2018

Strategies for Sustainability in Multilevel Marketing Organizations

Nicole Renea Cordell
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Nicole Cordell

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Erica Gamble, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Irene Williams, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Scott Burrus, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

Strategies for Sustainability in Multilevel Marketing Organizations

by

Nicole Renea Cordell

MBA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2012

BA, North Carolina Central University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2018

Abstract

The number of entrepreneurs in the direct sales industry has steadily increased since 2010; however, the annual turnover rate is 56%. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore multilevel marketing (MLM) entrepreneurial leadership strategies implemented to help ensure sustainability of entrepreneurial MLM businesses for longer than 5 years. Purposive sampling was used to recruit 10 entrepreneurs who maintained an MLM business more than 5 years and used a hierarchical status that required a team. The transformational leadership theory constituted the conceptual framework for researching leadership as a concept of entrepreneurship and sustainability in MLM. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and reflective journaling. Member checking was used to increase the validity of findings. The data organization technique included Yin's 5 steps and the classic method of data analysis to categorize concepts. Themes derived from data analysis include self-efficacy, the behavioral approach to leadership, the psychological perspective of transformational leadership, the resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals. The implications of this study for social change might include decreasing the community unemployment rate through entrepreneurial opportunities and encouraging the development of leadership skills to promote community responsibility.

Strategies for Sustainability in Multilevel Marketing Organizations

by

Nicole Renea Cordell

MBA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2012

BA, North Carolina Central University, 2009

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2018

Dedication

I want to dedicate my work to my son, Jace Landon Henderson. He is an answered prayer, my brightest smile, and my greatest accomplishment. He is the motivation I needed to finish my degree and push harder to reach my dreams. It may be cliché to say a child should have what his parents were unable to have or even that a child is not supposed to want for anything. I believe that, but I'll add that I want my child to learn and experience a life full of opportunities, knowledge, and power. It is not the world's responsibility to provide the foundation my child needs to grow and flourish as a prosperous man. It is mine. I am the one who will instill the importance of unwavering dedication and the strength to continue searching for his passion no matter how often the world attempts to change his outlook on life. Therefore, I dedicate this dissertation to my son so he will continue to strive knowing that his parents will be close behind him every step of the way.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank God first for all he has done for me throughout this journey. I want to acknowledge my Dissertation Chair Dr. Erica Gamble for her encouraging words and understanding temperament. I want to thank my Second Committee Member Dr. Irene Williams and the Program Director Dr. Susan Davis for their assistance during the dissertation process. In addition, I want to acknowledge Rene Batts for her thoughtful assistance during my participant search; I appreciate the experience shared with your entrepreneurial family and everyone setting aside time to share their perspectives of entrepreneurship.

I want to thank my support system starting with my life coach, Esha Davis, for the years constant support and encouragement. I want to thank my best friend, Jessica Odom, for disagreeing each time I wanted to quit. I want to thank my best friend, Dr. Jessica Allen, for keeping me accountable. Reaching my destination would not have been possible without you insisting my degree is obtainable despite the timeline. I would also like to offer my warmest thanks for your editing services.

I want to thank my family; no matter how many times I amended my goals, you all continued to be my rock. I am the product of two brilliant parents, Janice and Tim, from a background of educational success. They also created my endearing sister, Brandi, who shows her brilliance every day. To all my family, thank you for the continuous support. Thank you, Diane, Shirley, Sophia, and Cedric for encouraging me to finish one goal and move on to the next.

Table of Contents

List of Tables iv

Section 1: Foundation of the Study 1

Background of the Problem 1

Problem Statement 2

Purpose Statement 2

Nature of the Study 2

Research Question 4

Interview Questions 4

Conceptual Framework 4

Operational Definitions 5

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations 6

Assumptions 6

Limitations 7

Delimitations 7

Significance of the Study 7

Contribution to Business Practice 7

Implications for Social Change 8

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature 8

Summary and Transition 36

Section 2: The Project 38

Purpose Statement 38

Role of the Researcher....................38
Participants....................40
Research Method and Design....................43
Research Method....................43
Research Design....................44
Population and Sampling....................44
Ethical Research....................45
Data Collection Instruments....................47
Data Collection Technique....................48
Data Organization Technique....................50
Data Analysis....................51
Reliability and Validity....................52
Reliability....................52
Validity....................52
Summary and Transition....................53
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change....................55
Introduction....................55
Presentation of the Findings....................55
Self-efficacy....................56
Behavioral Approach to Leadership....................57
Psychological Perspective....................58

Resource Theory of Social Exchange 60
Achievement Goals 61
Conceptual Framework 62
Applications to Professional Practice 63
Implications for Social Change 64
Recommendations for Action 65
Recommendations for Further Research 65
Reflections 66
Conclusion 67
References 69
Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Member Checking 90

List of Tables

Table 1. Transformational Leadership Components 16

Table 2. Approaches to Leadership 18

Table 3. Relationships Between Instrumental Leadership and the Transformational-Transactional Paradigm 22

Table 4. Concepts of Team Engagement 28

Table 5. Concepts of Qualitative Validity 52

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Entrepreneurship is vital to produce innovative products and consumer services, which, in turn create new jobs, stimulate the economy, and promote a means for economic security (Randolph-Seng, Mitchell, Marin, & Lee, 2015). Baluku, Kikooma, and Kibanja (2016) attribute business sustainability to psychological behaviors, such as business leadership and networking. In this study, I will explore the concepts of leadership and entrepreneurial sustainability to discover strategies that could deter business failure.

Background of the Problem

Entrepreneurial failure has an adverse impact on the entrepreneur, community, and economy. Artinger and Powell (2016) wrote that more than 50% of entrepreneurial businesses fail within 3 years, with no indication from historical data that this trend would improve. Entrepreneurial failure is a problem because it raises doubts about the validity of entrepreneurship as a means for long-term stability (Randolph-Seng et al., 2015). Baluku et al. suggested that emerging scholars should explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and psychological behaviors such as leadership, as indicators of long-term business success (2016). Entrepreneurs who have previously failed in business should embrace failure as a learning opportunity, and then identify a new opportunity and work toward sustainability (Mueller & Shepherd, 2016). The knowledge and expertise gained from previous experiences could produce better results for long-term stability.

Problem Statement

Entrepreneurial failure is at a high rate; failure within the first 5 years is an increasing trend (Artinger & Powell, 2016). According to the Business Employment Dynamics program, only about 50% of new businesses started in 2011 survived for 5 years (United States Department of Labor, 2016). The general business problem is that entrepreneurial businesses do not survive as a business entity beyond 5 years. The specific business problem is that entrepreneurs of multilevel marketing organizations (MLMs) lack strategies for sustainability beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore what strategies entrepreneurs of MLMs use for sustainability beyond 5 years. The targeted population consisted of 10 participants within various MLMs who had successfully maintained a business beyond 5 years in North Carolina. The analysis in the study could contribute to positive social change by encouraging the development of individuals, using leadership to promote community responsibility and decrease the community unemployment rate through entrepreneurial opportunities.

Nature of the Study

The three research methods include qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2016). I selected a qualitative methodology to explore strategies for entrepreneurial sustainability using face-to-face interviews. A qualitative study is unstructured observations or questions to explore prevalent trends by interviewing or hosting group discussions under natural conditions (Park & Park, 2016).

A quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study because it focuses on analyzing numerical data to test hypotheses (Venkatesh et al., 2016). A mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for this study because it promotes the development of theoretical perspectives by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study (Venkatesh et al., 2016). Without the inclusion of quantitative variables, the mixed-methods approach is not appropriate.

The qualitative research designs include phenomenological, ethnographic, narrative, and case study. I selected the case study approach to collect data from multiple sources to explore entrepreneurial leadership strategies for sustainability beyond 5 years. The phenomenological approach is not appropriate because phenomenology describes a lived experience based on interpretation or perception of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This case study did not incorporate philosophical assumptions required for phenomenology. The ethnographic approach is not appropriate because ethnography immerses the researcher in culture to study values, behaviors, or languages, requiring prolonged periods in the field setting (Yin, 2017). This case study did not require cultural exploration necessary for ethnography. The narrative approach is also not appropriate because the narrative design is a chronological collection of stories relating to a participant's extensive background to understand the context of the participant's life (Yin, 2017). The narrative approach does not focus on the experiences specifically relating to the research question. The case study approach is appropriate to explore multiple sources of information to understand similar instances and address any identifiable issues.

Research Question

What are the leadership strategies that entrepreneurs of MLMs implement to remain sustainable beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your leadership style?
2. How would you describe your interaction with your team?
3. What strategies did you use for maintaining sustainability in your multilevel marketing company?
4. What challenges, if any, have you overcome by implementing strategies for sustainability?
5. How did you address each of the challenges?
6. What strategies have you implemented as a reward system for your team for accomplishing goals such as acquiring a leadership status?
7. What additional information would you like to share regarding your strategies for sustainability?

Conceptual Framework

Transformational leadership theory (TLT) originated with James Downton and identifies the alignment of leadership and followership (Northouse, 2016). In a work titled *Leadership*, James Burns developed the TLT based on Downton's concept of leadership (Burns, 1978). Burns identified four concepts of transformational leadership: influence, motivation, stimulation, and consideration (Burns, 1978). TLT is suitable for theorizing about the leadership skills associated with building a business in MLM, because the theory pertains to the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower based on being attentive to the follower's needs and motives.

Transformational leadership represents high levels of motivation, effort, satisfaction, and performance (Zaech & Baldegger, 2017). The structure of MLMs incorporate concepts indicative of a leadership role that contributes to guiding and supporting members without the typical authoritative environment of retail or marketing organizations (Sparks & Schenk, 2001). A leadership role in MLM contributes to a cycle of building potential leaders for the betterment of an entrepreneur's business and the affiliated MLMs.

Operational Definitions

Acquisition entrepreneurs: An acquisition entrepreneur is an individual starting an entrepreneurship opportunity in a preexisting organization (Rocha, Carneiro, & Varum, 2015).

Collective social entrepreneurship: Collective social entrepreneurship is the act of identifying social problems and implementing new institutions (Montgomery, Dacin, & Dacin, 2012).

Downline: The downline includes nascent entrepreneurs added to the organization under an existing entrepreneur, referred to as the upline (Sethi, Chhimpa, & Khinvasara, 2015).

Entrepreneurial sustainability: Entrepreneurial sustainability is the sustainability of entrepreneur-based companies compared to 5 years of profitability and longevity (United States Small Business Administration, 2007).

MLM: Multilevel marketing is the practice of marketing products and supplying consumer goods to individuals away from the typical retail premises; typically, product or service transactions initiated and concluded by a salesperson (Babu & Anand, 2015).

Pyramid scheme: Pyramid schemes, or endless-chain distributor schemes, require small investments that grant the opportunity for the investors to recruit others to invest, creating a chain by promising substantial return investments (Koehn, 2001).

Transformational-transactional leadership paradigm: Transformational-transactional leadership paradigm is an instrument that extends the leadership phenomenon to include entrepreneurial concepts and organizational performance (Rowold, 2014).

Upline: The upline includes entrepreneurs compensated by bonuses or commissions on sales generated by their direct downlines (Sethi et al., 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are concepts accepted as truths without proof for developing findings and the validity of the research (Wolgemuth, Hicks, & Agosto, 2017). The first assumption is that participants are credible and reliable when presenting personal accounts of strategies for sustainability. The second assumption is that the qualitative research method chosen provided the best structure for researching sustainability in MLM.

Limitations

Limitations are uncontrollable threats to the qualitative rigor that affect the reliability and validity of the study method, affection results that would otherwise provide an accurate representation of the population (Simon & Goes, 2013). The only limitation was that I could not control the availability of the participants or their willingness to participate.

Delimitations

Delimitations restrict what the research addresses within the context of conceptual frameworks (Simon & Goes, 2013). The first delimitation was the selection of North Carolina. The second delimitation was the inclusion of entrepreneurs who had more than 5 years in MLM.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Entrepreneurs of MLMs could use the results of this qualitative, multiple-case study as a guide for strategies that could lead to sustainability in entrepreneurship. This study could be of value to the practice of business because entrepreneurs in the early stages of business development or entrepreneurs researching to improve their current business could benefit from the resulting strategies for building economic stability. The study's contributions to business practice are strategies that could lead to a sustainable entrepreneurial career by means of observing and exploring an entrepreneur's personal experiences of sustainability.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential to decrease the community unemployment rate through entrepreneurial opportunities and to encourage the development of individuals, using leadership skills to promote community responsibility. Improving employment and promoting leadership in the community are actions that could increase economic security (Randolph-Seng et al., 2015). Collective social entrepreneurship relates to community responsibility by leveraging existing resources, building new resources, and creating change (Montgomery et al., 2012). As an implication for social change, entrepreneurial leaders are vital in showing initiative in the community and taking on community responsibility as an opportunity to help other entrepreneurs and members of the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Introduction

The literature review is a collection of empirical literature integrating new perspectives with existing concepts and frameworks (Torraco, 2016). The TLT and the concept of leadership include the introduction of the terms taken from seminal works by James Downton, Bernard Bass, and James Burns (Northouse, 2016). The TLT extends the research question as a leadership strategy that promotes sustainability in entrepreneurship, focusing on MLM.

