in the public sector.

Public sector leadership has the potential to make an important impact on policy development. Despite long term grants aimed at improving the health of women and children, the United States ranks low in terms of positive health outcomes. Fraser (2013) argued that leaders are an especially important piece of the policy and implementation puzzle. Federal, state, and local governments are responsible for delivering grant funded maternal and child health services. Good leadership is critical to developing and adopting policies and programs to support positive maternal and child public health outcomes (Fraser, 2013). Weiss, Lillefjell, and Magnus (2016) supported this stance on the importance of effective leaders as public health policy advocates. Public sector leaders are critical to effective policy development and organizational performance. It is critical to understand what actions and behaviors leaders' use that affect policy implementation. While studies support the importance of leadership in organizational

outcomes and policy issues, it is important to understand how leaders' effect outcomes.

What did the leader do and say that positively impacted policy development and implementation?

While performance, policy development, and policy implementation are critical to the success of government organizations, leaders also influence the overall tone and character of their organization. Leaders play a significant role in the organization's culture. Schein (2004) indicated that leaders establish the ethical tone of an organization. Pless, Maak, and Waldman (2012) supported this stance with their study linking leader attitude and corporate responsibility. Leaders who demonstrate an attitude of customer first are more likely to demonstrate a commitment to corporate social responsibility (Pless et al., 2012). Public sector leaders can mold an ethical, positive organizational culture. Leaders do this by the behavior they role model and the way they handle unethical or illegal actions by subordinates (Schein, 2004). To better understand this phenomenon, more evidence-based research that qualitatively supports the importance of positive role modeling and ethical action by leaders is needed.

Motivation, Inspiration, and Commitment Focused Theories

A 2011 survey completed by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence indicated that one of the crucial issues reported by state and local governments is morale (SLGE, 2011). Low morale hampers performance. Leaders who motivate, inspire, and foster commitment among followers build better public organizations. Effective government organizations have the capacity to develop and

implement effective public policy and sustained social change. By simply meeting organizational goals leaders can implement and apply public policy.

Not only do leaders need to develop and design good public policy, they need to build and guide public organizations to successfully implement policy. Additionally, effective leaders, successful public employees, and high performing organizations have the capacity to transform their communities through positive social change. In the case of local public health agencies, which was the focus of this study, social change can produce healthy individuals and communities. Public leaders are often able to realize social change by adapting the culture of their organization (Arya, 2012). Through commitment building, increased motivation, and focused inspiration, public leaders leverage real social change and improve the implementation of policies focused on the public good.

Werts and Brewer (2015) stressed the importance of understanding the individual and their specific situation when discussing policy implementation in public schools. This demonstrates the importance of understanding how important constructs like public policy, leadership, and organization goals are viewed or seen by individuals within government organizations implementing important public policies. To understand how leaders impact policy development and policy implementation, it is important to understand the circumstances in which public leaders and followers interact to realize organizational goals and implement policy. The unique situation in an organization and the goals of the organization all interact with the leader's ability to motivate, inspire, and build organizational commitment among followers. It is also important to understand the

researcher may anticipate that good public sector leadership looks like one thing when the participants view it differently. Werts and Brewer referenced this misunderstanding as they collected data during their study. They realized that the data were from the participants' perspective and it simply looked different to the participant than it did to the researcher.

The research question for this dissertation focused on aspects of follower motivation, inspiration, and commitment. Considering public policy, organizational effectiveness, and social change implications associated with a motivated, committed, and inspired public workforce, it is important to understand what leadership frameworks have been recently explored in the pertinent literature. It is important to understand the dyadic nature of leadership; the important relationship between leader and follower. The leader-follower dynamic has become an increasingly prolific area of research in the field of leadership. Much of this interest is due to the pioneering theories and research of earlier scholars.

Maslow (1943) introduced the idea that individuals must have certain basic needs met before they achieve higher levels of self-actualization. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is compatible with Greenleaf's (1977) theory of servant leadership that is focused on serving the needs of others. Conger and Kanungo (1987) suggested that charismatic leadership is dependent on important aspects of the leader's personality. This theory is closely associated with transformational leadership where the leader empowers, inspires, and motivates followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 2003). These revolutionary theories have been explored and expanded by many researchers and scholars. Van Wart

(2013) suggested that transformational leadership helps encourage and realize change in organizations. Transformational and servant leadership theories are linked with improving follower motivation, inspiration, and organizational commitment.

Servant leadership is a style that is often closely associated with increased follower commitment. Servant leadership is a theory that is complementary to the public sector and should be explored in detail. An important question for researchers interested in servant leadership is how servant leaders can engender commitment in followers. Miao, Newman, Schwarz, and Xu (2014) attempted to determine how servant leaders build follower commitment in the Chinese public service. The researchers found compelling evidence that servant leaders build trust to improve follower commitment (Miao et al., 2014). Beyond building trust in followers, servant leadership in the public sector can provoke feelings of trust from external stakeholders. Weinstein (2013) supported this stance suggesting that servant leaders can improve adversarial relationships between organizations that appear to have opposing stances. While both studies linked servant leaders with improved commitment there were not enough practical examples of how leaders engender trust and commitment. Positively correlating servant leaders with increased commitment is important, but it is also critical to have detailed descriptions of specific leader actions that improved commitment to organizational goals.

Servant leadership has ethical overtones. Leaders who display servant behaviors place the needs of others above their own needs and focus on building better communities and societies (Greenleaf, 1977). The principles associated with servant leadership appear

especially compatible with public service motivation. The servant leadership construct and its implication for the public sector have been reviewed more extensively in the Chinese public service. In one such study, Liu, Hu, and Cheng (2015) attempted to determine how generalizable the western theory of servant leadership was to the Chinese public service. Lieu et al. found a positive correlation between a servant leadership style and follower public service motivation.

Jones (2012) also provided evidence suggesting that servant leadership improves customer satisfaction and overall trust in the organization. Additionally, Jones' indicated a link between a servant leadership style and employee satisfaction. Beyond merely linking leadership style with aspects of follower inspiration and employee satisfaction, qualitative data are needed to understand in what ways leaders inspire and motivate.

Leadership style is impacted by many variables related to context and setting. The organizational culture and climate can impact the effectiveness of the leader's style. Servant leadership may be less effective in a negative organizational environment where employees do not feel valued and appreciated. In this context, where organizations do not support employees, we return to the importance of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. When individuals' basic needs are not met, they are unable to realize higher levels of functioning (Maslow, 1943). Maslow has faced criticism for being too ethnocentric (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016). It should be noted that Maslow should be used as a frame of understanding the importance of individual needs. It should not be used as a linear process that meets all situational contexts. Zhou and Miao (2014) tested the relationships between an employee's affection and dedication, or affective commitment,

to the organization and servant leadership. The researchers offered evidence supporting a link between servant leadership and committed employees dedicated to realizing organizational goals (Zhou & Miao, 2014). While recognizing this link is important, it is essential to understand how the servant leader influences the followers' affective commitment to the organization.

Transformational leadership is a style that is often connected with organizational change. Burns (2003) stressed the leader's role in producing positive change. Transformational leadership has also been associated with aspects of charisma and meeting follower needs as is demonstrated in Bass and Riggio's (2006) components of inspirational motivation and individualized consideration components. Leaders' use inspirational motivation to create a compelling vision for the organization while they use individualized consideration to understand each follower's unique needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Balyer (2012) stressed transformational leadership's charismatic nature and ability to empower followers in a study exploring the leadership behaviors of school principals. The study determined that faculty perceived principals with transformational behaviors in a positive light and that this improved teacher performance (Balyer, 2012). Hauserman and Stick (2013) further validated the positive organizational and employee implications for transformational leadership by principals in public schools. The authors found evidence of increased job satisfaction among teachers with transformational leaders. Additionally, Hauserman and Stick advocated exploring leadership through several methodologies, including qualitative methods to uncover the essence of the

leadership construct. This underscores the need to explore the leadership phenomenon using qualitative methods.

When considering public sector employees' commitment to organizational goals it is natural to reflect on the importance of public service motivation. Public service motivation may be an important variable in understanding how public administrators influence follower performance. Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey (2012) explored how the leader's style impacts and influences an employee's public service motivation and indicated that the use of transformational leadership behaviors can be important factors that influence motivation, inspiration, and commitment among public sector followers. The authors' study indicated that transformational leaders can increase public service motivation in public employees by providing a compelling vision and acting as a positive role model (Wright et al., 2012). Wright et al. pointed out that much of the leadership research in the public sector has gathered data from the leader's perspective. This gap in the research needs to be addressed. Oberfield (2014) did offer a rare study focused on employee perceptions and indicated a transformational leadership style positively related to employee intellectual stimulation and motivation. Additional research is needed to understand dyadic leadership from the follower viewpoint.

Understanding how the leader impacts employee performance is critical to determining the essence of effective leadership. By studying the mechanisms of dyadic leadership, we improve organizational outcomes through leadership development. Styles like transformational leadership have received much research interest within the private, or mainstream, leadership literature (Van Wart, 2012). Researchers have focused on

correlating leadership style with organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Research linking leadership style and improved outcome measures is available for the public sector but is still limited.

Mokgolo, Mokgolo, and Modiba (2012) found positive implications for using transformational leadership in the public sector in South Africa. The researchers found evidence that a transformational style improves follower performance, job satisfaction, and acceptance of leadership (Mokgolo et al., 2012). The researchers suggested that more qualitative studies are needed to improve our understanding of transformational leadership in public settings. Tarcan, Hikmet, Tarcan, and Top (2013) also found evidence positively linking transformational leadership with enhanced organizational trust, increased organizational improvement, and higher employee job satisfaction among workers in two Turkish public hospitals. These types of studies indicate the importance of qualitative studies focused on understanding and exploring how leaders impact organizational change and outcomes.

Increasingly tight budgets and changing demands by citizens have led public organizations to change to remain viable. Leadership can have an important impact on change processes and help improve the likelihood of successfully implementing change. Erksine et al. (2013) studied the impact a transformational leadership style has on change implementation in a region of the English National Health Service (NHS). The study provided support for the use of transformational leadership to drive quality improvement changes within healthcare settings. This type of research can help public health improve processes, implement new policies, and drive needed change to positively impact

citizens. Kellis and Ran's (2013) study of a new public leadership theory supported the importance of a transformational leadership style in improving outcome measures in public organizations. Continuing this type of research will help improve our understanding of what followers perceive to be good leadership. Understanding what followers perceive to be good leadership has positive implications for improved outcomes in the public health arena. Increasing positive health outcomes demonstrates the implications the research has for progressive social change.

Motivation, Inspiration, and Commitment Variables

Leaders can positively impact organizational outcomes in many ways. Leaders impact organizational outcomes such as service provision, policy implementation, and overall effectiveness. How important is motivation, inspiration, and commitment to follower performance and organizational outcomes? This section briefly explores the importance of motivation, inspiration, and commitment to employee and organizational performance. Additionally, it addresses how leaders impact performance.

It seems apparent that employees with greater commitment to the organization and its goals will be higher level performers. Improving public servants' commitment to the goals of the organization can improve measurable outcomes. This also brings into question how leaders influence greater commitment among followers. Miao, Newman, Schwarz, and Xu's (2014) research of servant leadership in the Chinese public sector provided support for a positive correlation between organizational commitment and employee performance. Their findings suggested that servant leaders engender trust and improve commitment to the organization. Another important variable within the

literature is the influence of public service motivation on commitment and motivation. Kernaghan (2011) provided evidence linking public service motivation with higher levels of organizational commitment and motivation. Variables can mitigate the effectiveness of good leadership. Qualitative studies can help scholars understand how certain variables, such as public service motivation, impact a leader's effectiveness.

Public administrators and leaders have the capacity to improve work meaningfulness for followers. Understanding work meaningfulness in the public sector warrants serious study and has important implications for the field of public administration. Tummers and Knies (2013) researched leadership and its impact on work meaningfulness in local governments, education, and healthcare. Evidence suggested that leaders influence and impact work meaningfulness among employees. Work meaningfulness has a positive correlation with employee commitment to the organization (Tummers & Knies, 2013). Organizations benefit from employees that are dedicated to the organizational mission because they find their work to be meaningful and important (Tummers & Knies, 2013). Appreciative interviews with public sector employees can provide examples of how leaders provide followers with work that is meaningful.

Along with commitment to organizational goals, motivation and inspiration can lead to engaged employees. Leaders who motivate and inspire can improve organizational and employee performance. This is emphasized in Bass and Riggio's (2006) FRL Model that indicated a combined transactional and transformational leadership style can improve performance. Oberfield (2014) tested the FRL in a longitudinal study of sub agencies of the United States federal government. Oberfield's

study findings do support the FRL's, centered around aspects of motivation and inspiration, capacity to improve performance by improving followers' perception of work quality, cooperation, and job satisfaction. While Oberfield's results are intriguing, it does not offer rich detail about how leader's impact followers' perceptions. Understanding the mechanics of leadership, through rich data collected during interviews, can be improved through qualitative methods of inquiry.

Several studies have focused on linking transformational leadership theory with follower job performance and satisfaction. Chu and Lai (2011) also focused on how leadership style impacted job performance. The researchers found positive correlations between transformational leadership and Taiwanese government accountants' organizational commitment and aspects of motivation and inspiration (Chu & Lai, 2011). Keskes (2014) pointed out that, while there is a large body of research focused on positively linking increased organizational commitment with a transformational leadership style, there is little information on how the leader's style impacts employee commitment. This limitation in the current research suggests that it is important to explore the mechanisms of how a leader builds employee commitment, motivation, and inspiration.

Employee motivation has real implications for job performance. Motivated employees who perform well influence organizational performance (Baloch et al., 2016; Keskes, 2014). The organization's capacity to motivate employees will improve outcomes. Baloch et al. (2016) suggested that public sector employees are motivated to perform at higher levels through salary. In many instances, public organizations many

not be able to provide high salaries to employees and leaders must find innovative ways to motivate and inspire employee performance and job satisfaction. Wright et al. (2012) suggested that transformational leaders have the capacity to improve motivation through role clarity, mission valence, and fostering public service motivation among employees. By understanding how public leaders overcome limits to tangible rewards, practitioners will be able to strength outcomes when budgets are tight.

Theoretical Framework: Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is an organizational development tool that can also be used in qualitative research and to transform organizations into agents of good in the world (Cooperrider, 2017). Appreciative inquiry is rooted in social constructionism. Social constructionism suggests that understanding and meanings about the world are a result of interchanges between individuals (Gergen & Barrett, 2004). The social constructionist approaches stress that beliefs are uniquely located within communities (Gergen & Barrett, 2004). Appreciative inquiry introduces this concept to organizational development through carefully constructed questions and storytelling (Bushe, 2016). Positive questions about the social construct of the organization begin the appreciative inquiry dialogue.

The positive nature of appreciative inquiry can be adapted to frame the approach to data collection. Appreciative inquiry allows the researcher to explore best practices and successes within the organizational setting (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative interviewing can be utilized to gather strengths and assets. This approach has been used in studies to explore change in organizations and to better understand

leadership. A positive approach to organizational processes, data collection, and change may be beneficial in the public sector. Framing data collection techniques in a positive manner may encourage participants to willingly share information during an appreciative interview.

Appreciative inquiry has four distinct phases: Discover, dream, design, and destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). These elements have been utilized to improve the likelihood of successful change processes. The ability to motivate and develop staff is critical for successful leaders. Additionally, leaders are required to produce transformative change among individuals and their organization (Burns, 2003). Institutions are change agents (Cooperrider, 2017). Cooperrider's (2017) focus over the last decade has been on how appreciative inquiry and organizational development can make organizations agents for positive social change and address many of the challenges facing the world today. Appreciative inquiry has transcended mere organizational development. It helps leaders recognize what gives life to an organization (Cooperrider, 2017). Appreciative inquiry's roots in positive psychology allows an organization to recognize and fully appreciate its unique strengths.

Appreciative inquiry can be used as a framework for understanding and approaching leadership. Understanding what leaders do well has important implications for organizations. Appreciative inquiry has been blended with strengths-based management to yield strengths-based leadership. Brun, Cooperrider, and Ejsing (2016) suggested that effective leadership is about strengths; no longer is leadership about a specific style, traits, or behaviors. By using strengths-based leadership and frameworks

like appreciative inquiry, organizations and leaders can tap the strengths it already has at its disposal (Brun et al., 2016).

Appreciative inquiry has been a tool used to produce positive change and growth in several private and public organizations. Appreciative inquiry has been used to grow the United Nations Global Compact and to improve Apple's commitment to go green (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2015). Appreciative inquiry and the leadership approaches associated with it, support the importance of understanding both organizational and individual strengths (Cooperrider et al., 2015). Leveraging strengths can help organizations soar. Cooperrider (2018) has suggested that appreciative inquiry is about possibilities and valuing. Appreciative inquiry has gone beyond improving businesses and organizations. It has been used to make lasting social change through the United Religions Initiative (URI). The URI has been a positive force for peace proving that appreciative inquiry has far reaching implications (Cooperrider, 2018).

Appreciative inquiry has been around for thirty years. Current trends suggest that appreciative inquiry is not merely a positive approach to organizational development, but a tool for generating new possibilities in people, organizations, and society (Grieten et al., 2018). A key component of appreciative inquiry is how and what questions are asked during discovery (Grieten et al., 2018). Grieten et al. (2018) suggested that appreciative inquiry is a linking or connecting of strengths, not merely an organizational development tool focused on a positive approach. Rather, appreciative inquiry discovers strengths to introduce new value and possibilities that can transform in a variety of ways. Appreciative inquiry is not about only focusing on the positive and ignoring the negative

(Grieten et al., 2018). Ignoring problems and gaps can be dangerous. The current metamorphous of appreciative inquiry is that it is generative in nature, focused on possibility and new ideas (Grieten et al., 2018).

Appreciative inquiry is a tool that has been used at the university level to improve leadership capacity among graduate students. Selcer, Goodman, and Decker (2012) developed and implemented an appreciative inquiry coaching process that was included in the curriculum for graduate students in healthcare administration at a university in the United States. The students' leadership aptitude was measured pre and post process and significant measurable improvement in leadership capability was found after the students successfully completed appreciative inquiry coaching (Selcer et al., 2012). This study provides a foundation for future research in the field of leadership using appreciative inquiry.

Appreciative inquiry's possibilities for adoption in social science research within the public sector have been promoted by appreciative inquiry scholars. Ritvo (2012) suggested that appreciative inquiry could be utilized to understand successes in nongovernmental organizations' (NGOs) and as a tool to develop appreciative leadership. Specifically, Ritvo explored how NGOs in the country of Georgia overcame government bureaucracy to provided needed services in a country torn by civil war. Ritvo's suggestion is intriguing because it proposed public organizations become better by carefully examining what other, similar, organizations do extremely well. Instead of merely focusing on a solution to a current problem, appreciative inquiry uncovers the organization's strengths and expands them exponentially.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) claimed that appreciative inquiry offers organizational leaders a way to approach change management from a unique perspective; a perspective not focused on a problem to be solved. As a development and research tool, appreciative inquiry's positive stance is a refreshing way to view change in the organization. Zaldivar (2014) proposed that appreciative inquiry could be partnered with multicultural diversity to produce adaptable leaders who function well in today's global environment. Diverse perspectives and varied viewpoints have the potential to build better social systems.

Childe and Black (2015) used appreciative inquiry's positive nature to frame their study of social responsibility in two nonprofit organizations. Appreciative inquiry was coupled with phenomenology to explore nonprofit employees' perceptions of social responsibility. Kung, Giles, and Hagan (2013) also used phenomenology and appreciative inquiry to gather course evaluations. Appreciative inquiry's constructive, strengths-based approach to gathering students' experience with a school course provided needed data and an encouraging experience for students (Kung et al., 2013). Appreciative inquiry practitioners have suggested using appreciative inquiry as research method or framework to better explore and understand strengths in organizations (Mohr, 2010). Combining appreciative inquiry frameworks with phenomenological data collection utilizes a positive structure for gathering lived experiences.

Appreciative inquiry opens conversations with an optimistic tone. Questions asked during an appreciative inquiry can be focused on specifics of what the organization does well, and this can easily be applied to leadership. Tschannen-Moran (2012) pointed

out how an empathetic approach to inquiry can build positive momentum and encourage innovation. Appreciative inquiry is a process, if used properly, which allows all voices within a group to be heard. The strength of appreciative inquiry is its focus on communication and collaboration. Chidzewe (2011) claimed that the positive feeling engendered by appreciative inquiry holds the capacity to produce positive social change within communities by focusing on what “gives life” to a project, community, or organization (p. 67). It is collaboration, cooperation, and coordination that will help public administrators to produce real, positive social change. Appreciative inquiry has received interests as a tool for change, but there are not enough empirical studies employing the method in public organizations.