The organization of the review of the literature includes three headings: MLM, transformational leadership, and sustainability. I provide an overview of MLM that includes the relationship between entrepreneurship and perspectives that are both for and against MLMs. The relationship between the concept of sustainability entrepreneurship and the specific business problem will expand on the strategies implemented for sustainability beyond 5 years.

To construct the literature review, I searched the following databases: Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, ProQuest, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. Search terms and phrases included *TLT*, *entrepreneurship*, *MLM*, and *business sustainability*. The literature review consisted of 70 articles, of which 60, or 85%, are peer-reviewed and within 5 years of 2018. Other sources include websites and books.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore the research question: What are the leadership strategies that entrepreneurs of MLMs implement to remain sustainable beyond 5 years? MLM is both retail-focused and recruitment-driven; while income increases by selling products, also, income increases by a continuation of a distribution network forming a downline (Sethi et al., 2015). The TLT is similar to the process of building a distribution network from the perspective that the downline relies on the upline's leadership behaviors and influences to build an independent business affiliated with the MLMs.

Multilevel Marketing

Entrepreneurs initiate opportunities commonly resulting from unemployment or economic uncertainty (Liu & Almor, 2016). Rocha et al. (2015) identified two categories of entrepreneurs as start-up entrepreneurs and acquisition entrepreneurs. Existing organizations provide acquisition entrepreneurs organizational foundation and structure alleviating common risk in nascent entrepreneurship. Rocha et al. also stated start-up entrepreneurs have the potential for higher survival rates as acquisition entrepreneurs tend to suffer from early business exits as they could have less of a personal interest in the business. According to Rocha et al., start-up entrepreneurs created a close relationship with the business; however, start-up entrepreneurs are susceptible to more risks associated with creating a new organization or independent business.

MLM income generates from both selling a product or service and the sales of an entrepreneur in the distribution network (Babu & Anand, 2015). From a corporate perspective, MLMs provide incentives for products sold and organizational membership increases (Hatchaleelaha & Wongsurawat, 2016). Entrepreneurs sell an organization's products or services to grow their businesses within MLMs alongside branding the organization to increase the number of entrepreneurs affiliated with the organization (Tyre, 2016). The new members create a downline to develop a hierarchical structure for leadership and incentive (Hatchaleelaha & Wongsurawat, 2016; Sethi et al., 2015). The perception of MLMs is comparable to a retail or marketing job as the literature presents both positive and negative views of MLMs relating to self-efficacy and economic security.

Multilevel marketing organizations. MLMs could have a different perception than the interpretation of a retail or marketing job. Rui and Le (2012) described storefront marketing as a retail or marketing job as opposed to a home-based independent business. Conveying the value of entrepreneurial marketing to retail, Rui and Le noted that the combination of both traditional marketing and MLM create modernization and maximize profit for the marketing industry. Regarding the potential for economic security and self-efficacy, there are opposing opinions when comparing entrepreneurial MLMs to retail or marketing jobs (Randolph-Seng et al., 2015). The concept of self-efficacy derives from obtaining and keeping stable income and economic security; MLMs promote economic security and self-efficacy similar to retail or marketing jobs (Randolph-Seng et al., 2015). Psychological attributes of entrepreneurial self-efficacy include leadership qualities, financial awareness, networking, and resource management (Baluku et al., 2016). Although scholars present opposing views, income from MLMs could demonstrate economic security and self-efficacy similar to that of a retail or marketing job.

Jain and Ali (2013) opposed high self-efficacy in an entrepreneurial setting and justified potential adverse effects resulting from overconfidence. Overconfidence could lead to poor decision-making and over-valuation of one's business; as a result, businesses do not adequately develop or are unprofitable (Heller, 2014). The results of the study show overconfident actions are relational to important decisions, and in turn, unconventional choices have a probability of a lower success rate (Heller, 2014). Artinger and Powell (2016) also expressed that entrepreneurial errors consequently result from the psychological factors of overconfidence. High self-efficacy could increase the confidence necessary in the start-up phase, but self-efficacy in excess affects one's gauge of strategic planning and complacency negatively (Jain & Ali, 2013). Jain and Ali suggested avoiding an adverse outcome of overconfidence due to effective strategizing, decision-making, and using a calm temperament when faced with potential difficulties of entrepreneurship such as planning for sustainability. Self-efficacy in moderation could produce better results.

MLMs generate income similar to retail or marketing jobs, but other characteristics of MLMs have a negative connotation in comparison to the perception of ethics. Oppositions to MLMs suggest unethical behavior and negative associations with internal consumption or pyramid schemes. Peterson and Albaum (2007) reported unethical behavior in MLMs as the term coined *internal consumption* in which MLM members purchase products or services retail-priced or at a discounted price for personal use. Peterson and Albaum stated that the ethicality of internal consumption is apparent when determining whether entrepreneurs should receive compensation for products or services sold for personal use. Peterson and Albaum recognized research both for and against compensation from internal consumption.

Entrepreneurs retaining income from internal consumption agree on the basis that entrepreneurs should receive compensation for all sales without any exclusions (Peterson & Albaum, 2007). Further research supporting this perspective creates a relationship with other industries that practice internal consumption by offering employee discounts or incentives for internal consumption. Additionally, organizations could include discounts for family members (Crittenden & Albaum, 2015). Oppositions to internal consumption include forcing entrepreneurs to purchase discounted products to quantify corporate sales goals solely for the benefit of the organization as opposed to the entrepreneur or the consumer. Internal consumption has a comparable perspective generalized by the intended purpose of the product or service.

Another perspective of unethical MLM is the act of creating a pyramid scheme. In a pyramid scheme, recruiting and influencing investments are the concentration as opposed to products or services that would typically be the focus of MLMs; essentially, the investor is paying to receive compensation when other people invest into the scheme (Hatchaleelaha & Wongsurawat, 2016). Building a distribution network in an MLM has a negative association with unethical intentions of a pyramid scheme (Walsh, 2016). To mitigate associating MLMs with unethical schemes, the legality of MLMs could associate with monitoring the performance of retail sales, including buy-back policies for retail products, charging low start-up fees, and asserting the purchase of training material as voluntary. Walsh (2016) analyzed a case detailing the MLM structure of Amway and three policies that distinguish entrepreneurial legitimacy; these policies include requiring ongoing retail sales, requiring the sale of 70% of purchased products before reordering, and the inclusion of an inventory buyback policy to alleviate distributors. As MLMs promote sales and team building, the legitimacy of the organization and the importance of building a distribution network differ from unethical investing.

Distribution networks. Sparks and Schenk (2006) presented views that are both for and against building a distribution network; the authors noted that the term MLM originates from the actions of paying commission on multiple levels of sales from recruits of complex networks. Sparks and Schenk illustrate the emphasis on group networking and the adverse effects on an entrepreneur's attentiveness to the individual business. In comparison, according to Sparks and Schenk, socialization promotes self-identification through membership and cohesive groups by building networks that ultimately grow the entrepreneur's independent business and the organization. Sparks and Schenk's studies showed a positive relationship based on socialization and did not interpret socialization as a hindrance to financial performance. From this perspective, distribution networks focus on both individual and group development.

Building a distribution network also includes establishing social and business relationships to create a social networking environment that is vital for entrepreneurial development (Pinho & Elisabete, 2014). Pinho and Elisabete (2014) distinguished a correlation between social networking and financial gain deriving from increased access to knowledge, opportunities, and resources. Montgomery et al. (2012) agreed on the presented views regarding the benefits of cooperative socialization that positively influence both individualism and networking expressed using the term *collective social entrepreneurship*. The three techniques of collective social entrepreneurship are framing, convening, and multivocality (Montgomery et al., 2012). Framing incorporates strategizing and objectifying building legitimacy and accessing risk (Montgomery et al., 2012). Convening promotes resource collaboration stemmed from collective learning and innovation (Montgomery et al., 2012). Multivocality combines the interests of the entrepreneur and the organization (Montgomery et al., 2012). MLMs promote building a distribution network to benefit both the entrepreneur and the organization; by multiplying the number of products sold, both income and profit increases for the entrepreneur and the organization respectively. I included the next section to expand on transformational leadership as the conceptual framework and theories that are comparable to this theory.

Transformational Leadership

Effective MLMs promote the essentialism of leadership (Sakiru, D'Silva, Othman, DaudSilong, & Busayo, 2013). According to Northouse (2016), constructing a definition for leadership must be inclusive of the fundamental concepts such as categorizing leadership as a process, identifying the relationship between leadership and influence, incorporating leadership from a group perspective, and outlining the common goals of leadership. Leaders assert qualities that influence belief and motivation by utilizing the ability to anticipate projections and restructuring due to obstacles (Sakiru et al., 2013). Transformational leadership is an emphasis on the charismatic and motivational perspective of the development of a leader and follower by measuring intentions and satisfying the need to influence followers to accomplish more than the expectation (Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership was the overarching concept for this study; I used the theory for the conceptual framework and the foundation for the constructs used for the analysis.

Evolution of leadership and transformational leadership. The concept of leadership originated from biblical, Greek, and Latin mythology to assert dominance and submission, but adversely affected by distorted socioeconomic injustices (Bass, 1990). Scholars developed early theoretical leadership concepts by examining the qualities of the leaders in comparison to the elements of the situation; later scholars incorporated the situational interactions between individuals as leaders and followers as an addition to the concepts of leadership (Bass, 1990). The three concepts of the comprehensive perspective of leadership: comparative, interdisciplinary, and developing testable theories

(Downton, 1973). Interdisciplinary leadership is inclusive of social and psychological approaches to the leader-follower context (Downton, 1973). Scholars used leadership concepts to develop deductive hypotheses relating to the variations of leader-follower pattern and leadership styles (Downton, 1973). As a concept of leadership, transformational leadership stems from deciphering choices among alternatives that identify competition and conflict through comprehending, evaluating, and experiencing alternatives (Burns, 1978). The concepts of leadership and transformational leadership represent the qualities and characteristics exerted to develop a leadership style.

Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) categorized transformational leadership into four components: charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (see Table 1).

Table 1

Transformational Leadership Components

Charisma	Demonstrating charismatic leadership involves influencing trust, respect, and confidence by emphasizing commitment
Inspiration	Inspirational leaders communicate a vision with confidence, increase optimism and enthusiasm, and energize through motivational conversations
Intellectual stimulation	Transformational leaders actively encourage innovation and creativity by stressing the value of intellectual stimulation
Individualized consideration	Individualized consideration incorporates individual attention through portraying value and recognizing contributions

Yammarino and Dubinsky supported Bass's (1990) concepts of charismatic and inspirational leadership. Charismatic leader-follower relationships promote a sense of purpose and confidence through inspiration and experience (Bass, 1990). Charismatic relationships are the combination of the abilities, emotions, and personal characteristics of leaders with a follower's desire to identify with the leader (Bass, 1990). Followers of inspirational leaders identify with the leader's initiatives and relate to the leader psychologically (Bass, 1990). Leaders promoting intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration significantly increase team development by encouraging positive behaviors open to learning and improvement (Sánchez-Cardona, Soria, & Llorens-Gumbau, 2018). Through intellectual stimulation, leaders heighten entrepreneurial interest, awareness, and ability to solve problems; through individualized consideration, leaders recognize and acknowledge goal achievement (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2013). The four components of transformational leadership represent behaviors that promote a positive leader-follower relationship and produce organizational effectiveness.

Approaches to leadership. The approaches to leadership are concepts of various scholarly perceptions of the definition of leadership including the influences of personalities, actions, behaviors, relationships, skills, or processes of transformation (Northouse, 2016). Northouse (2016) identified and analyzed the relationships between the approaches to leadership (see Table 2).

Table 2

Approaches to Leadership

Trait approach	Eight traits that differentiate the average leader from the average follower are intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability
Skills approach	Three basic skills of efficient administration are technical, human, and conceptual
Behavioral approach	Two behaviors that influence goal achievement are task behaviors and relationship behaviors
Situational approach	Two concepts that situationally adapt based on the needs for directive or supportive behaviors are leadership style and the development level of followers
Psychodynamic approach	Three concepts that recognize the motives behind certain behaviors focus leader-follower relationships

The trait approach to leadership originated from an interest in defining personality traits that develop leadership behavior similar to that of transformational leadership (Meuser et al., 2016). Walter and Scheibe (2014) agreed that stable traits, abilities, and personality characteristics are crucial to leadership behaviors and outcomes. The trait approach benefits both the organizational level and an individual entrepreneurial level by improving organizational effectiveness, team efficiency, and individual attitudes and behaviors (Meuser et al., 2016). The personality characteristics used to define the trait approach to leadership also relate to traits that could lead to strategies for entrepreneurial sustainability.

The skills approach to leadership is a concept that refers to the competency and characteristics of effective leadership as opposed to the innate skills interpreted as the trait approach (Muldrow, 2014). Herman (2014) recognized that the leader’s skill assessment has a direct effect on the follower’s behavior, creativity, and performance. The skills approach is an extension of employing appropriate leadership styles as Muldrow (2014) noted the importance of the idea that followers could learn to be leaders with technical, human, and conceptual skills through duplication and application. The learned skills used to define the skills approach to leadership also relate to traits that one could learn to implement strategies for entrepreneurial sustainability.