Summary and Conclusions

Scholars and theorists have produced original constructs and theories that have inspired subsequent researchers in the field of leadership. Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs influenced how researchers viewed leadership and followers. Understanding and meeting the needs of employees could improve long term outcomes for the organization. This more personal view of the leader-follower dyad is found in Burns’ (1978) transforming leadership, Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership, and Bass and Riggio’s (2006) FRL model. These important works led to an increased interest in leadership research.

In 2003, Van Wart indicated that public sector leadership research lagged significantly behind the mainstream leadership literature. This call to explore the dynamics of public sector leadership offered a myriad of possibilities for researchers.

Researchers could explore how specific leadership styles translated to the public sector, the variables that impacted leader effectiveness, and how leaders impact organizational and employee outcomes. A decade later, Van Wart (2013) revisited his statement to determine if his call to arms had been heeded. Van Wart (2013) found that there had been an increase in administrative leadership in the public sector. Van Wart defined administrative leadership as those government employees who daily lead people, manage process, and provide governance.

Over the past decade, many scholars have explored the importance of administrative leadership in public organization. Scholars have clearly shown that leadership has important implications for individual and organizational outcomes. Additionally, researchers have shown an increased interest in understanding how specific leadership theories correlate to the public sector. The focus on the variables of motivation, inspiration, and commitment has produced compelling evidence supporting the use of transformational and servant leadership styles in the public sector. Unfortunately, the United States has lagged behind other countries in producing research focused on public sector leadership and testing specific leadership theories. Other researchers have focused on the importance of motivation, commitment, and inspiration in improving employee and organizational performance. These variables have been demonstrated to be impactful in improving measurable outcomes. Finally, scholars began to explore the use of appreciative inquiry to gather data and improve performance. While there has been interest in the use of appreciative inquiry, it needs to be expanded to build understanding of the mechanics of good public sector leadership.

As a part of the reassessment of the state of public sector administrative leadership research, Van Wart (2013) pondered the general distrust the public often feels for government administrators and the subsequent need to focus research on aspects of good public leadership. Van Wart suggested more studies were needed focused on providing guidance to public leaders on how to motivate and inspire employees in negative environments. Van Wart (2012) has also indicated that people-oriented behaviors are difficult to connect to performance quantitatively. These suggestions for future research support the qualitative study discussed in Chapter 1. Van Wart's call for more qualitative research focused on people-oriented behaviors will improve the field's understanding of the dynamic of good public leadership.

This qualitative study will help bridge the gap in understanding how leaders motivate, inspire, and build commitment in public servants. A review of the current literature pertinent to the study was reviewed and numerous gaps in understanding how public sector leadership works were noted. Research in the public sector often lags behind private sector research, gathers data primarily from the leader's perspective, and does not reflect the rich detail of qualitative approaches. The specifics of the research plan to help bridge the gap demonstrated in the current literature is covered in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this study I sought to better understand how specific leadership styles translate to the public sector. Specifically, I explored the experiences of public sector employees in relation to good public leadership. To frame good public leadership, I looked at what leader actions followers perceived to produce social change and build commitment, motivation, and inspiration. The methodology for the study was qualitative. The specific method of inquiry was phenomenology. To collect information, interviews that solicited experiences with social change and examples encompassing the three variables of commitment, inspiration, and motivation were conducted. Once data were collected and analyzed, they were compared to specific leadership styles to determine if what public sector employees perceive as good leadership corresponds with established leadership theories and styles or whether public sector leadership warrants the development of a specific style of leadership. The research plan followed is detailed below.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Question

Research Question: In what ways does public sector leadership effect how followers perceive themselves as social change agents in a local city-county health department?

The study was conducted using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was appropriate for this study because this method is focused on researching individuals' lived experiences with a specific phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). The appreciative inquiry framework provided additional structure for the data collection process by

guiding the research participant questioning using a positive, appreciative approach. Appreciative inquiry supports a collaborative approach to discovery. The discovery reveals the positive perceptions of what could be within the context of the phenomenon.

Phenomenology is a tool used to uncover the meaning behind a phenomenon. Phenomenology can be approached in many ways. For this study, hermeneutic phenomenology was utilized. Van Manen (2014) described hermeneutic phenomenology as interpretive and descriptive. Following this phenomenological stance, the researcher is not seeking a concrete answer to the research problem. Rather, the phenomenological researcher is using the research question to search for meaning (van Manen, 1990). As a part of the search for meaning, the researcher is seeking to understand lived experiences with good public leadership.

Van Manen (1990) described phenomenology as allowing the researcher to transcend their understanding of a specific phenomenon. Through phenomenology the researcher will overcome the limited knowledge pertaining to how specific leadership styles translate to the public sector and share the gained knowledge as a part of the greater leadership literature. Phenomenology offers the researcher a way to gather rich data about a specific phenomenon through the perspective of those individuals who have lived the experience. Phenomenology, with its focus on lived experience and meaning giving, was appropriate for the research study and aligns well with the research problem and research questions.

Role of the Researcher

Appreciative interview techniques were used to encourage participants to share important experiences involving good public sector leadership. Due to the intimate relationship with the data collection process, the researcher must maintain standards of credibility. To improve validity, possible bias was identified and ways to limit bias was detailed (Maxwell, 2013). To overcome possible bias, respondent validation methods were used to assure that predispositions were not influencing data analysis. Respondent validation involves soliciting feedback from participants to verify that meanings derived from data analysis corresponded with the participants' intent (Maxwell, 2013).

Methodology

Participant Selection

The participant pool was determined with a purposeful sampling strategy.

Sampling strategy. A specific form of purposeful sampling known as criterion sampling was used to select participants for the study. Criterion sampling involves selecting participants based on a preselected set of criteria (Patton, 2002). This sampling method allows the research to select participants purposively so that the sample adequately represents the target population by meeting predetermined criteria for inclusion. The population for this study met the following criteria for inclusion: Participants were nonsupervisory public sector employees working for at least two years in the organization studied.

Sample Size. Another critical component of participant selection is determining an appropriate sample size. Qualitative research is often intensive. The data collection

for this study involved the use of appreciative interviewing. Appreciative interviewing is a discourse between individuals or groups to gather positive experiences from participants (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Thus, it is important to establish a sample size that was large enough to meet the needs of the study while remaining small enough to be easily managed by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Due to the lengthiness of each appreciative interview, the sample size for this study was 10 participants.

Participants. Participants for the qualitative study were selected from the staff of a city-county health department in central Oklahoma. As previously mentioned, the participants had experience with public sector leadership, were in a nonsupervisory position, and had at least two years of service in the organization. Participants' provided information on their experiences with leadership behaviors that they perceived to be motivating, inspiring, and commitment building. Data were collected using appreciative interviews.

Instrumentation: Appreciative Interviews

According to van Manen (2014), phenomenological data analysis is predicated on two requirements that must be met prior to and during the data collection process. First, the researcher must use an appropriate phenomenological question. This requires the researcher to ask a question that addresses a recognizable phenomenon and that the phenomenon is readily experienced by accessible individuals (van Manen, 2014). Second, data collected should be a direct description of the phenomenon being investigated (van Manen, 2014). True phenomenological interviews offer detailed

descriptions of the phenomenon being studied. To ensure that this core component of phenomenology is met, I used appreciative interviewing techniques.

Appreciative inquiry is a dynamic tool used to understand organizational strengths, recognize organizational values, and to tap the future potential of the organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). At its very heart, appreciative inquiry is collaborative and cooperative in nature. This positive approach allows organizational members to focus on strengths and assets. While a full appreciative inquiry in an organization would involve intensive commitment, interaction, and multiple stages, this qualitative study utilized one component of appreciative inquiry: appreciative interviews. I developed a series of questions following the appreciative inquiry tradition. Questions were focused on gathering information about leadership strengths, organizational strengths, and prime examples of good public sector leadership. The interview questions were phrased to ask the participant to describe specific examples of their experience with good public sector leadership. The interview questions are included in Appendix A.

Data Collection

Data were collected from one-on-one interviews with participants. The data collection process began only after the study has been approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Walden University's approval number for this study is 09-19-17-0398083 and it expires on September 18, 2018. After this step was completed, data were collected after all appropriate consents were completed by participants and I provided assurance of the voluntary nature of participation, that participants may withdraw from the study at any time prior to final dissertation approval, and that all

information collected will be kept confidential. Extensive notes were taken during the interviews and, with participant permission, the interviews were recorded. Transcripts were made from recordings. Recording and transcripts improved data analysis and accuracy. Participants were then contacted via email to verify that thematic codes accurately reflected their intent. The interviews took place at the organization to provide ease of access to participants.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Once data were collected and transcribed, I began the process of data analysis and interpretation. Interviews took place at the organization. Interviews were completed on 10/13/17 and 10/30/17. In person interviews were then transcribed. One interview was completed via telephone on 11/09/17. The telephone interview was not recorded. Rather, detailed notes and clarification with the participant was confirmed during the telephone interview. I manually analyzed the transcribed interviews. Interview recordings, handwritten notes, and transcribed interviews were reviewed multiple times to determine thematic codes. Once thematic codes were determined, participants were contacted via email to verify that the thematic codes were accurate. Data analysis software was not utilized. Rather, the hermeneutic circle was used to compare the data and to improve understanding and meaning. The hermeneutic circle involves comparing the whole to parts and the parts to the whole to interpret data.

Themes and Patterns

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gather information about followers' perceptions of good public sector leadership. Phenomenology purpose is to

understand human phenomena from the perspective of an individual who has lived through the experience. As researchers study a specific phenomenon through individuals' lived experience, a sense of the meaning of the experience for the individual is realized (van Manen, 2014). This meaning was derived through careful analysis of the data.

Patton (2002) indicated qualitative analysis can be a challenge because the researcher must be able to reduce large quantities of qualitative data down to patterns and themes that represent the essence of the data (p. 432). To determine the significant themes in the data, I initially reviewed the data to recognize patterns. While a firm set of codes was not predetermined, the initial coding framework was guided by appreciative inquiry and the variables of commitment, inspiration, and motivation. The patterns allowed me to recognize phrases, concepts, and feelings that were expressed throughout the data and connect the phrases to appreciative inquiry and the variables of commitment, inspiration, and motivation. Themes and patterns were determined inductively. Inductive analysis allows the significant themes to emerge from the data (Patton, 2002). The goal of this study was to determine what followers perceived to be good public sector leadership that produces social change and is commitment building, inspiring, and motivating. Additionally, by allowing the themes to emerge from the data, I reduced bias.

Interpreting the Data

Once patterns and themes were gathered from the data, I analyzed the information and provided an interpretation of the data. Interpretation in qualitative inquiry involves

finding meaning (Patton, 2002). At its essence, hermeneutic phenomenology is a search for meaning by gathering descriptions of lived experiences with the phenomenon in question (van Manen, 2014). Data interpretation involved utilizing the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle involves interpreting the data by comparing the parts to the whole and the whole to the parts of phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Interpretation involved detailed comparison and meaning finding.

Trustworthiness

Research can be a long, time intensive process. So that the time and effort in conducting research is warranted, the researcher must always address issues of trustworthiness. A major component of trustworthiness in research is to assure the research findings are valid and credible. The first step is to have a rigorous research design to support data findings. By carefully detailing the research plan, I ensured data were trustworthy. However, it is critical to provide evidence of data trustworthiness, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

During the interview process, I clarified understanding and interpretation of participant's responses. Additionally, participant feedback and validation were utilized to support the credibility of findings. Participants validated the thematic codes found during their interview. Thematic codes were emailed to participants for each question asked during the interview. Each participant responded that the thematic codes accurately represented their response to the question. Participant validation allows any misinformation and misunderstanding to be addressed throughout the data collection,

analysis, and interpretation process. Participant validation establishes the credibility of the researcher's interpretation (Maxwell, 2013).

Trustworthiness is also established through transferability. Transferability suggests that findings could be transferred to other contexts (Given, 2008). I sought to determine the lived experiences of public employees in a local city-county health department. The findings could be transferred to other nonsupervisory public health employees. Additionally, trustworthiness was established by documenting and describing the entire research process in detail. The background, research design, data collection, and data analysis are provided for the reader.

A thorough review of the research design can help determine dependability. Dependability indicates that the data are stable over time and conditions (Anney, 2014). Dependability can be established with audit trails. An audit trail allows an auditor to exam the research process and its products in detail (Anney, 2014). Documents to provide an audit trail will be maintained. These documents include interview notes, transcripts, recordings, email communications, and consents. The audit trail will also help establish confirmability (Anney, 2014). Confirmability is established when other researchers can confirm data findings and results by following the audit trail and research design (Anney, 2014).

Ethical Concerns

Any research study involving human participants can result in ethical concerns. The participants in this study were adults and do not come from a marginalized population. The nature of the study was to gather positive examples and experiences

with specific aspects of good public leadership. The nature of the study limited the number of ethical concerns. Regardless of the unlikelihood of harm coming to any of the participants because of participation, steps were taken to protect individuals. Ethical concerns were mitigated by addressing them prior to data collection and by following several important steps. Doing no harm, gaining informed consent, and safeguarding participant privacy are key components of ethical research (Creswell, 2013). Participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and assured that their names and other identifying information will be held private. The interview questions were designed to collect data on positive experiences with leaders and the organization.

Data collected and participant identification will be maintained on a password protected laptop and smart phone for 7 years. Paper copies of data and consents will be maintained in a lock box for 7 years. No participant identifying information will be included in study findings. I am not an employee or supervisor at the organization study. I have no connection to agency supervisors. Supervisors did not have access to the interviews or the interview location. The informed consent offered participants the option to conduct the interview via telephone or in another location at their convenience. Nine of 10 participants chose to take part in a face-to-face interview at the city-county health department. Due to scheduling conflicts, 1 of 10 participants chose to complete the interview via telephone.

Participants are not identified in study findings. Participants are only noted as having met the purposeful sampling criteria. Specific examples of lived experiences and

direct quotes of individual experiences will not be included in the data findings. All interview data were included in the analysis process and was explored using thematic coding. Interview data included both positive and negative interactions with leaders. Due to the sensitive nature of supervisor-employee experiences being explored in the research, the data are only represented in thematic codes, key words, and phrases. Additionally, the name of the organization is not being used. Despite framing the research positively using appreciative inquiry, it is critical to protect the confidentiality of research participants.

The organization asked that final findings be shared with the organization. Thematic coding ensures that a supervisor cannot determine the identity of a subordinate by reading the data findings, thus mitigating any supervisor retaliation against an employee. Using only thematic coding was a critical part of the Walden IRB approval. This analysis process removes the date from its original context and presents it categorically (Given, 2008). Presenting data in themes, patterns, and codes allows the researcher to communicate the important concepts found during analysis without providing information that could identify the participant. Utilizing thematic coding minimized the likelihood of retaliation by participants' supervisors. Walden's IRB approved the research prior to any data collection. The role of the IRB is to protect human participants in research (Creswell, 2013). Gaining approval from the IRB ensured that ethical concerns were addressed, and the participants were safeguarded throughout the process.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research design was described. The research methodology was discussed and a rationale for the method was provided. This chapter covered the role of the researcher, the participant selection logic, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Sound reasoning was offered to justify the research design and its appropriateness for the research question asked. An explanation of the specific type of phenomenology utilized was provided. Additionally, information on details of the data analysis approach associated with the specific method employed was explained. Issues associated with research quality and questions related to ethical concerns were addressed. Steps that were taken to reduce issues related to trustworthiness were expounded and the limited ethical concerns associated with the study were detailed. This chapter provided a concise summary of the research design and process. Chapter 4 will include research and data collection. Participant demographics will also be covered. Coding methodology is covered. Data analysis and research findings are included in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

In Chapter 4, data findings and analysis from 10 interviews with public sector employees working at a city-county health department studied are presented. The purpose of the study was to better understand how specific leadership styles translate to the public sector. The study was focused on leadership as experienced by employees. The questions covered aspects of social change, effective public leadership, commitment, motivation, and inspiration. The method of inquiry for data collection was qualitative. Specifically, phenomenological interviews were completed with 10 nonsupervisory employees who had worked at the organization for two years. Data collected was assessed using thematic coding. Thematic coding allowed data to be removed from the original context and presented in categories (Given, 2008). The themes found during data analysis were then compared to elements of both transformational and servant leadership theories to determine if public sector leadership requires the development of it's a separate theory. Data collection, thematic codes, recurring themes, a comparison with established theories, and a final summary of data findings are detailed below.

Research Setting and Data Collection

Nine of the 10 interviews were conducted onsite at the organization. Interviews were conducted in two conference rooms on two different days. The conference rooms were private. Only the researcher and the interviewee were present during interviews. The tenth interview was conducted via telephone to more conveniently fit the schedule of the individual interviewed after the participant had to cancel the original face-to-face

interview. The nine face-to-face interviews were recorded, and I took extensive notes. The tenth interview was not recorded because it was completed via telephone. Extensive notes were taken during the tenth interview. Once interviews were completed and broad themes were pulled from data, participants were contacted to verify the themes matched their interview responses. Participants were provided a summary of their responses and the subsequent themes. Participant validation, transferability, confirmability, and a detailed description of the data collection process provides evidence of trustworthiness. Interviews were conducted after providing the participant with an explanation of the research, its methodology, reassurances that data were held confident, and both the participant and the researcher signed the consent.

Interview questions included concepts including work values, social change, leadership, motivation, commitment, inspiration, effective leadership, and organizational change. Words and themes that were mentioned repeatedly during each interview included positive appreciation and being recognized, feeling valued, community impact, listening, having clear expectations, making an impact on individuals, and having leaders who are open minded, trustworthy, and supporting/encouraging. Additional themes were recognized during data analysis. However, only themes found in 50% or 5 out of 10 participant interviews are included in findings.

Participant Demographics

Demographics collected for each participant were limited. The participants met the criteria of being nonsupervisory personnel and having worked at the organization for at least two years to be included in the study. Participants' gender and role are noted in

Table 1. The participants are coded as being either direct service or administrative staff. Direct service staff members are engaged directly with clients or outside stakeholders, while administrative staff worked supporting other staff members or organizational tasks. Demographics collected on participants was purposefully limited to safeguard identity and to protect participant confidentiality.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Gender	Role	
	Administrator	Direct Services
Male	4	7
Female	6	3

Coding Methodology and Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an inductive process consisting of the hermeneutical approach. The inductive process allowed me to present a large amount of information in categories or codes. The inductive approach to data analysis allowed me to link the research question and the summary findings (Freeman, 2005). The hermeneutic circle was used to finding meaning in data. Hermeneutic phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive (van Manen, 2014). The hermeneutic circle was utilized by comparing the whole data to parts of data (Patton, 2002). By reflecting on parts of data, a better understanding of the whole construct is attained. Data analysis provides both description and interpretation of the phenomenon. Hermeneutic phenomenology is more than just describing lived experiences with a human phenomenon; hermeneutics is focused on

interpreting phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The researcher is merely offering an interpretation of individuals' lived experience, not offering a complete truth (Patton, 2002).

Interpretation of lived experience is provided by using the hermeneutic circle. First, a sense of the whole is determined. Second, the researcher attempts to make sense of the parts (Patton, 2002). The comparing of the parts to the whole is represented in the circle. Eventually, the researcher develops an understanding of the interview text so that there is a harmony between the two (Patton, 2002). The circle moves from general (whole) to specific (part). The responses to interview questions are layers of the whole. Each participant response is a layer of the total data collected. The interpretation is offered based on the specific context, theory, or perspective utilized by the researcher (Patton, 2002). Other researchers would likely find different meanings in data based on the situation.

Essentially, the hermeneutic circle is reflective (van Manen, 2014). The researcher reflects on the parts and the whole until a clear understanding is developed. For this study, the hermeneutic circle involved four distinct steps. In Step 1, I conducted interviews and developed initial themes. In Step 2, the interviews were reviewed, transcribed, and the emerging themes analyzed. Step 3 involved reflecting between the parts and the whole. Finally, the fourth step involved a final interpretation of the understanding of the lived experiences of participants. Once data were analyzed inductively, and codes were determined, the findings were connected to the theories of

servant and transformational leadership. Data analysis was completed manually using thematic coding.

Coding Methodology

Coding is a tool to organize data during data analysis. Through coding, the researcher interacts with data and closely scrutinizes the information to find meaning (Given, 2008). The coding methodology for this qualitative study was thematic. Each interview answer was labeled with a specific theme or themes. Thematic coding allows the researcher to break data down into categories, codes, or themes (Given, 2008). Predetermined themes or codes were not used during data analysis. Rather, emergent coding was utilized. The themes emerged from data. Emergent themes were used to provide insight into the experience of the participants (Given, 2008). Reflective data analysis was employed to recognize emergent themes. Based on the research design, commitment, motivation, inspiration, leader values, social change, leader behaviors, and appreciative inquiry variables were used as an initial framework for coding. Appreciative inquiry variables included organizational values, vision, and best practices. Each theme was organized under one of the variables.