The behavioral approach to leadership includes task-oriented behaviors, such as providing instruction and delegating duties, and relationship behaviors, such as the appearance of being approachable and attentive (Li, Gupta, Loon, & Casimir, 2016). Task-oriented leaders pressure followers to work engagingly and be attentive to quality standards by monitoring performance and emphasizing deadlines (Li et al., 2016). Precise task-oriented leaders do not provoke negative emotions or behaviors even though the environment focuses on the pressure of task completion; motivation influences positive emotions and behaviors (Li et al., 2016). Behavioral leaders promoted organizational motives, actions, and goals that influence positive adaptive behavior (Makkonen, Johnston, & Javalgi, 2016). The behavioral approach to leadership relates to team building and improvement goals that lead to entrepreneur sustainability.

The leader should not ignore situations or situational internal or external factors in the workplace; situational leaders should employ communication and cooperation as tools for motivating and implementing organizational goals (Berim & Gentritt, 2014). The situational approach to leadership is similar to the task-oriented skills of the behavioral approach, but also incorporates people-oriented behaviors (McCleskey, 2014).

Situational leaders focus on required organizational tasks and building a leader-follower relationship (McCleskey, 2014). McCleskey (2014) argued situational leaders have a concern for both the relationship between active leadership and organizational values and the relationship between leadership effectiveness and stress-free organizational performance. The ability to gauge how situations could affect the business in the future is essential for entrepreneurial sustainability.

The psychodynamic approach to leadership relates to transformational leadership by representing the actions that influence collaborative relationships (Prins, 2006). The idea of organizational collaboration represents strategy planning with focused team engagement and commitment (Prins, 2006). The approaches to leadership, trait, skills, behavioral, situational, and psychodynamic, are a representation of leadership behaviors that influence goal achievement and organizational effectiveness.

Transformational and transactional leadership. Afsar, Badir, Saeed, and Hafeez (2017) conveyed that both the transformational and transactional leadership styles have similar outcomes originating from a different approach, but also note the differences in the effects on entrepreneurship. Afsar et al. (2017) supported this assertion by noting that inspiring and motivating positivity is a transformational leadership behavior, and motivating psychological empowerment is a transactional leadership behavior. Afsar et al. also suggest that transformational leaders promote innovation by influencing personal values and concepts with the intent that others will aspire to obtain more than their personal goals. The characteristics of transformational leaders are likely to promote entrepreneurial behavior. In contrast, Rowold (2014) argued that transformational leaders omit the leadership behaviors relating to obtaining information about the market or the necessary strategic behavior to survive in the market.

Transactional leaders influence extrinsic marginal improvements and quality of performance by emphasizing role clarity and task-oriented expectations (Afsar et al., 2017). Transactional leaders promote motivation to take risks and implement new ideas within specific boundaries or time constraints (Afsar et al., 2017). The relationship between a transactional leader and follower develops from an understanding of mutual exchange in which positive behavior constitutes reward and inadequacies constitute punishment (Afsar et al., 2017). Transactional leadership could negatively influence entrepreneurship due to the lack of stimulation to explore new opportunities (Afsar et al., 2017). Followers could negatively perceive the leader as inflexible and bureaucratic, such that the behavior hinders entrepreneurial intentions (Afsar et al., 2017). The paradigm in the next paragraph represents the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership.

Rowold (2014) agreed with the comparativeness of the leadership behaviors and coined the *transformational-transactional leadership paradigm* that interprets the concept of instrumental leadership as an extension of the leadership phenomenon. Instrumental leadership represents the concepts of the paradigm relative to entrepreneurial and organizational performance. Instrumental leadership breaks down into strategic leadership and follower work facilitation (see Table 3).

Table 3

Relationships Between Instrumental Leadership and the Transformational-Transactional Paradigm

Instrumental Leadership	Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership
Strategic Leadership	Formulate and strategize a vision	Discuss strategy and define goals
Follower Work Facilitation	Detect and allocate resources	Provide goal achievement feedback

Rowold concluded by noting that the best leadership strategy is a combination of instrumental, transformational, and transactional leadership behaviors. The paradigm represents the similarities in transformational and transactional leadership styles.

Transformational leadership in multilevel marketing organizations. In MLMs, an entrepreneur assumes a leadership role when starting a distribution network and new entrepreneurs become members of their downline; the upline and downline roles are a representation of the leader and follower roles of transformational leadership (Friedner, 2015). As entrepreneurs improve their businesses, leadership serves as a resource to influence a sense of belonging and promote the benefits of becoming a leader. Leadership roles in MLMs have the dual purposes of building the leader's business with a motivated team and improving the personal business of members of the leader's team.

Baluku et al. (2016) interpreted a difference in entrepreneurial intention relating to a short-term or long-term duration of a business entity as a choice as opposed to success and failure determining the reason for business exit. Seeking an addition to employment or an employment alternative differentiates the entrepreneurial intention (Baluku et al., 2016). Mieuttinen and Littunen (2013) agreed that the status of employment affects performance. Tyssen, Wald, and Spieth (2014) concluded that transformational leadership is also useful for short-term entrepreneurial intentions. The effectiveness of transformational leadership is evident in the instance of short-term entrepreneurial intentions due to the characteristics of environmental change and uncertainty; transformational leaders could adjust to change or uncertainty and continue to convey the value of commitment to others during moments of change or uncertainty (Tyssen et al., 2014). As an addition to employment or an employment alternative, entrepreneurs should employ transformational leadership concepts that could lead to sustainability.

Psychological perspective. Chatterjee (2015) explained that an entrepreneur's psychological characteristics include unique values and attitudes that justify satisfying a need for self-efficacy, achievement, innovativeness, and independence. According to Hughbank and Horn (2015), factors that applied to the psychological perspective to leadership include the uncertainty and unpredictability of the external environment, personal values and ethics, and the assessment of individual abilities based on leadership experience. Within these factors of psychological leadership, leaders should remain flexible to the variables of individualism, experience, and culture (Hughbank & Horn, 2015). Hughbank and Horn identified individualism using the theory of behaviorism to represent the value of the leader's characteristics and abilities. Education, professional development, and practical experience influence effective leadership behavior; leaders develop education and experience based on trial and error because of a dynamic environment. Hughbank and Horn suggested psychological empowerment is most beneficial as a combination of sustainable, transformational, and transactional leadership behaviors. Sustainable leadership represents an extension of transformational-transactional leadership paradigm by identifying the relationships between personal and organizational development, and sociological and ecological development. The factors of the psychological perspective to leadership influence psychological empowerment of individualism, experience, and culture.

Scholars also categorize psychological empowerment into four constructs: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact; psychological empowerment is most useful as a combination of all four constructs (Pradhan, Panda, & Jena, 2017). The constructs demonstrate the perceived value of work, confidence in the abilities to perform organizational tasks, the decision to initiate and regulate self-performed actions, and the perception of self-influence (Pradhan, Panda, & Jena, 2017). Lan and Chong (2015) agreed with scholars who support the relationship between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. Similar to transformational leadership, psychological empowerment promotes employee value, creativity, and self-efficacy (Lan & Chong, 2015). Lan and Chong asserted that psychological empowerment represents a mediator for the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment and employee satisfaction. Amundsen and Martinsen (2015) also agreed with scholars who supported this relationship of psychological empowerment, using the term empowerment leadership, in comparison to self-leadership. Amundsen and Martinsen noted that self-leadership involves controlling one's behavior and strategies. Amundsen and Martinsen (2015) suggested that both empowerment leadership and self-leadership represent characteristics and behaviors that complement each other; empowerment leadership illustrates empowering actions that promote empowering reactions.

Psychological empowerment relates to transformational leadership by influencing behaviors that develop organizational effectiveness. In the following section, I will provide supporting theories of transformational leadership found in the literature.

Supporting Theories of Transformational Leadership

Leader-member exchange theory. Incorporating the leader-member exchange theory (LMX), a leader's actions might influence a follower's attitudes and behaviors (Buch, Thompson, & Kuvaas, 2016). A high-quality LMX relationship includes the leader's keen ability to predict follower performance and work-related attitudes through social exchange (Buch et al., 2016). Social exchange requires ample time for relationship development; in turn, leaders could focus on a transformational LMX relationship with some followers and a transactional LMX relationship with others (Buch et al., 2016). Transactional LMX relationships associate with economic exchanges by regular role-defining interactions and influence lower performance and commitment (Buch et al., 2016). The relationship between the leader and the follower relate to the components of the leader-member exchange theory.

Epitropaki and Martin (2013) agreed that social influence promotes obtaining power and increasing the ability to access both tangible and intangible resources by utilizing the social exchange theory and the resource theory of social exchange to illustrate their assertion. Epitropaki and Martin noted that the social exchange theory applies reciprocating positive behaviors by strengthening interpersonal relationships through transformational leadership behaviors. The exchange of the leader's ability to communicate a vision and promote development reciprocates with rationality and positivity (Williams, Scandura, Pissaris, & Woods, 2016). The resource theory of social exchange is a representation of LMX by categorizing the contrasts of effective interactions and weak interactions as a high and a low leader and follower exchange (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). If an entrepreneur perceives the environment as generous in resources, this is the result of high leader and follower exchanges (Williams et al., 2016). Low leader and follower exchanges are conducive to a feeling constraint due to limited access to tangible and intangible resources (Williams et al., 2016). Both the social exchange theory and the resource theory of social exchange are developmental concepts that are determinates of the dynamics between leader and follower.

Epitropaki and Martin (2013) evaluated literature both for and against the relationship between transformational leadership and the LMX by noting that leader-follower exchanges could also be comparative to transactional leadership behavior. Epitropaki and Martin supported their evaluation by stating that, from the perspective of transactional leadership, social exchange focuses on personal and career development as opposed to transformational leadership exchanges that promote the development of the individual and the organization collectively. The social exchange theory and the resource theory of social exchange represent leadership behaviors that focus on the interactions between the leader and the follower.

Hamstra, Van Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2014) proposed that the leadership style, whether transformational or transactional, is an indicator of the follower's achievement goals by recognized standards of competence that incorporate motivational behaviors and influence performance. Achievement goals based on comparing performance with others represent aiming to outperform others, and achievement goals based on skill level represent aiming to learn by developing job skills (Hamstra et al., 2014). Transactional leaders emphasize the contrasts of individual performance to influence followers to appeal to the rewards that are contingent on achievements. Transformational leaders influence developing skills and developing as a team as opposed to focusing on performance comparison (Hamstra et al., 2014). Transformational and transactional leadership behaviors exemplify the value of achievement goals for the entrepreneur and the organization.

Social identity theory. The social identity theory is the self-perception of one's sense of value by measuring their status (Guan & So, 2016). Analyzing interactions and relationships based on social status define beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Guan & So, 2016). Identifying with social status encourages group-oriented behaviors that promote increased performance and individual self-efficacy, and a sense of belonging and responsibility to the group (Guan & So, 2016). As the similarities of group identification and engagement increase, the influence of capabilities increases the idea of self-efficacy among group members (Guan & So, 2016). Group-oriented behaviors and team engagement are essential for individual and team performance and growth.

García-Buades, Martínez-Tur, Ortiz-Bonnín, and Peiró, (2016) defined team engagement as a positive psychological concept demonstrated by sharing interactions and experiences of vigor, dedication, and absorption (see Table 4).

Table 4

Concepts of Team Engagement

Vigor	High energy, mental resilience, and persistence
Dedication	Strong involvement, sense of significance, and inspiration
Absorption	Full concentration without attention to time passing

Transformational leadership behaviors influence the concepts of team engagement and individual and organizational performance (García-Buades et al. 2016). The concepts of team engagement also indicate collective well-being, especially in an environment that recognizes ideas and suggestions for improvement (García-Buades et al. 2016). Ideas and suggestions for improvement learned from transformational leadership behaviors increase knowledge and expertise for implementing strategies for sustainability.

Transformational leadership as an intervention. Alexander and Hardy (2014) presented a quasi-experimental study that outlines a relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and the effects of transformational leadership on poor performers. Alexander and Hardy proposed that as transformational leadership behaviors attempt to improve the performance of poor performers, the leadership behavior also increases the perception of performance intervention to be more receptive. Transformational leadership aligns with Alexander and Hardy's proposition that leadership behavior encourages performance beyond expectations.

Transformational leadership and pro-organizational behavior. Leadership is also comparable from an organizational perspective. Scholars identified a relationship between transformational leadership in MLMs and *selfless pro-organizational behavior* (SPB), a term coined to represent behaviors that benefit the organization and the entrepreneur (Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014). Specifically, SPB is a choice to contribute to an organization instead of solely increasing personal gains, such as reputation (Effelsberg et al., 2014). SPB is vital to understanding that transformational leadership extends past self-interest for the benefit of entrepreneurial success; this illustrates influencing a collective perspective as opposed to individualism (Effelsberg et al., 2014). The scholars also present a contrasting view of pro-organizational behavior.