The coding framework is shown in Table 2. The most frequent codes for each category are included in the table. Only thematic codes that were found in 50% of interviews will be discussed in the findings under Recurring Themes.

Table 2

Coding Framework

Framework Category	Frequent Codes	Frequency
Organizational Values	Community Impact	9
	Individual Impact	6
Social Change	Ambivalent	1
	Effective Agent	1
	Accepting	1
	Passion	1
	Empathy	3
	Embody Change	3
Best Practices	Evidence Based Practice	4
Vision – Negative	Community Disconnect	5
Vision – Positive	Community	5
	Responsiveness/Responsibility	

table continues

Coding Framework

	Community Outreach	4
<hr/>		
Motivation, Commitment, Inspiration, Leader Values	Recognizing/Appreciation	21
	Listening	8
	Open minded	5
	Valuing	9
	Clear Expectations	6
	Trust	6
	Supporting/Encouraging	8
Leader Behavior – Negative	Leadership Disconnect	5

Reflective data analysis strategies included notetaking, reviewing interview responses, final coding, and participant verification. Notes were taken during the interviews to assign initial codes for each question. Each interview was reviewed several times to verify the appropriateness of the assigned code. After multiple reviews of data collected, final codes were set for each question. Final codes were verified by each participant to ensure each theme accurately described the participant's answer and experience.

Data Analysis Tool

Qualitative research allows the researcher to act as a data collection tool (Creswell, 2013). For this qualitative study, I also acted as a data analysis tool. A qualitative data processing software was not used. Instead, I carefully reviewed interviews to assess for themes and codes. Data analysis was an iterative process and began during data collection. Extensive notes and initial coding themes were recorded during the interview process. Interview responses were reviewed immediately following the interview, and the initial coding themes were appraised for appropriateness. Interview data were reviewed several times after the interviews were completed to ensure that themes accurately represented the participant's response. The review including listening to the recordings, transcribing interviews, and reviewing handwritten notes taken during the interview. Minor adjustments were made to the initial themes, and participant verification of the themes was completed. Data analysis process involved a repetitive, reflective analysis of data and emergent themes. Repetitive comparisons of data are a key part of the hermeneutic circle (van Manen, 2014).

Recurring Themes

Reflective data analysis resulted in emergent themes. Thematic codes for each question response were recorded. An assessment of the codes for each response were completed to determine the overarching, emergent theme for each question. All but one question had a clear predominant theme. Question 2 "What is your view of yourself as a social change agent?", had a different response from each participant. For example, one participant indicated their approach to social change was accepting and nonjudgmental.

The participant indicated that they “take them as they are” so that clients were more open to the efforts to improve health. Another participant indicated that they approached social change with “sympathy, empathy” and this approach helped them connected with clients. It should be noted that both participants noted here deal directly with to positively impact their health and the health of the community.

Other participants who provided support or administrative work for the agency were not as readily able to connect their work to social change. One participant who works in an administrative capacity indicated that they question their “effectiveness” as a social change agent and sometimes found it hard to connect their work to social change. However, the two other administrative staff who participated in interviews felt that they “embody change” and that they could see the role in social change through “volunteer” efforts and being willing “to do whatever it takes” to help clients and the larger community.

Themes were compiled and ranked according to prevalence. Some themes reoccurred throughout the interview questions and indicated that the theme was a critical component of effective public leadership according to the participants interviewed. The reoccurrence of several themes suggests that the saturation point was reached, and 10 participants were adequate. Table 3 ranks the thematic codes based on the frequency each code was found in the ten interviews. A discussion of each of the tops codes is provided after the frequency table.

Table 3

Thematic Code Frequency

Thematic Code	Interview Frequency
Appreciation/Recognition	8
Valuing	7
Listening	6
Clear Expectations	6
Community Impact	6
Individual Impact	5
Open minded	5
Trust	5
Supporting/Encouraging	5

Positive Appreciation/Recognizing ($f = 8$)

Positive appreciation and recognition were found in 8 out of 10 interviews. This theme is associated with showing gratitude or appreciation for work being performed.

Positive appreciation was associated with what one participant valued most deeply about

their work. The participant indicated that when a client told them that they “really helped me out”, they felt their work was valuable and appreciated. Additional participants mentioned being inspired for feeling “appreciated for doing the work you do” or being told “I appreciate your help”. Feeling appreciated helped participants feel inspired, fulfilled, and excited about their work. Positive appreciation was a theme that was often connected with participants providing specific examples of how they were appreciated by clients and coworkers.

Recognition and praise related to being acknowledged for the work participants performed. This theme was connected with the participants specifically mentioning being recognition or feeling recognition for the efforts. When employees feel recognized and appreciated, they are fulfilled and excited about their work. For example, one participant indicated that when leaders “make a big deal” about their work they feel recognized. Participants relayed that being recognized was a positive example of their experiences with leaders.

Additionally, recognition for their work translates to greater inspiration to influence social change. A participant relayed feeling inspired when they were recognized by another employee for “what we did” or when “a client mentioned us”. While participants could provide positive examples of recognition for their work, there also were examples of employees not feeling appreciated for their work and individual effort. Participants indicated there had been times when there was a disconnect between leaders and followers. For example, one participant felt “overlooked” for her work and

“misunderstood” by her supervisor. These types of leader-follower interactions limit employee engage

Supervisors’ consistently showing appreciation, recognition, and praise for employees’ efforts could improve the individual’s level of commitment, motivation, and inspiration. Bass and Riggio’s (2006) indicated that transformational leaders use individualized consideration to understand each follower’s unique needs to help empower the follower. Showing recognition, praise, and appreciation could be the specific leadership behavior that embodies the individualized consideration element.

Valuing ($f = 7$)

Feeling valued as an individual and for the work performed was a theme mentioned in seven interviews during data collection. This theme was linked to acknowledging the importance of the work and expertise of employees. When asked about how their leaders motivate, inspire, and collaborate, feeling valued was the prominent theme. One participant noted how their leader made them “feel valued” through recognition and positive appreciation. Valuing follower opinion and expertise is another theme that can be readily linked with both servant and transformational leadership. Spears (2010) claimed that servant leaders are committed to and value individuals. Individualized consideration focuses on the individual needs of followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Expressing value for followers’ work, ideas, and expertise is how servant and transformational leaders articulate consideration and commitment. A participant noted that they felt excited about their work when a leader noted they “knew what they were talking about”.

Listening ($f = 6$)

Leaders who listen to employees were another important theme found during data collection and analysis. This theme involved listening to the suggestions, concerns, and feedback of employees. Listening or being a good listener was mentioned in 6 out of 10 interviews. Listening is a theme that relates to both servant and transformational leadership theories. One participant mentioned their leader was “very open to listening to people” and that this allowed people to work well together. Another participant indicated that, to be an effective leader, they want to be “a good listener”. Spears (2010) indicated listening as an important characteristic of effective servant leadership. Listening can also be coupled with transformational leadership. Individualized consideration suggests that the leader listens intently to the cares and concerns of the followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Clear Expectations ($f = 6$)

Clear expectations from leaders was a theme found in 6 out of the 10 interviews. Participants expressed that their leader had a clearly defined set of expectations for them and that this was an important leadership trait. When describing interactions with their leader, one participant indicated that the leader would “give examples” of the work expectations to help employees “understand”. Another participant stated that the leader would “show them what your goal is” so that staff understood work plans. An additional participant claimed that it was “really encouraging to hear” the leader “state clearly the objective” for organizational goals.

Community Impact ($f = 6$)

Community impact was a theme found in six interviews. This theme was connected to having a positive impact on the greater community. When asked about what they valued most about their work, one participant clearly stated it was the “impact on the community”. Another participant claimed to “know my work matters”. Building community is a theme in servant leadership. However, Spears (2010) indicated that this characteristic focused on building a sense of community among individuals in a specific organization or agency.

The theme of community found during these interviews was significantly different. Participants spoke of leadership and community in terms of having a positive impact on the greater community. Community impact, connectedness, and responsiveness are not common themes in servant or transformational leadership. The context of community for public sector followers appears to be unique. As public servants, participants felt a larger obligation to the community they serve and were the “frontline of social change” by interacting with the community.

Individual Impact ($f = 5$)

Impacting individual lives was a theme found in 5 out of 10 interviews. This theme is associated with having a positive impact on the lives of the individuals served by the organization. When asked about a time when their leader motivated them to work harder, they indicated positive change and impacting the lives of their clients was important. One participant involved with providing direct services to clients indicated

that their leader helped them work harder “to find a way to make an impact” on a difficult case.

Additionally, another participant indicated they valued being able to help the client make “the best decision” to positively impact the client’s family. Positive change resonates with Burns’ (2003) theory of transformational leadership. The very nature of work in public health revolves around changing lives for the better. Positive change and helping others are closely related to Bass and Riggio’s (2006) concept of inspirational motivation. When the leader can connect the employee to work that they value, it will help improve commitment, motivation, and inspiration to excel at the job.

Open minded ($f = 5$)

Another important theme found in 5 out of 10 interviews are having a leader who was open minded. Being open minded was linked to being accepting of new ideas or new ways of doing things. When asked about what leader characteristics or traits they would like to have, one participant indicated that they wanted to be “more open” when dealing with coworkers and work activities. Another participant shared a similar thought when they indicated that they wanted to have a “frame that was a little more open”. Participants indicated being more open to new perspectives and less rigid in their approach to work would decrease their work stress. One participant also indicated that current leaders were more “open minded” to hearing followers’ suggestions and ideas.

Trust ($f = 5$)

Trust was another theme found in 5 out of 10 participant interviews. This theme was connected to being reliable and believable. When asked about what they valued

about their work, one participant indicated that they valued “the trust” they had “established” with coworkers. This participant is involved in support and administrative work at the agency and noted that their leader “trusts that I have the experience” necessary to offer solid suggestions. When asked about leadership traits that they would like to have, a participant stated that it was important that “people know they can trust you” and another noted that you must have “integrity” so that people know “they can trust you”.

Encouraging/Supporting ($f = 5$)

The words encouragement and support were also mentioned during 5 out of the 10 interviews. When asked about effective leadership, feeling fulfilled, social change, and collaboration, participants mentioned being encouraged and supported. One participant felt it was important that leaders were “supportive of frontline staff”. Additionally, this participant felt their leader’s support helped them be a better “advocate” for their clients. Two other participants felt supported or encouraged when their leaders “went to bat for us” for a variety of reasons including raises and suggestions for work improvements.