A direct contrast to SPB is *unethical pro-organizational behavior* (UPB), behaviors that benefit the organization at the expense of the market or the consumer (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015). Organizational behaviors such as bribery or concealing product flaws are examples of UPB that increase the organization's goals, but adversely affect external stakeholders in the market such as the consumers or communities (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015). Effelsberg and Solga (2015) researched the relationship between UPB and transformational leadership behaviors based on a follower's willingness to perform unethical behaviors to align individual goals with organizational goals and to create a sense of identity with the organization. Effelsberg and Solga also stated that the idea of a sense of identity with the organization recognizes a person's strong desire to belong and acquire a psychological attachment to the organization.

Effelsberg and Solga (2015) proposed that transformational leaders' organizational identification might influence followers to behave unethically in response to leadership behaviors. Graham, Ziegert, and Capitano (2015) agreed with this perspective and added that followers might engage in unethical behavior to express gratitude towards their leaders because of the desire for a positive social exchange relationship. Effelsberg and Solga (2015) concluded that the moral influence stemming from transformational leadership should promote positive organizational identification and interactions with external stakeholders. I included the next section to present examples of opposing theories to transformational leadership.

Contrasting Theories of Transformational Leadership

Critical management theory. Andersen (2015) opposed the TLT as a universal contingency theory and asserted there is a bias leader-follower relationship that obstructs organizational performance and effectiveness. Andersen also supported his opposition by noting that transformational leadership focuses on skills and behaviors while failing to address leadership behavior outcomes; transformational leadership is an alluring self-image of leaders that oversimplifies the phenomenon of leadership and the necessary actions and behaviors that yield results in organizational performance. Andersen imposed the critical management theory as an opposing theory of transformational leadership. Anderson's critical management theory interprets a realistic perspective of managerial behavior. Andersen inferred that the followers determine achievement goals as opposed to transformational leaders; transformational leaders extend achievement goals by also influencing effectiveness. The next contrasting theory is the self-consistency theory.

Self-consistency theory. The influence of transformational leadership is contingent upon the personality of the follower, not solely based on transformational leadership behavior and style (Ho, 2016). Ho (2016) agreed that followers are more apt to perform well in an environment in which they feel satisfied and committed, but the follower's perspective on leadership is also a factor. The self-consistency theory contrasts the transformational theory by asserting the follower's self-esteem affects the perception of leadership and the reciprocation of transformational leadership behaviors (Ho, 2016). Followers with high self-esteem encourage challenging expectations and greater responsibility consistent with transformational leadership behaviors (Ho, 2016). Ekrot, Rank, and Gemünden (2016) agreed that employees exemplifying higher abilities recognize opportunities and react to constructive criticism as opportunities for growth and development. Followers with low self-esteem might view leadership behaviors as a threat due to a lack of confidence in the ability to accomplish the leader's expectations (Ho, 2016). Feelings of discouragement and frustration stemming from low self-esteem contrast the ability to present ideas for innovation due to the fear of scrutiny; constructive criticism is concerning due to the fear personal perception and evaluation based on the desire for social approval (Ekrot et al., 2016). In the next section, I focused on the topic of sustainability and the relationships between sustainability and leadership and entrepreneurship.

Sustainability

Sustainability demonstrates an economic indicator of survival beyond a specific timeframe or existing as a business entity for a certain amount of time (Fisher, Maritz, & Lobo, 2014). The problem is that only about 50% of new businesses started in 2011 survived for 5 years (United States Department of Labor, 2016). For this study, sustainability represents measuring business regarding success and failure, as the meanings of success or failure are multidimensional and could differ by personal perception (Le & Raven, 2015). Owens, Kirwan, Lounsbury, Levy, and Gibson (2013) described the most common definition of success as measuring economic factors that relate to performance, survival, growth, and profitability. As financial gain is a reasonable indication of success, financial performance is not the only determinate of entrepreneurial success (Wach, Stephan, & Gorgievski, 2016). Measuring success is subjective; thus, success could vary based on the entrepreneur's assessment of achievement (Wach et al., 2016). One's perception of success could be a failure by another; the perception of success or failure is not concrete and could change over time (Davis, 2016). Instead, sustainability will represent the idea of business success; Jackson and Jackson (2015) noted a sustainable business is profitable and valuable to consumers. The interpretation of failure represents a source of learning from failed experiences (Byrne & Shepherd, 2015). Knowledge gained from failed experiences are vital to building a more sustainable business on the next attempt.

The development of strategic sustainability relates the value of sustainability to the accomplishment of organizational goals; the four drivers of sustainability strategies are legality, profitability, innovation, and organizational change and social impact (Radulescu, 2016). The legality of sustainability represents the strategies that pertain to the conditions required by labor and environmental laws, while profit-driven strategies analyze the social and environmental positions that could improve intangible assets (Radulescu, 2016). Innovation strategies for sustainability incorporate economic, social, and environmental benefits, and organizational change and social impact strategies integrate long-term development with network collaboration (Radulescu, 2016). The four drivers of sustainability strategies illustrate concepts that are invaluable to organizational development.

Corporate social responsibility. Wyness, Jones, and Klapper (2015) expanded on the social impact of sustainability on business accountability and corporate social responsibility. Entrepreneurial scandals adversely affect the implementation of social practices and are the direct cause of imposing corporate social responsibility standards (González-Rodríguez, Díaz-Fernández, & Simonetti, 2015). Corporate social responsibility represents the decision-making behavior of entrepreneurs during ethical dilemmas (González-Rodríguez et al., 2015). The intent of corporate social responsibility enforces a different perspective of the misrepresentation of entrepreneurship and its association with greed, capitalism, and improper consumerism (Wyness et al., 2015). Opposed to solely equating entrepreneurship with personal gain, developing economic growth and sustainability contribute to global economic development (Wyness et al., 2015). Entrepreneurs practicing corporate social responsibility implement ethical standards in business and in their actions for social change that affect the community.

Baumol (2016) recognized that there are entrepreneurs that practice social responsibility by giving back to the community and contributing donations. Parhankangas, McWilliams, and Shrader (2014) asserted that social responsibility leads to job creation, increased tax revenue, and attentiveness to consumer needs in the community. Coben (2014) described cultural sustainability as a driver of economic activity and poverty alleviation stemming from generating jobs and revenue, increasing profitability, and economic stimulation. Further, the study conducted by Wyness et al.

(2015) supported that entrepreneurship has the potential to become a significant contribution to the well-being and the sustainability of society. Social entrepreneurship combines innovative aspects of business, development, economics, sociology, and social work to analyze global community issues (Foy Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). Sulphey and Alkahtani (2017) defined social entrepreneurship as an adaptable process of addressing social problems and basic needs in the community that retail organizations ignore. Sulphey and Alkahtani added that social entrepreneurs combine creativity with practical skills to develop and implement innovation. Social responsibility is an indicator of sustainability valuable for the entrepreneurs, organizations, and communities.

Parhankangas, McWilliams, and Shrader (2014) suggested a perspective that corporate social responsibility attributes more to retail organizations and sustainability parallels entrepreneurship. Sustainability strategies affect employees, communities, and consumers, and require more than marginal improvements associated with corporate social responsibility (Parhankangas et al., 2014). Innovation and disruptive technology are critical strategies for sustainability that increase the potential for competitive advantage as new business models (Parhankangas et al., 2014). Entrepreneurs benefit from taking advantage of implementing new business models because of the freedom to experiment and the flexibility to cope with market uncertainty (Parhankangas et al., 2014). Sustainable business practices have a beneficial relationship with entrepreneurship.

Sustainability entrepreneurship. Minello, Alves Scherer, and da Costa Alves, (2014) generalized entrepreneurial behaviors as concepts of competence that are vital for reaching sustainability, defined as the ability to capitalize on resources, engaging and committing to the responsibility of learning, and incorporating a strategic plan. The ability to capitalize on resources represents building entrepreneurial behaviors by training and preparing to think with creativity and optimism that could lead to innovation and acquiring a market niche (Minello et al., 2014). Acknowledging responsibility for learning implements ownership of behaviors and any consequences of behaviors as the entrepreneur calculates risk and identifies new opportunities (Minello et al., 2014). Demonstrating the ability to view future opportunities in the present outlines a strategic vision (Minello et al., 2014). The concepts of entrepreneurial competence could minimize diversions from sustainability and dually serve the purpose of presenting concepts to use as learning opportunities when reflecting on business failure.

Van Rooij (2015) asserted the importance of learning from failure, explicitly avoiding repetitive mistakes. The inability to reach a level of sustainability is not an absolute indication of business failure; one should analyze whether there was a cause or whether the failure was unavoidable (Van Rooij, 2015). Pinho and Elisabete (2014) stated that the ability to identify opportunities improves as past experiences increase influence quality, innovation, value creation, and opportunity assessment (Pinho & Elisabete, 2014). The idea of reassessing structures, cultures, and practices has the potential to initiate a transition toward sustainability (Timmermans, Van Der Heiden, & Born, 2014). Ideally, entrepreneurs should strategize the advantages and disadvantages of relaunching after a business failure. Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, and Lyon (2013) recognized that entrepreneurs should analyze the financial, social, and psychological costs of failure as exiting an entrepreneurial career could be the better option if these costs are too high in comparison to the benefits of starting a new business venture. Sustainability for this study is quantifiable by owning a business affiliated with an MLM for more than 5 years.

Summary and Transition

In summary, I intended to explore transformational leadership strategies that I identified from the participants' experiences of sustaining an MLM business beyond 5 years. The research question aligned with the problem and purpose to obtain data through qualitative, multiple-case study research. The literature review constructs included an evaluation of the MLM structure, background of transformational leadership, supporting and contrasting theories of transformational leadership, and concepts of sustainability. The organizational structure of MLM is the foundation for earning income from selling an organization's product or service and recruiting to build a team within the develop an entrepreneurial business. I chose transformational leadership as a suitable concept and theory of leadership based on the components charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration that could stimulate entrepreneurial development. To expand the TLT, supporting theories included LMX and social identity theory. To provide an opposing perspective, contrasting theories included critical management theory and the self-consistency theory. To further expand the research question, I included concepts of sustainability in the literature review.

In Section 2, I expand on the purpose of the study by defining the roles of the researcher and the participants to mitigate potential bias. Identifying the research method and design is an expansion of the nature of the study to introduce the sample and population. I introduced and discussed the ethical requirements of the qualitative, multiple-case study research to illustrate the validity and reliability of data collection, organization, and analysis.

Section 3 is an analysis of the data collected from audio-recorded, semistructured interviews and reflective journaling. I interviewed 10 participants to explore their experiences of MLM entrepreneurial leadership and sustainability. I discussed the use of classic method of data analysis to categorize the recurring themes in the participants' responses. To support the results, I included a quote from the data that corresponds with each recurring theme: self-efficacy, behavioral approach to leadership, psychological perspective of leadership, resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals. I discussed how this study could apply to effective professional practice for business improvement. I included the implications for social change relating to economic and community development. In the recommendations for action and future research, I discussed who could be attentive to this study and the flexibility of the research. Finally, I reflect on the doctoral experience.

Section 2: The Project

In this section, I reiterated the purpose of this study and detailed the roles of the researcher and the participants. For the research method and design, I outlined the requirements for determining the appropriate sample and population based on the standards of ethical research. I also described the data collection process by identifying the data collection instrument, data collection technique, and data analysis. The data analysis process was a model of the requirements for reliability and validity because of the use of member checking.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore what strategies entrepreneurs of MLMs use for sustainability beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of 10 participants within various MLMs who had successfully maintained a business beyond 5 years in North Carolina. Entrepreneurs could view the study results as contributions to positive social change such as encouraging the development of individuals using leadership to promote community responsibility and decrease the community unemployment rate through entrepreneurial opportunities as opposed to a retail organization.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is to be the primary data collection instrument; I interviewed a selected number of participants to research common themes as strategies for entrepreneurial sustainability. Miyazaki and Taylor (2008) noted the importance of the ethical research to mitigate any misinterpretation of the participants' responses or unethical behavior that could result in interviewer or researcher bias. First, the researcher's interests could compromise the research design, recording, interpretation, or evaluation of the study (Miyazaki & Taylor, 2008). Second, the researcher's interests could compromise the participants' perception of the interview questions (Miyazaki & Taylor, 2008). I completed the study as required, understood my role in the study design, and interpreted limitations and challenges appropriate for reliability and validity.

Roulston and Shelton (2015) defended the notion that due to the interactions with the participants, the reliability and viability of qualitative research could raise a question. According to the Belmont Report, three culturally accepted principles should remain constant in any ethical evaluation of human behavior: respect, beneficence, and justice (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016). Respect for participants includes two requirements, which consist of the capability of determining personal goals and acting on such goals, and the protection of participants such that any involvement is voluntary and the researcher informs the participant of their choice for voluntary involvement (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016). I advised the participants that they could withdraw from participating using verbal or written notification. Complying with actions that are respectful, promote well-being, and protecting the participants from any harm is a requirement of beneficence (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016). I maintained my moral obligation by respecting all participants' decisions by promoting well-being and minimizing risk. Unjust actions include both denying any participant of a benefit without just reason and imposing any burden on the participant (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016). To avoid any preconceived injustices, selection of participants solely included the parameters of the study and did not reflect class or ethnicity.

To describe my relationship to the topic, I assert that I have not successfully implemented leadership strategies to sustain an MLM organization beyond 5 years. The participants of this study included entrepreneurs of MLMs that have sustained an MLM business more than 5 years and have implemented leadership strategies to build a distribution network within their independent business of their respective MLMs. I assert I do not have a personal or business relationship with any of the participants of the study to mitigate bias of the researcher's culture and experiential background.

To avoid viewing data through a personal lens, I implemented an interview protocol that includes member checking, data saturation, and data triangulation to correlate themes until the participants' responses present no new information. The concepts used for the interview protocol were important to gain unbiased insight of the opinions, experiences, and behaviors of the participants when conducting interviews and analyzing the research data (Rowley, 2012). Using the member checking process after conducting the interview ensured the validity of the participants' responses. Using data triangulation methods semistructured interviewing and reflective journaling ensured the depth and reliability of the data collected to reach data saturation.

Participants

Probst (2016) asserted that participants of a qualitative research study are sharing personal experiences and researchers must respect their vulnerability and embrace their knowledge. The eligibility criteria stem from components of the research question including entrepreneurs of MLMs who have successfully implemented leadership strategies to sustain a business with a distribution network more than 5 years in the Wake County area. The eligibility criteria required participants to have an independent business within an MLM organization, participants must have a hierarchical status that requires a team, and the business duration is longer than 5 years. Brinkmann (2016) identified one approach to developing a qualitative interview as creating an instrument that transfers reality from the participant to the interview. Identifying prerequisites for establishing criteria is the first phase of qualitative interviewing and stems from previous empirical knowledge relating to the research topic (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Selecting participants using a specific criterion is key to obtaining qualified participants to gain credible information (Turner, 2010). Each of the eligibility criteria is within the scope of the population.

To gain access to participants, I used social media to recruit participants by posting a standard message on my page and groups that I am a member of on various social media platforms. The standard messaged addressed entrepreneurs in the specific geographical region for the study, stated my intentions for the study, and included the participant criteria. If any potential participants responded to the post indicating their interests, I contacted the potential participant via phone or email. When speaking with the potential participant, I reiterated the reason for my criteria inquiry questions and my intent for the study; I presented the participant criteria as questions to determine if the entrepreneur met the criteria. Participants who met the criteria received an email that included the informed consent form. Participants understood that agreeing to participate in this study is voluntary and participants were entirely able to withdraw at any time. I contacted the participants who replied with consent by phone or email to schedule a semistructured interview. According to Evangelinou-Yiannakis (2017), semistructured interviews are appropriate to create a relaxed and comfortable environment that encourages freely discussing open-ended questions. Doody and Noonan (2013) outlined the advantages of interviewing including gaining insight and context, asking probing questions for further clarity, and stimulating self-exploration and discovery. Challenges of gaining access could include the participant's perception of validity or the requirements of the ethics committee (Hoyland, Hollund, & Olsen, 2015).

Strategies for establishing a working relationship with participants included obtaining consent and following the interview protocol. Obtaining consent provided participants with the reasons for the study, potential risks or benefits of involvement, and the expected outcomes of the study (Cridland, Jones, Caputi, & Magee, 2015). To establish awareness, I provided the participant with information detailing the interview process. The interview protocol included explaining the purpose of the study and the behavioral expectations of the researcher and the participant (Taylor, Parshuram, Ferri, & Mema, 2017). To build rapport, I discussed with the participant the value of their experiences to the study; as Wolgemuth et al. (2015) suggest, participants appreciate sharing their experiences with empathetic listeners with the intent to benefit others. The eligibility requirements aligned with the research question to explore entrepreneurial leadership strategies implemented for sustainability in MLMs beyond 5 years.

Participants received a summary of the results of this study in a chart outlining which leadership strategies might or might not be more prevalent in participant responses.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Devotta et al. (2016) used an interviewing method to research lived experiences in a community-based qualitative case study. I selected a qualitative research method to use open-ended interview questions to explore strategies implemented by successful entrepreneurs who maintained sustainability beyond 5 years. Kozleski (2017) illustrated the value of qualitative research using the concept of social validity noting that qualitative research could potentially apply to current and everyday life. Parallel to this study, social validity includes the importance of participant engagement and contribution critical to some aspect of sustainability (Jayawickreme, Jayawickreme, & Goonasekera, 2012; Kozleski, 2017). By selecting a qualitative research method and incorporating social validity, I researched current experiences of strategies for sustainability that entrepreneurs were willing to discuss during an interview

In contrast to the qualitative research method, the quantitative or mixed methods do not relate to this study. The quantitative research method uses statistical data similar to scientific concepts as opposed to philosophical perception (Barnham, 2015; Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The mixed methods approach requires integration of qualitative and quantitative methods that justify the use of both inductive and deductive reasoning; inductive research is more appropriate by analyzing the events presented from the participant to identify significant categories to expand a theory (Ivankova, 2014). From the perspective that both the quantitative research method and mixed methods are not appropriate for this study, I only used the qualitative research method.

Research Design

The qualitative research design most appropriate for this study was the case study design. There are three components of case study research including lived experiences, triangulation, and data analysis based on a theory (Gog, 2015; Göttfert, 2015). In this study, I incorporated the three components of case study research by using triangulation to analyze data from multiple participants' lived experiences to find common themes based on the TLT. The concept of triangulation is valuable to support the validity of a case study by incorporating multiple methods of data collection (Denzin, 2012). Potential benefits of a multiple case study include increasing understanding through comparison and replication by providing multiple sources of evidence (Ridder, 2017; Tumele, 2015). In comparison to a single case study, a researcher should investigate multiple cases to collect data for the research question and support or refute argumentation (Gog, 2015). This study is a multiple case study as I collected data from various entrepreneurs of MLMs.

Population and Sampling

The scope of this qualitative, multiple-case study was the direct sales industry, specifically focusing on MLMs. The population for this study included entrepreneurs that meet the participant criteria by maintaining a leadership role in an MLM organization for more than 5 years in North Carolina area. I used purposive sampling as the sampling method for this study. Purposive sampling for qualitative research is appropriate to obtain a comprehensive understanding and as a strategy for semistructured interviewing (Duan et al., 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). Benoot, Karin, and Johan (2016) categorized purposive sampling as a technique for collecting information-rich data in which the researcher could gain knowledge and an in-depth understanding. I established a sample of 10 participants that fit the participant criteria as an opportunity to reach data saturation at the point in which the interview participants do not present any new data, and other researchers could replicate the study. I used methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure data saturation. The eligibility criteria required participants to have an independent business within an MLM organization for longer than 5 years, a hierarchical status that requires a team, and live in North Carolina. Each eligibility criterion is specific to the research question for ensuring data saturation.

Ethical Research

For a qualitative, multiple-case study, I must implement strict ethical considerations to comply with research ethics standards. I emailed the informed consent form to all potential participants to advise the intent of the study and obtain permission to include the potential participant in the study. Per the informed consent form, all participants should print or save the form to keep for personal record and contact information. I advised all participants that participants might withdraw from participating in the study at any time without penalty using verbal or written notification using the contact information provided on the informed consent form. The data will remain saved in a password-protected document on a separate storage device for 5 years to protect the rights of the participants. Walden University's approval number for this study was 04-19-18-0659856. The study did not include names or any identifying information of any of the participants for confidentiality.

According to the Belmont Report, participants must have a complete understanding of their role in the study (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016). To comply with this requirement, I informed all participants of the interview protocol and follow-up member checking process following the submission of their consent. I advised participants that participation is voluntary and that, at any time, a participant could withdraw from the study without providing a reason via email or phone. The contact information listed on the consent form included a statement of information on how to withdraw from the study if desired. Agreement documents and any data collected will remain confidential. Participants did not receive any incentive or financial compensation for their inclusion in the study. I will store the data collected in a password-protected document on a separate storage device for 5 years to protect the names of participants and the organization for confidentiality purposes. I will destroy all data on the device after the 5-year period. I destroyed all names and contact information at the completion of the study.

I informed participants I would be interviewing to compile data to research common themes that could contribute to sustainability in an MLM organization. I advised that they would be participating in a 30-45-minute audio-recorded interview during a scheduled time of their convenience where I would ask open-ended questions regarding their MLM business and leadership strategies that led to sustainability beyond 5 years. I ensured participants understood that answers would be according to personal experience, and thus no answer is right or wrong; to protect the participants' rights, the participant could refuse to answer any question deemed uncomfortable. After the interview, each participant reviewed the synopsis of each interview response before analyzing the data for the study as the member checking process. I advised the purpose of this process is to ensure I accurately represented all responses in the initial interview correctly and appropriately. Participants could request a summary of the research findings at the conclusion of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

In this qualitative, multiple-case study, I was the primary collection instrument. In qualitative research, it is the role of the researcher to explore feelings and experiences using qualitative methods to construct common themes and relationships (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2012). As a data collection method, researchers should probe theoretical works of proper interview procedures and interview protocol as opposed to the assumption that interviewing is a natural experience that does not incorporate specific requirements (Brinkmann, 2016; Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Secondary data collection instruments included a semistructured interview method using open-ended questions following the interview protocol referenced in Appendix A. Interviewing as a data collection method in qualitative studies is most beneficial for exploring comprehensive data of participant experiences. Kallio et al. (2016) and Doody and Noonan (2013) concluded that the popularity of semistructured interview is because of the versatility and flexibility of the structure that could relate to various study methods.

Using the semistructured interview method listed in the interview protocol, I engaged the participant with a series of predetermined interview questions referenced in Appendix A. Researchers should develop an interview guide, understand how to identify when to insert probing questions appropriately, and listen and transcribe an interview before the next scheduled participant to discover areas for improvement for successful semistructured interviews (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I did not implement structured or unstructured interviewing methods as structured interviews do not allow probing questions for in-depth elaboration, and unstructured interview data prompts difficulty in recognizing common themes due to the loose structure of nondirective questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Panagiotakopoulos, 2011). To enhance reliability and validity, I implemented a member checking process following the semistructured interview. Returning the synopsis of the interview answers to the participant allows the researcher to ensure the accuracy of the data and evaluate the data using triangulation (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Harvey, 2015). The researcher applied convergence and corroboration of the data for triangulation to document common themes stemming from various sources of data (Gibson, 2017). Refer to Appendix A for the member checking process.

Data Collection Technique

The primary approach for collecting data was conducting ten semistructured interviews that refer to the research question: What strategies do entrepreneurs of MLMs implement for sustainability beyond 5 years? Following the interview protocol in Appendix A, each interview conducted used the same structure to comply with ethical considerations. The participant and I introduced ourselves, and I reiterated the information from the consent form before beginning the interview process. After a series of open-ended and probing questions, the interview concluded with discussing the member checking process. To increase reliability and validity, I used the member checking process to interpret the participants' responses to the interview questions. To ensure I had an accurate representation of the participants' responses, each participant reviewed the synopsis of each interview response. I asked the participants if they agree or disagree with the synopsis of each interview response. I used reflective journaling as the second source of data and to categorize common themes that are strategies for sustainability. The reflective journaling process included taking notes of vital points and observations as the participant answered each interview question.

There are fundamental concepts that are advantages and disadvantages to appropriately using interviewing as a data collection technique. Downey (2015) developed the concept of the *looking-glass self* as a synthesis of factors that could influence the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative interviews. Subjective factors, such as interruptions and silences, associate with disadvantages like anxiety in face-to-face interviews based on interactions, emotions, and perceptions (Downey, 2015). The interviewer must gauge the participants' feelings, mainly pride, embarrassment, and sympathy, for controlling the dynamics and avoiding potential problems (Downey, 2015). Similarly, by gauging reflective verbal language such as a pause, the interviewer should look for signs of uncertainty and disengagement (McVey, Lees, & Nolan, 2016). A pause could also indicate advantages such as reflecting, listening, or channeling personal experiences (McVey et al., 2016). Being attentive to verbal and nonverbal cues are essential for conducting interviews as a method of data collection for accuracy and ethical behavior.

Data Organization Technique

I organized the data by participant number to create a file including the recorded interview, transcription, and member checking results. I coded each participant using the letter P and a number 1 through 10 corresponding with the order in which the participant agreed to the consent form. In a separate document, I listed each of the participants' identifying information and the corresponding participant number for confidentiality. Specific codes should represent all information that identifies both the participant and the MLM organization (Wahyuni, 2012). Initially, I decided that NVivo qualitative software was the best option for the interview coding process and data analysis. The benefits that led to the initial decision to use data analysis software included time management, data interpretation efficiency, and a data analysis audit trail (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009). I decided that the classic method using a manual coding process was a more appropriate strategy for in-depth data analysis. I coded each file using a mind-mapping process to identify potential themes and similarities to cluster data to compile in a database. I stored the data securely as a password-protected document saved on a USB device that remained separate from the study and did not have any personal use outside of data storage for the study. I will destroy all data after five years of the study completion date to comply with the requirements of the study and the Belmont Report.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method for the qualitative case study was methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation is a combination of multiple data collection methods to research a single problem (Denzin, 2012). Joslin and Müller (2016) proposed that that researcher should use triangulation to analyze various perspectives of a complex problem to gain a better understanding. Using triangulation, the researcher could present a method of asserting validity and reliability by identifying relationships to generate knowledge using the data collected (Gibson, 2017; Konecki, 2008). I conducted a series of interviews to gain various perspectives of leadership strategies for entrepreneurial sustainability from multiple entrepreneurs in various MLMs. I used reflective journaling as the second source of data for methodological triangulation. The reflective journaling process consisted of handwriting everything seen and heard to reflect on the information away from the research site to identify themes and patterns in the participant's interview responses.