Participants were able to offer examples of being encouraged and supported, but also included instances when they felt they were not supported by their supervisor. This suggests that supervisors need to utilize consistently supportive behaviors. Being supportive and encouraging are leader behaviors that link to transformational leadership’s individualized consideration. Bass and Riggio (2006) suggested that leaders who

understand the needs of followers and show care for followers are demonstrating individualized consideration.

Discrepant Themes

Each question during the interview resulted in discrepant data. Discrepant data are alternative perspectives or differences found in data (Maxwell, 2013). Some cases will not align closely with the themes uncovered during data collection and analysis. Each interview question was reviewed for discrepant cases that provide a different way of understanding data (Maxwell, 2013). Providing discrepant themes allows the reader to make their own decisions about interpretation.

Table 4

Discrepant Themes by Question

<p><i>What do you value most deeply about your work and the OCCHD?</i></p> <p>Discrepant Theme: Relationships ($f = 1$)</p>
<p><i>What is your view of yourself as a social change agent?</i></p> <p>Discrepant Themes: Ambivalence, Effective Change Agent/Change Agent, Accepting, Passionate, Empathetic, Embody Change</p> <p>Note: Most answers to this question were unique.</p>
<p><i>How would you describe your experiences with leadership? What happened? What did the leader say and do?</i></p> <p>Discrepant Theme: Ineffective Leadership ($f = 1$)</p>
<p><i>What do you consider to be good or effective public sector leadership within the context of social change?</i></p> <p>Discrepant Theme: Pragmatism ($f = 1$)</p>

table continues

Discrepant Themes by Question

Thinking back on your career at the OCCHD, describe a time when your leader made you feel fulfilled and excited about your work. What did they do or say to make work fulfilling and exciting?

Discrepant Theme: Fostering an environment for change ($f = 1$)

Describe a time when your leader motivated you to work harder to realize a goal as a social change agent. What did the leader do or say to motivate you and what was your experience?

Discrepant Theme: Appreciating individuality ($f = 1$)

Describe a specific time when your leader inspired you as a social change agent. What did the leader do or say that was inspiring? How did that make you feel?

Discrepant Theme: Transparency ($f = 1$)

Give an example of how your leader helped you feel more committed to the goals of the OCCHD. How did you feel?

Discrepant Theme: Continuous improvement ($f = 1$)

Thinking of your immediate supervisor, how do you perceive your experiences with leadership as collaborators in the OCCHD? Can you give me an example?

Note: There was no discrepant theme ($f = 1$)

If you could transform yourself as a leader in any way you wished, what three characteristics, traits, or qualities would you give yourself as a leader? Why?

Discrepant Theme: Professionalism ($f = 1$)

If you could lead a transformation in your organization to effect greater social change – what would you do and how would you feel about leading the change? Why?

Discrepant Theme: Improved research and innovation ($f = 1$)

Question 1 of the interview asked participants what they valued deeply about their work and organization. One participant indicated that they valued “interaction with fellow coworkers” and the “trust” that peers placed in the individual. This theme differed from other responses which focused on impacting lives, positive change, and engaging in meaningful work. For example, other participants indicated that they valued their “impact on the community” or “working with outside partners”. Other themes were focused on the broader impact on the community and individual lives.

Question 2 of the interview asked participants how they viewed themselves as an agent of social change. Answers to this question included themes of being ambivalent about social change, being an effective agent of social change, being accepting and nonjudgmental, demonstrating a passion for social change, demonstrating empathy as a social change agent, and embodying social change. Each participant had a unique view of themselves as a social change agent. The participant that stated they should embody social change felt “I first must change myself” before they could be a social change agent. Another participant indicated that they must accept people “as they are” to realize social change.

Question 3 of the interview invited participants to share their experiences with leadership and provide examples of what happened. The discrepant theme uncovered in data analysis was ineffective leadership. The participant that provided this theme “felt overlooked” and “misunderstood”. The participant stated that “I’ve been discouraged”, my leader “didn’t like me”, and new leadership “changed the morale” of the agency. The response made by this participant indicated the follower believed a leader should hold a

broader worldview focused on recognizing and appreciating the talents of each follower and the needs of the greater community. Most of the answers focused on specific leader behaviors associated with lived experiences with leadership. For example, another participant indicated that their “suggestions” were considered by the leader. One participant indicated that their leader was transparent in providing an “overview of what’s going on” and what was happening with “upper level” leadership.

Question 4 asked the participant what they considered to be good public leadership in the context of social change. The discrepant theme for this question was pragmatism. This question had many different answers. The discrepant participant response differed in the belief that the best public sector leaders were pragmatic and realistic, rather than focused on change or responsive to the community. For example, this participant indicated that leaders needed to “be realistic” about programs and the agency’s impact.

Question 5 asked participants to describe a time when their leader had made them excited about their work. Most answers to this question focused on praise, being supported, and being recognized for work. The discrepant theme for this question was focused on the leader fostering an environment of innovation and change. The participant indicated feeling excited by an environment that supports change and innovation. For example, the participant felt excited when leadership focused on “things to change” and “actually taking steps” to make change happen within a department.

Question 6 invited participants to share a time when they were motivated to reach a goal. The discrepant theme for this question was appreciating individuality. Most

answers to this question centered on feeling valued and encouraged. While this answer also focused on being valued, it differed from other answers due to its theme of appreciating individuality rather than being recognized for hard work. This participant indicated they felt valued when leaders' "let me be me" and recognizing the employee's individual "passion and drive".

Question 7 focused on the participant describing a time when they were inspired by their leader. The discrepant theme for this question was transparency. While most answers focused on recognition for work, this answer indicated the participant valued leader transparency with struggles in instituting social and organizational change. The participant valued that the leader clearly indicated "there will be struggles" with change and that the leader had a plan on "how we can get through this". The transparency helped the participant feel more resolved and inspired to work for harder to reach agency goals.

Question 8 asked participants to describe how their leader made them feel more committed to realizing organizational goals. The discrepant theme for this question was continuous improvement. While most answers to this question focused on being recognized and having a voice in the goals of the agency, this answer indicated the participant felt committed when leaders focused on ways to improve the organization. For this participant, having a "QI council" and continuous improvement "framework" in place indicated the agency was committed to always getting better.

Question 9 asked the participant to provide their experience with leaders as collaborators within the organization. Every answer to this question focused on having a voice, being valued, or being listened to by their supervisor. There was no discrepant

theme for this answer. The importance of having a voice in work, being listened to, and feeling appreciated is critical. Leaders can be seen as collaborators when they value, listen to, and value their employees. One participant indicated her supervisor knew she was “able to do my work” without constant supervision. Another response demonstrated that employees are “given a voice” in their work.

Question 10 asked the participant to use the dream aspect of appreciative inquiry. The dream component of appreciative inquiry involves dreaming of the best possible future organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The participants were asked, if they could transform themselves as a leader, what three traits or characteristics would they like to have. The discrepant theme for this question was professionalism. Answers to this question focused on traits like communication, empathy, honesty, transparency, and relationship building. This answer indicated the participant valued a more professional approach to leadership. For example, the participant indicated they were frustrated when work activities were a “social function” rather than being focused on work goals. This participant stressed the need do things “in a professional way”.

Question 11 also utilized the appreciative inquiry dream approach by asking the participant how they would like to transform the agency. The discrepant theme for this question was fostering a quality improvement culture. Answers to this question focused on community, responsiveness, and expanded services. This answer focused more on improving outcomes through research and evidence-based innovation. The participant indicated that the organization should “work more with academic and research organizations” to promote evidence-based practices.

Key Words and Phrases

To protect the identity of participants, clients are not identified, and partial quotes are used instead of full quotes. Participant key words and phrases were used to determine thematic codes. Many words or phrases were repeated throughout each interview. Words like recognition, listening, valuing, appreciation, and community was found in interview transcripts. Recognition was mentioned 11 times during the interviews. It was an answer to multiple questions for some individuals. Praise and appreciation were both mentioned once each and were included in the recognition theme. Participants used phrases like being “recognized for my part” or “my work was recognized” to express how important leader recognition can be for followers.

Other words and phrases were mentioned throughout the interviews. During the 10 interviews, seven participants mentioned listening as an important behavior for leaders. Participants used phrases like my leader “listens to ideas” or my leaders is “good at listening” to show how critical listening is for effective leadership. Other key words and phrases included participants mentioning the important of making changes and helping others. Participants indicated they valued “making changes in lives” and “helping others”. Additionally, participants mentioned how important it was to feel encouraged and supported by their leaders. They used words like “supportive” and phrases like “feel believed in” to demonstrate how their leader made them feel encouraged.

Leadership Traits Associated with Effective Leadership

Question 11 asked participants what three leadership characteristics or traits they would like to have as a leader. The top four traits mentioned were being an effective communicator ($f = 3$), demonstrating transparency ($f = 3$), being trustworthy ($f = 4$), and showing compassion and empathy ($f = 4$). One participant was only able to give two traits they would like to have as a leader. Five participants offered four or more leadership qualities. Some of the leadership traits connected back to the experiences with good leadership that participants described.

Transparency ($f = 3$)

The importance of honesty, transparency, and integrity were mentioned as important leadership traits. One participant indicated that “my work is transparent” and people did not question their work. Another participant indicated they believed “transparency creates trust”. These were critical traits for effective leadership “because if they can trust you, they will follow you anywhere”. Participant responses mentioned the importance of the leader modeling good behavior and leading by example. These traits appear to connect closely with Bass and Riggio’s (2006) element of idealized influence. Leading by example, a part of idealized influence, suggests that the leader is the model of what is appropriate behavior and that followers venerate the leader. When transformational leaders are utilizing idealized influence, their specific behaviors embody honesty, integrity, and transparency.

Communication ($f = 3$)

Participants mentioned traits associated with communication when asked about the leadership qualities they would like to embody. Participants mentioned being a good communicator and a good listener. Listening, having a voice, and effective communication was mentioned throughout the interviews. For example, one participant indicated wanted to “be a good listener” so that employees “feel comfortable enough to come back and talk to me” about issues. Another participant felt that effective communicators were able to communicate in ways that “don’t offend anyone” and that “keep everyone willing to communicate” about issues and goals.

Listening is a part of effective communication with followers. Bass and Riggio (2006) suggested that leaders must be able to use idealized influence and inspirational motivation to share compelling visions and help followers understand the meaningfulness of their work. Further, individualized consideration is used to understand the unique needs of followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership theory, coupled with data collected during this study, indicated that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration manifests as leaders who connect agency goals to work performed, listen intently to followers, and give them a voice in their work and the direction of the agency.