I used the classic method of data analysis for categorization and analysis of themes presented in the participants' responses. A manual coding process is a physical method for a cognitive overview to analyze connections in the data (Blair, 2016). Coding with topics assists with prioritizing clarity and analyzing qualitative data (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Salmona and Kaczynski (2016) agreed that methodological transparency is essential for increasing research quality, creditability, and transferability. The data analysis process included categorizing concepts of transformational leadership to identify key themes stemming from the data obtained from semistructured interviews.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

I conveyed qualitative reliability using concepts of dependability by asserting the stability and consistency of the data (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, Murphy, 2013). Chowdhury (2015) explained that applying the study's meaning throughout the entire work ensures dependability in a qualitative study. To show reliability in this study, I used the classic method of data analysis to analyze common themes guided by the data about leadership strategies and sustainability to ensure the study's meaning applied throughout the work.

Validity

The researcher conveys qualitative validity using concepts of credibility, transferability, and confirmability (see Table 5; Houghton et al., 2013).

Table 5

Concepts of Qualitative Validity

Credibility	Valuable research conducted in a believable manner
Transferability	Answers if the research findings are transferable to another context including the original meanings or inferences
Confirmability	Valuable research conducted in a neutral and accurate manner

The researcher can justify credibility using triangulation and member checking to confirm data by comparisons from multiple sources constructing a consistency in the data (Casey & Murphy, 2009; Houghton et al., 2013). The member checking method was vital to increasing credibility based on the interview transcription method and data interpretations (Weinbaum, 2016). I used the member checking process to ensure an accurate representation of the participants' responses to the interview questions. During the member checking process, each participant reviewed the synopsis I wrote after each interview; presenting new information during the member checking process will restart the process. The researcher can justify confirmability by illustrating an audit trail in the interview transcription and coding processes (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004; Houghton et al., 2013). Confirmability also stems from a methodological analysis of the researcher's study to avoid potential bias (Connelly, 2016). I used the classic method of data analysis for the interview coding process to compile a database of reoccurring concepts in the data. The researcher can justify transferability with the use of detailed descriptions of the context and including transparency in the data analysis to project a vivid informational picture that resonates with the reader (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016). The researcher cannot determine if the study is transferable; the reader will reach this conclusion based on interpretations of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). Other researchers could adapt this study to other areas such as retail sales, marketing, direct sales, or any other MLM organization. To show validity in this study, I ensured accuracy by using member checking as each participate reviewed the synopsis for each interview question. Member checking was complete if the participants' responses presented no new information consistent with data saturation.

Summary and Transition

In Section 2, I described the study and data collection methods. I was the primary data collection instrument, semistructured interviews as the data collection technique, and secure storage for the data organization technique. I identified the data analysis method as the classic method of data analysis for theme categorization. In Section 3, I conducted a qualitative case study and presented findings based on categorized themes from the participants' responses. I identified a relationship between the data and implications for social change to analyze the potential for tangible improvements and recommendations for action. Last, I included reflections on my experiences of the doctoral process and summarized the study with a concluding statement.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Social Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore what strategies entrepreneurs of MLMs use for sustainability beyond 5 years. The trend of business failure within the entrepreneurial MLM industry provided the foundation for this study. I conducted semistructured interviews with 10 MLM entrepreneurs from various organizations who maintained a business beyond 5 years. The data collected stemmed from the following research question: What are the leadership strategies that entrepreneurs of MLMs implement to remain sustainable beyond 5 years? The data collection instrument used in this study included seven interview questions and the use of probing questions for further clarification and additional information. To ensure the accuracy and validity of the data collected, I used member checking after each interview. I used the classic method to categorize and identify themes from the data that represented important strategies relating to the research question. The findings were the following leadership strategies that are key to sustainability in MLMs beyond 5 years: self-efficacy, the behavioral approach to leadership, the psychological perspective of transformational leadership, the resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals.

Presentation of the Findings

In this study, I explored strategies that entrepreneurs of MLMs implemented for sustainability using semistructured interviews and reflective journaling. The research question for this study was: What are the leadership strategies that entrepreneurs of MLMs implement to remain sustainable beyond 5 years? TLT was the conceptual framework for the literature review and the study. I compiled reoccurring themes from the data using the classic method of data analysis. The common themes represented in the data were self-efficacy, the behavioral approach to leadership, the psychological perspective of transformational leadership, the resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals.

Self-efficacy

In the context of this study, self-efficacy is the desire to obtain economic security solely as an entrepreneur or in addition to other employment. An entrepreneur's perception of self-efficacy might affect the level of competence that is critical for sustainability (Brändle, Berger, Golla, & Kuckertz, 2018). When asked about the strategies for sustainability, Participant 1 (P1), an entrepreneur with years of experience with numerous MLMs, said:

> I think I've been able to sustain by working hard, knowing and understanding the products, and conveying them to my customers and members of my team. If you are going to be a winner, you need to be with a winner. I think that is probably part of my sustainability more than anything else. It's a very highly regarded company; they've been around for a long time all over the world. It just has all the ingredients for success. So, it is easy to sustain and maintain your business.

When asked about the strategies for sustainability, Participant 4 (P4), an entrepreneur with experience in various types of entrepreneurial opportunities, said:

> The way I talk to people about the business. Your leaders could share with you what works for them, but it doesn't mean that it's necessarily going to work for

> you. So, I think you have to find your own niche in anything that you do, but use their strategies until you find your own niche; and then you come up with your own strategies when you really get into what works for you. So just listening, talking, and trying to see what the partners are struggling with, what the customers want to see, or what the intent is of the organization and just staying focused.

P1 and P4 shared their experiences of strategies of sustainability, both relating to self-efficacy and believing in the abilities necessary to sustain in MLM and perform as a leader.

Behavioral Approach to Leadership

From the results of the data, I deemed the behavioral approach to leadership a common theme during the data analysis process. The behavioral approach to leadership pertained to completing and delegating task-oriented behaviors. When asked about the challenges of sustainability MLM, Participant 2 (P2), an entrepreneur with years of experience with managing a high number of entrepreneurs, stated:

> It's figuring out there's non-negotiables, and whether it's working in 15-minute increments in your business each day, or whether it's assigning, okay, Mondays are my client care days, Tuesdays are my hostess coaching days, Wednesdays are my delivery days. So, finding that balance is, I think every business owner has struggled with, and that changes over time. So, it's not just scheduling, the schedule from 10 years ago is not the same schedule I have today.

When sharing experiences of maintaining sustainability, Participant 3 (P3), also an entrepreneur with years of experience with various types of entrepreneurial opportunities, stated:

> Well, the thing with multilevel marketing and direct sales is that, at least with this particular organization and a lot of them, it is all about adding to the team. It's about growing and growing that is imperative for operations. To be successful in this type of business, it's a mindset that you have to continuously grow to keep your business going as well. It is a business, but it's also like volunteer work, not full-time income. You are setting your hours to put the work in that you want to work based on flexibility. But, [to] a lot of my team this is part-time income. So, if they are ok with what they made on their full-time for that month, they may not put as much effort into the business that month

P2 and P3 shared their experiences on the challenges of maintaining sustainability in MLM and combat these challenges using task-oriented behaviors to prioritize and continue with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Psychological Perspective

Using the data, I categorized the psychological perspective of transformational leadership a common theme during the data analysis process. The psychological perspective is the ability to embrace industry change alongside continuing professional development and effective leadership; this is key for perspective strategies that promote productive behaviors (Wiggins-Romesburg, & Githens, 2018). When interviewed about the leadership style, Participant 9 (P9), an entrepreneur who acquired a leadership status within the first ninety days of joining the MLM organization, said:

> I try to be hands-on and personalized. I pay attention to what each individual team member needs because everyone's learning style is different. I need to get to know each one individually to know what is going to motivate them and keep them excited about the business. Knowing them helps me help them. Some people learn the ropes quickly and continue to stay motivated with little effort from leadership. Others will need more one-on-one time and different strategies of motivation. I want to help you help yourself; I want my team to learn to be self-sufficient and be able to be a leader of their own team.

When asked about strategies for product education, Participant 10 (P10), an entrepreneur with years of experience with numerous MLMs, stated:

> I do my monthly newsletters to the team to talk about new products or specials. I also constantly encourage my people to go online and learn about the products themselves. The company's training site provides interactive videos that stimulate your mind and prepares you with the product information you need to help you in the field. I make sure my team knows when I am available and I can assist with any questions. You don't need to memorize everything, just understand the product so you can present the benefits to potential clients.

The psychological perspective of transformational leadership is evident in the responses from P9 and P10 because in both contexts of the leadership style and product education, the entrepreneurs are demonstrating ways to influence each other for development.

Resource Theory of Social Exchange

From the results of the data, the resource theory of social exchange emerged as a common theme in the data analysis process. I decided the resource theory of social exchange was the appropriate theme if the participant's experience discussed utilizing available resources efficiently in a resourceful environment or an environment with limited access to resources. When asked about strategies for marketing, Participant 5 (P5), also an entrepreneur with years of experience with numerous MLMs, stated:

> Phone calls or referrals from other people are a good strategy, especially with vendor events and various activities. It is about getting out there and branding the product and the opportunity; going out there and making face-to-face contact, as the product sells itself. I use cards and give out samples or put them out at an event.

When interviewed about product education strategies, Participant 7 (P7), an entrepreneur who recently acquired a new leadership status, stated:

> The company resources like the website that has information about all our products. I use resources like brochures that explain the ingredients or other information about the products for whatever I don't know off the top of my head. I've been doing this for some years, so some stuff I have retained from memory. But when I'm talking to people, and they ask about certain things about products that I do not know, I do have to go online and research. So, I rely on the

> company's recommendations as far as the products and things like that. There's a wealth of information on there.

Both P5 and P7 use company and personal resources for entrepreneurial gain and share their expertise with the members of their team for professional development.

Achievement Goals

The achievement goals theme was apparent when discussing standards both for the leader and for members of the team. Leaders could compare the performance of recognized standards amongst members of the team to determine skill level and individual development. Achievement goals promote long-term performance and commitment (Wang, Li, Sun, Cheng, & Zhang, 2018). When asked about team building strategies, Participant 8 (P8), an entrepreneur that has earned the highest prize status available for the organization, stated:

> Strategies for team building, now my team building strategies and team building skills need improvement. This fiscal year, I'm going to concentrate on building and adding at least two members a month, and that would give me a minimum of 24. That is what I want to do is increase it by that minimum of 24, but hopefully more than that. I plan to do that by going out and meeting people to share my card and follow up with them. Sometimes I will schedule on the spot for a tentative appointment.

When interviewed about a team reward system, Participant 10 (P10), also an entrepreneur with years of experience with numerous MLMs, said:

> The company has gifts and incentives that sales directors can purchase to give to the team for rewards. I also personally pick up gifts that I can give for meeting sales goals. We have the brunch to celebrate milestones and recognize new people. We also recognize new people at team meetings when they join, meet a sales goal, or add someone to their team.

P8 and P10 implemented personal achievement goals and promoted team achievement goals for development and increased performance.

Conceptual Framework

I analyzed the data obtained by interviewing MLM entrepreneurs who maintained a business more than 5 years to answer the overarching research question. Using the results, I confirmed strategies that could lead to entrepreneurial sustainability in MLM. The findings were that there is no specific strategy, but a combination of various strategies stemming from the data analysis. I confirmed that self-efficacy, the behavioral approach to leadership, the psychological perspective of transformational leadership, the resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals were the common strategies that led participants to sustainability beyond 5 years. In comparison to the results and data analysis, because there is no standard meaning of sustainability, there is no set business model for measuring sustainability (Jaramillo, Arimany-Serrat, Vidal, & Ferràs-Hernandez, 2018). In the case of this study, maintaining an MLM beyond 5 years is an indication of business sustainability.

I identified the TLT for the conceptual framework. The TLT is a current contemporary leadership theory in which researchers could use in support of the value of business achievement goals (Kovach, 2018). Transformational leadership relates to the MLM structure because of the leadership skills necessary to expand in MLM; transformational leadership was an appropriate fit for analyzing entrepreneurial organizations with increasing growth, constant change in an environment that is not consistently micro-managed, and continuous emphasis on cognitive development (Ma & Jiang, 2018). All the participants included in the research study had leadership experience; because participants acquired a leadership role, each participant was able to discuss experiences related to the leadership skills necessary to maintain the members of their team and elaborate on how such skills led to the sustainability of their business. The strategies for sustainability analyzed from the data collected compared to the existing literature on effective business practice.