Trust ($f = 4$)

The importance of being trustworthy and credible was another common theme found during data collection processes. Participants indicated that they would want to be credible and someone others could trust. For example, one participant stressed the

importance of followers being able to talk to them “if and when they have a problem” and trusting the leader to do the right thing. Research has suggested that servant leaders use trust to improve commitment to organizational goals (Miao et al., 2014). While participants indicated this was a critical leadership trait, only once was trust mentioned as having a significant influence for motivating staff.

Compassion/Empathy (*f* = 4)

Participants indicated showing empathy, compassion, and kindness were leadership traits they would like to possess. Empathy was also mentioned as being important for effective public sector leadership. For example, one participant stressed the importance of “having a little more empathy” and understanding that people will have different “backgrounds” and “situations” that impact their work life. Empathy is directly connected with servant leadership theory. Greenleaf (1977) suggested that servant leaders are adept at showing empathy for others. Empathetic leaders accept followers as they are as people (Spears, 2010). Being able to show understanding, compassion, sympathy, and kindness towards followers can be action empathetic leaders take to improve their effectiveness.

Themes and Theory

This study collected data utilizing appreciative interviews to collected lived experiences with public sector leadership. The participants were employees of a city-county health department in central Oklahoma. The participants were nonsupervisory employees with two years of service with the agency. The study was unique in its use of appreciative interviews to collected positive examples of lived experiences with

leadership. Additionally, the study was unique due to its focus only on follower perspectives of good leadership. While there were some negative examples shared by followers, each was able to offer positive experiences with public sector leadership at the organization. The negative examples shared by followers are discussed in Chapter 5 under implications for future research.

Appreciative inquiry was used to frame the interview questions. Appreciative inquiry has four distinct cycles. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) labeled the four elements discovery, dream, design, and destiny. Discovery was the primary appreciative inquiry component used during data collection. The appreciative interview is the core of the discovery process and every question asked was positive (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Interview questions were designed to uncover the values and best of the organization and its members. Unlike a full appreciative inquiry process, data were only collected from ten organizational members.

The themes found during data collection support servant and transformational leadership translating well to the public sector. Themes like recognition, positive change, supporting, listening, valuing, giving followers' a voice, transparency, and relationship building all connect well to the theories of servant and transformational leadership. Leaders in public sector organizations can utilize the traits and behaviors discussed in this chapter to improve their ability to build commitment, inspire, and motivate staff. Actions like recognition and praising work, valuing followers' abilities, listening to their ideas, and giving them a voice in their job and the direction of the agency are practical actions

leaders can use to improve performance. The ability to use qualities like empathy, compassion, and integrity can improve leader performance.

The one strong theme found during data collection that does not clearly resonate in either servant or transformational leadership is responsibility for and responsiveness to the community. While Spears (2010) suggested that servant leaders build a sense of community within their organizations, this is not the sense of community expressed by participants. Participants clearly articulated that they believed good leaders were connected to their communities, they were responsible for their communities, and they should be more responsive to the needs of the communities served. This specific theme warrants further study. The need to explore public sector leadership within the context of community is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Summary

In Chapter 4 data collection process and data findings were detailed. The research setting and collection processes were explained. The significant themes found during data analysis were explained and connected with established leadership theories. Data findings provide real examples of leader behaviors that public health employees found inspiring, commitment building, and motivating. The unique theme of community did not fit neatly in either theory, and it was suggested this theme warrants further research. In Chapter 5 research finding interpretations, study limitations, suggestions for future research, and implications for social change are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Specific leadership theories have been well explored in the main stream literature. However, leadership theory has not been as vigorously reviewed in public organizations and from the perspective of followers (Dinh et al., 2014; Van Wart, 2013). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how specific leadership styles translated to the public sector. The methodology for the study was qualitative, and the research method was phenomenology. Participants were asked to provide positive leadership experiences with social change, commitment, inspiration, and motivation. The study does have limitations associated with researcher bias and generalizability. The researcher brings personal assumptions and worldviews to their research that must be clearly stated and mitigated. Because this study focuses on one local city-county health department, findings may not be transferrable to all other public agencies. Chapter 5 interprets research findings, discusses limitations, provides implications for social change and public administration, proposes recommendations for future research, offers reflections from the researcher, and provides concluding thoughts.

Appreciative inquiry was used as a framework to guide interview questions and data collection utilizing a positive approach. During discovery, the best of the organization is discovered through positive discourse (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). To a smaller extent, appreciative inquiry's dream element was utilized. The dream phase of appreciative inquiry is focused on what individual's wish to see in the future and helps the individual conceptualize how things would look (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). During the dream element of appreciative inquiry, the participants were asked to imagine

a better future self and future organization. The dream element of appreciative inquiry involves imaging the agency at its very best (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Questions 1-9 focused on discovering strengths; questions 10 and 11 focused on dreaming of a better future organization.

Interpreting Research Findings

The findings in this study offer support for public service leaders utilizing servant and transformational leadership styles. Transformational leadership theory's is founded in Burns' (2003) theory of transforming leadership. Transforming leadership theory was expanded and tested by the work of Bass and Riggio (2006).

Transformational leaders are focused on the needs of followers, on empowering followers to higher levels of commitment, on recognizing the needed for change, and to design compelling visions of the future (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 2003). Servant leadership is a complementary theory of leadership. Greenleaf (1977) introduced servant leaders as being driven by the need to serve others first. It is through their service to others that these individuals find themselves in positions of leadership (Greenleaf, 1977).

Servant and transformational leaders are both committed to the needs of followers. Both types of leaders want to help followers' meet their needs while empowering the individual. Servant leaders are focused on service to others first (Greenleaf, 1977). Transformational leaders are often focused on positive change and building a compelling vision of the future (Burns, 2003). While the two theories share common elements, the key difference is related to what drives each style of leadership.

Interpreting the research findings is essential for determining the importance of the study. In addition, it is important to know how the study adds to the literature and the knowledge in the field. Appreciative inquiry was utilized as the framework for this research study. Appreciative inquiry involves four distinct phases: discovery, dream, design, and destiny. The discovery phase is the search for the best an organization has to offer (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). It was the primary element of appreciative inquiry used to frame the approach to data collection and analysis. Briefly, in questions 10 and 11, the participants were invited to dream by asking questions associated with transforming themselves and the organization. The dream phase of appreciative inquiry allows the participant to consider a better future organization (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Appreciative interviewing was used to begin a positive conversation about the best that the organization, employees, and leaders had to offer. Appreciative inquiry has been utilized as a tool for lasting, positive social change (Cooperrider, 2018). Through reflective analysis, positive themes were determined that extracted the best of leaders, the values of the organization, and the importance of the work the organization performs. Recognizing the strengths of leaders as reflected in thematic codes, will help the organization be a force for change.

Thematic coding indicated that public sector employees are motivated, inspired, and committed to social change through a variety of leader behaviors. The number one theme found in data analysis was the importance of recognizing, praising, and appreciating staff. Data also indicated that public sector followers appreciate positive change, encouragement, leaders who listen, feeling valued, having a voice, and

responsiveness to community. Knowledge, empathy, and caring leaders were also common themes found in data. Lastly, participants valued leadership traits like effective communication, transparency, trust, and compassion or empathy.

Wright et al. (2012) suggested that transformational leadership behaviors impact an employee's public service motivation. Transformational leadership is characterized by positive change in people and organizations, a focus on empowering followers, appreciating follower individuality, and molding a compelling vision for the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 2003). The findings in this study support transformational leadership in public organizations and indicate that when public sector leaders show appreciation, are encouraging, listen to staff, value employees, and give followers a voice in their work and in the direction of the organization, they can positively influence the employee's performance. When leaders demonstrate these types of behavior, they can stimulate employees' public service motivation. Data suggested that employees' value positively impacting the lives of the citizens they serve and that they feel strongly about being responsible for and responsive to the community's needs. Leaders who actively support staff through simple demonstrations of appreciation and value for work can more effectively connect followers to the importance of the organization's public health goals.

When employees are appreciated, have a voice in their work, can safely have their concerns or ideas heard, and are valued as individuals, public sector leaders can leverage public service motivation to realize organizational goals. Public sector leaders often have limited budgets and flexibility to reward staff. Public leaders must find other ways to stimulate staff to work hard. Data collected in this study suggests that leaders can do this

by simply treating staff with respect, as valued team members with valid opinions, and as decision makers in organizational policies.

Limitations

All research has limitations. The limitations of this study included researcher bias and generalizability. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is an active participant in the research process. Essentially, the researcher is the research tool (Creswell, 2013). Framing the research in an appreciative inquiry approach also calls for the researcher to enter into a dialog with participants during interviews. Reducing bias during data collection and data analysis process involved utilizing bracketing and respondent validation.

Bracketing is a purposeful approach to data collection and analysis where the researcher defers personal beliefs so that the participants lived experiences are more fully understood (Creswell, 2013). In addition to bracketing, respondent validation techniques were used to verify that the researcher's themes accurately demonstrated participants' experiences and thoughts about leadership and social change. All ten participants indicated that the overarching themes found in their interviews accurately matched their responses.

The research study and data findings have additional limitations regarding generalizability. Focusing on one agency and level of government suggest that the research findings might not be transferrable to other public agencies and levels of government. However, data findings corresponded well with both servant and transformational leadership theories. Both servant and transformational leadership

theories have been studied in other levels of government and utilizing different types of analysis. Data findings in this study support public sector leaders practicing servant and transformational leader behaviors. Leaders who are supportive, listen to followers, let staff have a voice in their work, and show appreciation and value for workers can influence commitment, motivation, inspiration, and social change.

Implications for Social Change

This phenomenological study helps overcome the gap in understanding how leaders influence followers to positively impact public organizations, public policy, and social change. Data analysis provided a plethora of information on the leader actions and behaviors that influence followers' commitment, inspiration, motivation, and approach to social change. The themes uncovered during data collection and analysis support the importance of servant and transformational leadership in public settings. Servant and transformational leaders have the potential to impact social change at the organization and community level. When public leaders do simple things like listening to the ideas of followers and supporting their ability to make changes through their work, the followers become engaged in organizational goals and social change.

Thematic codes found in data revealed a simple pattern; when employees feel valued, supported, appreciated, and given a voice in their work, they are more committed and engaged in their work. Traditional methods of leadership, that are directive and focused on a top down approach, will not produce the level of commitment, motivation, and inspiration needed to produce positive social change in communities and organizations. Servant leadership traits like empowerment, empathy, and service can be

translated into leader actions that support engagement and improve organizational performance. For example, leaders can listen to followers' concerns, give employees' a voice in their work, and value their staff to improve engagement and support for goals. Likewise, transformational leadership traits that focus on appreciating the specific needs of employees while connecting them to meaningful work will allow public sector leaders to influence both organizational and social change. While data findings support the effectiveness of servant and transformational leadership traits in public organizations, public sector leaders also need to focus on community.

Thematic coding largely supported servant and transformational leader traits as being what public employees view as effective leadership. However, neither servant nor transformational leadership theories effectively incorporate the community responsibility and responsiveness theme found in data analysis. Public leaders who appreciate their community ties will likely be more effective. By accepting responsibility for and demonstrating responsiveness to the communities they serve, leaders will become more effective in the eyes of their followers.

Implications for Public Policy and Public Administration

Data findings can be utilized to improve professional practices in the fields of public policy and public administration. Public administrators can use data findings to improve human resource and organizational policies. Recruiting individuals that demonstrate strong transformational and servant leadership traits can produce a more committed, motivated, and inspired workforce. Understanding how to motivate and inspire effects policy making. Implementing data findings will allow public health

leaders to realize two critical components of CDC's public health services. These findings can be translated into actions that impact an organization's ability to build a competent workforce and improve community health (CDC, 2014). Public health leaders must have a plan for implementing findings.

Implementing Data Findings

Building your leadership bank. Leaders must have the right tools to effectively influence followers. Leadership, at its core, is about influence (Van Wart, 2012). To better understand the leadership phenomenon and how it works, it can be helpful to visualize leadership as a bank account. When you deposit more money than you spend, your bank account is in the positive. Conceptualize leadership as a bank account. The more positive, effective actions and behaviors the leader utilizes, the higher their leadership bank account. The higher the leader's bank account, the more effective they are as leaders. A positive balance in the leadership bank helps the leader remain effective when they must make hard or unpopular decisions. To remain effective when times are tough, the leader must bank leadership deposits.

Leadership deposits. Routinely interacting with followers in positive ways are important deposits in the leader's account. According to data findings, effective leaders motivate, inspire, and influence commitment and social change in several ways. Leaders make deposits in their leadership bank when they listen to their employees, when they provide followers with a voice in the direction of the organization, and when they support followers. Each of these leader actions requires the leader to build relationships with followers. Relationship building allows the leader to understand the needs of the

follower, their unique skill set, and how to motivate and influence the follower's work performance. Public sector leaders can improve follower performance and commitment by showing appreciation, listening to the follower's concerns, supporting the follower's ideas for their work, and including them in the strategic planning process for the agency. Building your leadership bank can be realized with simple actions and behaviors. Overall the leadership at the organization is viewed positively by employees. However, there were both positive and negative experiences shared by participants. Because the research question was focused on how leaders' influence greater commitment, motivation, and inspiration only positive experiences were included in Chapter 4. Table 5 provides examples of positive and negative leader transactions taken from the interviews with participants. Both negative and positive leader interactions could be used to guide future research. The transactions below are presented in themes.

Table 5

Positive and Negative Leader Transactions

<i>Positive Leader Transactions</i>	<i>Negative Leader Transactions</i>
Praise and appreciate follower	Only noticing when the follower makes mistakes
Listen to followers' concerns and ideas	Disregarding follower work concerns
Empower and support followers	Withholding resources and support
Give followers a voice in the direction of the agency	Withholding information
Ask instead of tell	Issuing directives and rules
Show empathy, consideration, and kindness	Not being available to followers

Recommendations for Future Research

The implications for future research are many. Future research focused on different levels of government would improve generalizability. Exploring follower experiences with and perceptions of good leadership in different types of government agencies would provide a greater understanding of effective public sector leadership. Government agencies will always face budgeting concerns and limitations in rewarding staff. Understanding what other leader actions can influence employee performance helps produce high functioning agencies that are better prepared to respond to the needs of communities.

The community theme found during data analysis also warrants further study. Future research focused on this element could produce a plethora of information that could be practically applied in the practical setting. Exploring how leaders leverage community responsibility and community responsiveness could provide a better understanding of how public leaders positively influence social change. Coupling community responsiveness and social change in future research has exciting potential. By understanding if a leaders' community responsiveness positively impacts social change, scholar practitioners can offer knowledge and suggestions to improve public sector leadership effectiveness.

Community responsibility could also be explored in conjunction with public service motivation and transpersonal leadership theory. Understanding how public service motivation is influenced by a sense of responsibility to one's greater community has the potential to provide an understanding of what public sector employees value and

find motivating. Transpersonal leaders are focused on engaging the complete potential of the follower and this theory is more spiritual in nature (Beerel, n.d.). The transpersonal leader can help the follower better understand themselves and to engage their possibilities (Beerel, n.d.). Transpersonal leaders may have the ability to improve the potential of their followers and, in turn, the greater community. Exploring how transpersonal leaders impact social change can inform practical application in public administration and public policy.

Reflections

Surprising Themes

The researcher brings their experiences and worldview with them into data collection and analysis process. When the researcher is engaged in a dialog about what the interviewee finds valuable, finds inspiring, and finds motivating it is important to maintain a minimum level of scholarly detachment. It is important to be open to the themes and patterns that are present in data collected. The overwhelming importance of being recognized and praised by leaders was a small surprise. While feeling appreciated and recognized for our work seems intuitive, the importance of this simple concept was surprising.

Data indicated that the employees of the organization value helping people and making positive changes in the community. Despite the commitment to helping people, followers need to feel appreciated, to hear words of praise, and to be recognized for exceptional work. Being committed to your work is important but having basic esteem needs met appeared to outweigh public service motivation. In some ways, data findings

also validate Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. To fully achieve one's potential, basic esteem and achievement needs must be met.

A larger surprise found during data collection and analysis was the importance of leaders having a connection to community. The importance of leaders who feel a responsibility for and a responsiveness to community was clearly articulated during data collection. Participants connected this theme with effective leadership and how they would like to transform their agency. While this theme was a surprise, it was a pleasant surprise that has the potential to fuel future research in public sector leadership, social change, public policy, and public administration.

While the community theme is not well supported in either servant or transformational leadership theories, the study findings do not support the need to develop a specific public sector leadership theory. Servant and transformational leadership theories can simply be expanded and grown to better fit the needs of the public sector leader, follower, and organization. Perhaps, servant leadership theory is best suited to expanding to including community responsibility and responsiveness. Service is the critical component of servant leadership. Service to community is a logical expansion of this theory.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The influence of Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation is easily seen in both servant and transformational leadership theories. Both theories are focused on understanding follower needs. Data findings also offered validation for Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Almost 75 years later, Maslow is still relevant to motivating

individuals. While the theory has limitations due to generalizability and ethnocentrism, it is clear that individual needs are important in the work environment (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016). Scholars still use Maslow's hierarchy to understand employee motivation (Eilertsen, 2015). The hierarchy of needs can still be used to motivate followers.

Data findings in this study supported the importance of realizing group and esteem needs to reach self-actualization. Researchers are still focused on how Maslow's hierarchy is utilized by leaders to help followers' reach self-actualization (Bui, Zeng, & Higgins, 2017). Once a follower feels like an important part of the group and is confident in their abilities, they are better able to positively impact social change. Maslow (1943) has been connected to employee engagement. Employee engagement involves the employee connecting with organizational values and mission (Madan, 2017). Leaders who meet follower needs can motivate, inspire, and improve commitment. These types of leaders positively impact follower performance, organizational outcomes, and social change.

Summary

While future research is needed to expand upon the findings in this study, there are immediate implications for improving public sector leadership and employee engagement. Public organizations and public leaders can utilize the findings in this study to improve employee commitment, motivation, and inspiration. By showing appreciation, listening to their followers, giving staff a voice in the work they perform, and showing support, public sector leaders can improve their organizations. Improving

employee morale and performance will improve the organization's ability to realize goals and support communities. Implementing the findings in this study do not require additional funds or resources. Rather, leaders must understand the small ways they can change their behaviors to reap large gains in organizational impact.

In this qualitative study, I sought to understand how specific leadership styles translated to the public sector and how effective leadership impacted social change, public policy, and public administration. Leaders who can effectively impact follower and organizational outcomes have the potential to positively impact social change. Leaders who utilize effective behaviors have the potential to foster employee commitment to organizational goals and sustained social change. Servant and transformational leaders are important in producing positive social change and leading impactful public organizations. Future research focused on community responsiveness and social change could improve understanding of how leaders' influence change.

Phenomenology has the potential to build understanding and find meaning in complex constructs like leadership. Utilizing qualitative methods can improve the understanding of the mechanics of leadership in the public sector. Chapter 5 provided a final interpretation of data findings, discussed potential limitation, recommended future research projects, and provided researcher reflections. In this qualitative study, I sought to better understand how specific leadership styles translate to the public sector. When compared to established theories like servant and transformational leadership, data findings supported these theories as being close to what followers deem to be effective public leadership. While the theories need to be expanded to include a more thoroughly

vettted component of service to community, data does not support a specific public sector leadership paradigm. However, there is evidence that servant and transformational leadership styles can influence social change in public health organizations.

The future of effective public health is focused on changing social structures (Galea & Annas, 2016). Simply, social change is needed to realize important public health outcomes. This requires effective leaders who can motivate and inspire commitment to organizational goals focused on changing social structures and social expectations. Engaged employees feel a greater connection to the values, mission, policies, and practices of the organization (Madan, 2017). Leaders who demonstrate and appreciate individual follower needs, listen to the ideas of the employees, support employees, and engender trust will be better positioned to leverage social change. Transformational and servant leaders embody these behaviors. Transformational and servant leaders can lead their followers and organizations in important, effective social change efforts.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What do you value most deeply about your work and the Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD)?
2. What is your view of yourself as a social change agent?
3. How would you describe your experiences with leadership? What happened? What did the leader say and do?
4. What do you consider to be good or effective public sector leadership within the context of social change?
5. Thinking back on your career at the OCCHD, describe a time when your leader made you feel fulfilled and excited about your work. What did they do or say to make work fulfilling and exciting?
6. Describe a time when your leader motivated you to work harder to realize a goal as a social change agent. What did the leader do or say to motivate you and or what was your experience?
7. Describe a specific time when your leader inspired you as a social change agent. What did your leader do or say that was inspiring? How did this make you feel?
8. Give me an example of how your leader helped you feel more committed to the goals of the OCCHD. How did you feel?
9. Thinking of your immediate supervisor, how do you perceive your experiences with leadership as collaborators in the OCCHD? Can you give me an example?

10. If you could transform yourself as a leader in any way you wished, what three characteristics, traits, or qualities would you give yourself as a leader? Why?
11. If you could lead a transformation in your organization to effect greater social change - what would you do and how would you feel about leading the change? Why?