Applications to Professional Practice

The strategies for sustainability stem from data analysis using the classic method and mind-mapping to cluster common themes. The data collection method included interviewing ten entrepreneurs who maintained a business in MLM beyond 5 years. The entrepreneurs interviewed exhibited leadership skills by meeting the qualification of obtaining a hierarchical status that required a team. The leading theory in the literature and conceptual framework was the TLT; both the theory and the data collected were relevant to improved business practice. According to the data collected, there were multiple strategies that I identified as common strategies that led to the participants' sustainability; these strategies are self-efficacy, the behavioral approach to leadership, the psychological perspective of transformational leadership, the resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals. Improved business practice in entrepreneurship has the potential for innovation in *design-thinking tools* and business models (Garbuio, Dong, Lin, Tschang, & Lovallo, 2018). From an entrepreneurial perspective, improved business practice encompasses implementing improved strategies that lead to economic stability, entrepreneurial sustainability, and financial gain. From an economic standpoint, improving business practice involves organizational innovation and development by disseminating such innovation and development to the surrounding communities. As implementing multiple strategies are necessary for improved business practice, a combination of strategies is vital for entrepreneurial and economic improvements.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change included the potential positive impact on community unemployment rates and community and individual development. Entrepreneurship increases economic value and societal value (Ron, 2018). With the growing trend of MLMs, consumers are choosing to become an entrepreneur as full-time employment or adding an entrepreneurial investment to supplement income from full-time or part-time employment. Economic security is indicative of stable or extra income that provides individual and entrepreneurial development. Entrepreneurship also increases societal value; visionary and innovative entrepreneurs focus on addressing social needs such as improving poverty and promoting community sustainability (Foy Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). By addressing complex social issues, entrepreneurs are promoting the benefits of entrepreneurship and the impact on community growth.

Recommendations for Action

By analyzing the data according to how often the theme appeared, the strategies emerging from the participants' experiences showed that entrepreneurs should employ more than one strategy to maintain sustainability in MLMs beyond 5 years. Entrepreneurs interested in improving current business practices, entrepreneurs with a goal of maintaining sustainability beyond 5 years in the MLM industry, or nascent entrepreneurs planning to invest in the MLM industry should be attentive to the results of this study. Because of the flexibility of this study, entrepreneurs outside of the MLM industry, such as direct sales or marketing, also have the potential to benefit from the leadership and business strategies for sustainability. The results of the data collected could disseminate through the literature, conferences, training, networking groups, or any business or direct sales organizations.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research on strategies for entrepreneurial sustainability will continue to extend the body of knowledge. The limitations and delimitations for this study included the inability to control the participants' willingness to participate, the sole focus on entrepreneurs in the MLM industry more than 5 years, and the geographical selection of North Carolina. During the process of recruiting participants, I found that some entrepreneurs were unwilling to participate in an interview because of the recording requirement; future researchers could find a way to explore the practices of experienced entrepreneurs using predetermined interview questions without recording or in a setting that seems less formal. Entrepreneurs who were unwilling to participate in a recorded interview agreed to give their insight on leadership, and I noted their experiences in my reflective journal. Future researchers could duplicate this study by recruiting in any other realm of direct sales or use a different geographical specification. A quantitative study could provide data correlations between strategies and sustainability by answering questions stemming from an overarching hypothesis.

Reflections

Collecting data and completing the doctoral study was a rewarding experience that is personally beneficial, as well as a benefit to my networking cohorts aware of the research study and noted an interest in the results. To avoid personal bias, I used the data from the participants' responses as the basis for the common themes in the presentation of findings. I focused solely on the participants' responses for the data analysis and the results of the study. I feel that engaging with the participants to listen and learn had no adverse effect on the participants. Completing the doctoral study provided the opportunity to learn insight from entrepreneurs with a current business in various organizations in the MLM industry. During the some of the conversations about the inclusion criteria or the interview process, entrepreneurs who had not sustained a business past the 5-year requirement, had not acquired a team, or declined to participate in a recorded interview also provided tips from experience regarding their sustainability in their organization until this point. Topics discussed related to entrepreneurial learning, adjusting to the next generation's innovation, maneuvering in the workforce, remaining cognizant of the targeted audience, and continuing a rapport with others despite career path or job status.

The recommendations for action refer to entrepreneurs looking to invest in a business in MLM or entrepreneurs researching information to improve their current business; this also includes entrepreneurs planning a second attempt at business ownership. Such entrepreneurs should evaluate the reasons concerning the first business exit and revamp strategies when returning to the market. This study contributes to my professional development and business practices because I am an entrepreneur planning a second attempt in MLM; the first MLM endeavor had a duration of 3 years, with a portion of the last year at a hierarchical status requiring a team. By researching entrepreneurs with at least 5 years of experience and leadership expertise, I collected data that pertained to the main factors of MLM businesses: organizational growth by increasing membership and sustainable profit by sales and recruiting. I have determined that entrepreneurs in other MLM companies could use the leadership and sustainability strategies discovered from conducting this study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple-case study was to explore strategies entrepreneurs of MLMs use for sustainability beyond 5 years in MLMs. I interviewed ten entrepreneurs as participants in this study to explore the personal experiences of entrepreneurs who maintained a business more than 5 years and have reached a leadership status in their organization. The data collected added to the body of knowledge literature related to effective business practice and economic improvement. From the data, I discovered that a combination of self-efficacy, the behavioral approval to leadership, the psychological perspective of transformational leadership, the resource theory of social exchange, and achievement goals were all evident strategies that led to entrepreneurial sustainability in MLM.

References

Afsar, B., Badir, Y. F., Saeed, B. B., & Hafeez, S. (2017). Transformational and transactional leadership and employee's entrepreneurial behavior in knowledge-intensive industries. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *28*, 307-332. doi:10.1080/09585192.2016.1244893

Alexander A. C., & Hardy, L. (2014). Transformational leadership: A quasi-experimental study. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *35*, 38-53. doi:10.1108/LODJ-03-2012-0033

Amankwaa, L. (2016). Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, *23*, 121-127. Retrieved from tuckerpub.com/jcd.htm

Amundsen, S., & Martinsen, O. L. (2015). Linking empowering leadership to job satisfaction, work effort, and creativity: The role of self-leadership and psychological empowerment. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *22*, 304-323. doi:10.1177/154805181456819

Andersen, J. (2015). Barking up the wrong tree. On the fallacies of the transformational leadership theory. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *36*, 765-777. doi:10.1108/LODJ-10-2013-0130

Artinger, S., & Powell, T. C. (2016). Entrepreneurial failure: Statistical and psychological explanations. *Strategic Management Journal*, *37*, 1047-1064. doi:10.1002/smj.2378

Babu, R., & Anand, P. (2015). Legal aspects of multilevel marketing in India:

Negotiating through murky waters. *Decision (0304-0941)*, *42*, 359-378. doi:10.1007/s40622-015-0105-1

Baluku, M. M., Kikooma, J. F., & Kibanja, G. M. (2016). Psychological capital and the startup capital-entrepreneurial success relationship. *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, *28*, 27-54. doi:10.1080/08276331.2015.1132512

Barnham, C. (2015). Quantitative and qualitative research. *International Journal of Market Research*, *57*, 837-854. doi:10.2501/IJMR-2015-070

Bass, B. M. (1990). *Bass and Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial application* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press.

Baumol, W. J. (2016). On the appropriate social responsibilities of successful entrepreneurs. *Business & Society*, *55*, 14-22. doi:10.1177/0007650314523087

Benoot, C., Karin, H., & Johan, B. (2016). The use of purposeful sampling in a qualitative evidence synthesis: A worked example on sexual adjustment to a cancer trajectory. *BMC Medical Research Methodology, 16*(1), 1-12. doi:10.1186/s12874-016-0114-6

Berim, R., & Gentritt, B. (2014). Systems theory and systems approach to leadership. *ILIRIA International Review, 4*, 59-76. doi:10.21113/iir.v4i1.53

Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). Member checking. *Qualitative Health Research*, *26*, 1802-1811. doi:10.1177/1049732316654870

Blair, E. (2016). A reflexive exploration of two qualitative data coding techniques. *Journal of Methods and Measurement in the Social Sciences*, *6*, 14-29. doi:10.2458/jmm.v6i1.18772

Brändle, L., Berger, E. S. C., Golla, S., & Kuckertz, A. (2018). I am what I am - How nascent entrepreneurs' social identity affects their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, *9*, 17–23. doi:10.1016/j.jbvi.2017.12.001

Branthwaite, A. & Patterson, S. (2012). In search of excellence: The influence of Peter Cooper on qualitative research. *International Journal of Market Research*, *54*, 635-658. doi:10.2501/IJMR-54-5-635-658

Brinkmann, S. (2016). Methodological breaching experiments: Steps toward theorizing the qualitative interview. *Culture & Psychology*, *22*, 520-533. doi:10.1177/1354067X16650816

Brod, M., Tesler, L. E., & Christensen, T. L. (2009). Qualitative research and content validity: Developing best practices based on science and experience. *Quality of Life Research*, 18, 1263-1278. doi:10.1007/s11136-009-9540-9

Buch, R., Thompson, G., & Kuvaas, B. (2016). Transactional leader-member exchange relationships and followers' work performance. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, *23*, 456-466. doi:10.1177/154805181663022

Burns, J. M. G. (1978). *Leadership* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Byrne, O., & Shepherd, D. (2015). Different strokes for different folks: Entrepreneurial narratives of emotion, cognition, and making sense of business failure. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *39*, 375-405. doi:10.1111/etap.12046

Casey, D., & Murphy, K. (2009). Issues in using methodological triangulation in research. *Nurse Researcher*, *16*, 40-55. Retrieved from https://journals.rcni.com/nurse-researcher

Chatterjee, N., & Das, N. (2015). Key psychological factors as predictors of entrepreneurial success: A conceptual framework. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, *21*, 102-114. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org/academy-of-entrepreneurship-journal/

Chowdhury, I. A. (2015). Issue of quality in a qualitative research: An overview. *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*, *8*, 142-162. doi:10.12959/issn.1855-0541.IIASS-2015-no1-art0

Coben, L. (2014). Sustainable Preservation: Creating Entrepreneurs, Opportunities, and Measurable Results. *Public Archaeology*, *13*, 278-287. doi:10.1179/1465518714Z.00000000072

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Understanding research: Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *MEDSURG Nursing*, *25*, 435-436. Retrieved from www.medsurgnursing.net/

Cridland, E. K., Jones, S. C., Caputi, P., & Magee, C. A. (2015). Qualitative research with families living with autism spectrum disorder: Recommendations for conducting semistructured interviews. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, *40*, 78-91. doi:10.3109/13668250.2014.964191

Crittenden, V. L., & Albaum, G. (2015). The misplaced controversy about internal consumption: Not just a direct selling phenomenon. *Business Horizons*, *58*, 421-429. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2015.03.007

Cutcliffe, J., & McKenna, H. (2004). Expert qualitative researchers and the use of audit trails including commentary by Koch T. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *45*, 126-135. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.2003.02874.x

Davidson, J., Thompson, S., & Harris, A. (2017). Qualitative data analysis software practices in complex research teams: Troubling the assumptions about transparency and portability. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *23*, 779-788. doi:10.1177/1077800417731082

Davis, K. (2016). A method to measure success dimensions relating to individual stakeholder groups. *International Journal of Project Management*, *34*, 480-493. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2015.12.009

Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *6*, 80-88. Retrieved from journals.sagepub.com/home/mmr

Devotta, K., Woodhall-Melnik, J., Pedersen, C., Wendaferew, A., Dowbor, T. P., Guilcher, S. T., & ... Matheson, F. I. (2016). Enriching qualitative research by engaging peer interviewers: A case study. *Qualitative Research*, *16*, 661-680. doi:10.1177/1468794115626244

Doody, O., & Noonan, M. (2013). Preparing and conducting interviews to collect data. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*, 28-32. Retrieved from journals.rcni.com/journal/nr

Downey, B. (2015). The looking glass self and deliberation bias in qualitative interviews. *Sociological Spectrum*, *35*, 534-551. doi:10.1080/02732173.2015.1064803

Downton, J. V. (1973). *Rebel leadership: Commitment and charisma in the revolutionary process* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

Duan, N., Bhaumik, D. K., Palinkas, L. A., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Optimal design and purposeful sampling: Complementary methodologies for implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services*

Research, *42*, 524-532. doi:10.1007/s10488-014-0596-7

Effelsberg, D., Solga, M., & Gurt, J. (2014). Getting followers to transcend their self-interest for the benefit of their company: Testing a core assumption of transformational leadership theory. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *29*, 131-143. Retrieved from http://link.springer.com/journal/10869

Effelsberg, D., & Solga, M. (2015). Transformational leaders' in-group versus out-group orientation: Testing the link between leaders' organizational identification, their willingness to engage in unethical pro-organizational behavior, and follower-perceived transformational leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *126*, 581-590. doi:10.1007/s10551-013-1972-z

Ekrot, B., Rank, J., & Gemünden, H. G. (2016). Antecedents of project managers' voice behavior: The moderating effect of organization-based self-esteem and affective organizational commitment. *International Journal of Project Management*, *34*, *1028*-1042. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2015.10.011

Epitropaki, O., & Martin, R. (2013). Transformational-transactional leadership and upward influence: The role of Relative Leader-Member Exchanges (RLMX) and Perceived Organizational Support (POS). *Leadership Quarterly*, *24*, 299-315. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua

Evangelinou-Yiannakis, A. (2017). A reflection on the methodology used for a qualitative longitudinal study. *Issues in Educational Research*, *27*, 269-284. Retrieved from www.iier.org.au/

Fisher, R., Maritz, A., & Lobo, A. (2014). Evaluating entrepreneurs’ perception of success: Development of a measurement scale. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, *20*, 478-492. doi:10.1108/IJEBR-10-2013-0157

Foy Connor, R., & Bent-Goodley, T. B. (2016). Zanzibari social entrepreneurs and poverty alleviation strategies: Understanding efforts to build local community sustainability. *Journal of Community Practice*, *24*, 302-318. doi:10.1080/10705422.2016.1201784

Friedner, M. (2015). Deaf uplines and downlines: Multi-level marketing and disharmonious sociality in urban India. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 49(1), 1–25. doi:10.1177/0069966714558538

Garbuio, M., Dong, A., Lin, N., Tschang, T., & Lovallo, D. (2018). Demystifying the genius of entrepreneurship: How design cognition can help create the next generation of entrepreneurs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *17*, 41–61. doi:10.5465/amle.2016.0040

García-Buades, E., Martínez-Tur, V., Ortiz-Bonnín, S., & Peiró, J. M. (2016). Engaged teams deliver better service performance in innovation climates. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, *25*, 597-612. doi:10.1080/1359432X.2016.1171752

Gibson, C. B. (2017). Elaboration, generalization, triangulation, and interpretation: On enhancing the value of mixed method research. *Organizational Research Methods*, *20*, 193-223. doi:10.1177/109442811663913

Gog, M. (2015). Case study research. *International Journal of Sales, Retailing &*

Marketing, *4*, 33-41. Retrieved from www.ijsrm.com/

González-Rodríguez, M. R., Díaz-Fernández, M. C., & Simonetti, B. (2015). The social, economic and environmental dimensions of corporate social responsibility: The role played by consumers and potential entrepreneurs. *International Business Review*, *24*, 836-848. doi:10.1016/j.ibusrev.2015.03.002

Göttfert, E. (2015). Embedding case study research into the research context. *International Journal of Sales, Retailing & Marketing*, *4*, 23-32. Retrieved from www.ijsrm.com/

Graham, K., Ziegert, J., & Capitano, J. (2015). The effect of leadership style, framing, and promotion regulatory focus on unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *126*, 423-436. doi:10.1007/s10551-013-1952-3

Guan, M., & So, J. (2016). Influence of social identity on self-efficacy beliefs through perceived social support: A social identity theory perspective. *Communication Studies*, *67*, 588-604. doi:10.1080/10510974.2016.1239645

Hamstra, M., Van Yperen, N., Wisse, B., & Sassenberg, K. (2014). Transformational and transactional leadership and followers' achievement goals. *Journal of Business & Psychology*, *29*, 413-425. doi:10.1007/s10869-013-9322-9

Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member-checking: A dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *38*(1), 23-38. doi:10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487

Hatchaleelaha, S., & Wongsurawat, W. (2016). Multilevel marketing and entrepreneurship in Thailand. *Journal of Research in Marketing and*

Entrepreneurship, *18*, 146-160. Retrieved from http://www.emeraldinsight.com/

Heller, Y. (2014). Overconfidence and diversification. *American Economic Journal-Microeconomics*, *6*, 134-153. Retrieved from www.aeaweb.org/journals/mic

Herman, R. (2014). The emotional intelligence approach for enhancing skills in leadership. *Manager*, *19*, 38-44. Retrieved from http://manager.faa.ro/

Ho, J. (2016). Influence of organizational context and follower's deposition on the effectiveness of transformational leadership. *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior (Pracademics Press)*, *19*, 308-343. Retrieved from http://www.pracademics.com/index.php/ijotb

Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher*, *20*, 12-17. Retrieved from https://journals.rcni.com/nurse-researcher

Hoyland, S., Hollund, J. G., & Olsen, O. E. (2015). Gaining access to a research site and participants in medical and nursing research: a synthesis of accounts. *Medical Education*, *49*, 224-232. doi:10.1111/medu.12622

Hughbank, R. J., Horn, L. C. (2015). Traits and behavior: Psychological approaches to leadership. *Collective Efficacy: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on International Leadership*, *20*, 245-260. doi:10.1108/S1479-3660(2013)0000020014

Hurtado Jaramillo, C., Arimany-Serrat, N., Meijide Vidal, D., & Ferràs-Hernandez, X. (2018). Sustainability values for business: A perspective of value alignment in a supplier-client relationship for case Aqualogy. *Intangible Capital*, *14*(1), 3-24. doi:10.3926/ic.1083

Ivankova, N. V. (2014). Implementing quality criteria in designing and conducting a sequential QUAN → QUAL mixed methods study of student engagement with learning applied research methods online. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *8*, 25-51. doi:10.1177/1558689813487945

Jackson, E. A., & Jackson, H. F. (2016). The role of corporate social responsibility in improving firms' business in the directions of sustainable development, accountability and transparency. *Economic Insights - Trends & Challenges*, *68*, 39-50. Retrieved from www.upg-bulletin-se.ro/archive_en.htm

Jain, R., & Ali, S. (2013). Self-efficacy beliefs, marketing orientation and attitude orientation of Indian entrepreneurs. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, *1*, 71-95. doi:10.1177/0971355712469155

Jayawickreme, E., Jayawickreme, N., & Goonasekera, M. A. (2012). Using focus group methodology to adapt measurement scales and explore questions of wellbeing and mental health: The case of Sri Lanka. *Intervention (15718883)*, *10*, 156-167. doi:10.1097/WTF.0b013e328356f3c4

Joslin, R., & Müller, R. (2016). Identifying interesting project phenomena using philosophical and methodological triangulation. *International Journal of Project Management*, *34*, 1043-1056. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.05.005

Kallio, H., Pietilä, A., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semistructed interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *72*, 2954-2965. doi:10.1111/jan.13031

Konecki, K. T. (2008). Triangulation and dealing with the realness of qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, *4*, 7-28. Retrieved from www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/

Kovach, M. (2018). An examination of leadership theories in business and sport achievement contexts. *Journal of Values Based Leadership*, *11*, 186-202. doi:10.22543/0733.62.1215

Kozleski, E. E. (2017). The uses of qualitative research. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *42*, 19-32. doi:10.1177/1540796916683710

Lan, X. M., & Chong, W. Y. (2015). The mediating role of psychological empowerment between transformational leadership and employee work attitudes. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences: Contemporary Issues in Management and Social Science Research*, *172*, 184-191. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.353

Le, Q. V., & Raven, P. V. (2015). Woman entrepreneurship in rural Vietnam: success and motivational factors. *Journal of Developing Areas*, *49*, 57-76. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/journal/jdevearea

Li, Z., Gupta, B., Loon, M., & Casimir, G. (2016). Combinative aspects of leadership style and emotional intelligence. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *37*, 107-125. doi:10.1108/LODJ-04-2014-0082

Liu, Y., & Almor, T. (2016). How culture influences the way entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty in inter-organizational relationships: The case of returnee versus local entrepreneurs in China. *International Business Review*, *25*(1), 4-14. doi:10.1016/j.ibusrev.2014.11.002

Ma, X., & Jiang, W. (2018). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and employee creativity in entrepreneurial firms. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *54*, 302–324. doi:10.1177/0021886318764346

Makkonen, H., Johnston, W. J., & Javalgi, R. G. (2016). A behavioral approach to organizational innovation adoption. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*, 2480-2489. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.02.017

McCleskey, J. A. (2014). Situational, transformational, and transactional leadership and leadership development. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, *5*, 117-130. Retrieved from jbsq.org/

McVey, L., Lees, J., & Nolan, G. (2016). Reflective-verbal language and reverie in a qualitative interview. *Counselling & Psychotherapy Research*, *16*, 132-140. doi:10.1002/capr.12059

Meuser, J. D., Gardner, W. L., Dinh, J. E., Hu, J., Liden, R. C., & Lord, R. G. (2016). A network analysis of leadership theory: The infancy of integration. *Journal of Management*, *42*, 1374-1403. doi:10.1177/0149206316647099

Minello, I., Alves Scherer, L., & da Costa Alves, L. (2014). Entrepreneurial competencies and business failure. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, *18*(1), 1-15. Retrieved from http://www.alliedacademies.org/international-journal-of-entrepreneurship/

Miyazaki, A., & Taylor, K. (2008). Researcher interaction biases and business ethics research: Respondent reactions to researcher characteristics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *81*, 779-795. Retrieved from www.springer.com

Montgomery, A., Dacin, P., & Dacin, M. (2012). Collective social entrepreneurship: collaboratively shaping social good. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *111*, 375-388. doi:10.1007/s10551-012-1501-5

Moustakas, Clark E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mueller, B. A., & Shepherd, D. A. (2016). Making the most of failure experiences: exploring the relationship between business failure and the identification of business opportunities. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, *40*, 457-487. doi:10.1111/etap.12116

Muldrow, M. (2014). Online learning and post-secondary expectations: Bridging the gap from academic leaders to instructors. *Academic Leadership Journal in Student Research*, 1-12. Retrieved from https://scholars.fhsu.edu/aljsr/

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Office for Human Research Protections. (2016, March 15). The Belmont Report. Retrieved from https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html#xbasic

Owens, K. S., Kirwan, J. R., Lounsbury, J. W., Levy, J. J., & Gibson, L. W. (2013). Personality correlates of self-employed small business owners' success. *Work: Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation*, *45*, 73-85. doi:10.3233/wor-121536

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K.

(2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *42*, 533-544. doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

Panagiotakopoulos, A. (2011). Workplace learning and its organizational benefits for small enterprises: Evidence from Greek industrial firms. *The Learning Organization*, *18*, 350-360. doi:10.1108/09696471111151701

Parhankangas, A., McWilliams, A., & Shrader, R. C. (2014). Doing well by doing better: Entrepreneurs and sustainability. *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, *24*(2), 1-20. Retrieved from http://jsbs.org/

Park, J., & Park, M. (2016). Qualitative versus quantitative research methods: Discovery or justification? *Journal of Marketing Thought*, *3*(1), 1-7. doi:10.15577/jmt.2016.03.01.1

Peterson, R. A., & Albaum, G. (2007). On the ethicality of internal consumption in multilevel marketing. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *27*, 317-323. Retrieved from www.jpssm.org/

Pinho, J. C., & Elisabete, S. (2014). Personal characteristics, business relationships and entrepreneurial performance. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 21*, 284-300. Retrieved from www.emeraldinsight.com/journal/jsbed

Pradhan, R. K., Panda, M., & Jena, L. K. (2017). Transformational leadership and psychological empowerment. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, *30*, 82-95. doi:10.1108/JEIM-01-2016-0026

Prins, S. (2006). The psychodynamic perspective in organizational research: Making sense of the dynamics of direction setting in emergent collaborative processes. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *79*, 335-355. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)2044-8325

Racolţa-Paina, N., & Luncaşu, A. (2014). The sales force of multi-level marketing companies in the context of the marketing communications mix. Case study: Avon Cosmetics Romania. *Proceedings of the International Conference Marketing - From Information to Decision*, *7*, 185-200. Retrieved from http://www.worldcat.org/title/proceedings-of-the-international-conference-marketing-from-information-to-decision/oclc/797827383

Radulescu, C. V. (2016). Sustainability strategies in businesses. *Quality—Access to Success*, *17*, 331-336. Retrieved from http://www.srac.ro/calitatea/en/

Randolph-Seng, B., Mitchell, R. K., Marin, A., & Lee, J. H. (2015). Job security and entrepreneurship: Enemies or allies? *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, *20*, 24-49. Retrieved from https://www.greenleaf-publishing.com/journals/journal-of-applied-management-entrepreneurship

Ridder, H. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. *Business Research*, *10*, 281-305. doi:10.1007/s40685-017-0045-z

Rocha, V., Carneiro, A., & Varum, C. (2015). Entry and exit dynamics of nascent business owners. *Small Business Economics*, *45*, 63-84. doi:10.1007/s11187-015-9641-5

Ron, B. (2018). Entrepreneurial learning about the venture capitalist community.

Business & IT, *8*(1), 2-12. doi:10.14311/bit.2018.01.01

Roulston, K., & Shelton, S. A. (2015). Reconceptualizing bias in teaching qualitative research methods. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*, 332-342. doi:10.1177/107780041456380

Rowley, J. (2012). Conducting research interviews. *Management Research Review*, *35*, 260-271. doi:10.1108/01409171211210154

Rowold, J. (2014). Instrumental leadership: Extending the transformational-transactional leadership paradigm. *Zeitschrift für Personalforschung*, *28*, 367-390. doi:10.1688/ZfP-2014-03-Rowold

Rui, H., & Le, Z. (2012). Traditional marketing channel VS network marketing channel: A multi-market competition model. *2012 International Conference on Management Science & Engineering 19th Annual Conference Proceedings, Management Science and Engineering (ICMSE),* 693-698. doi:10.1109/ICMSE.2012.6414255

Sakiru, O. K., D'Silva, J. L., Othman, J., DaudSilong, A., & Busayo, A. T. (2013). Leadership styles and job satisfaction among employees in small and medium enterprises. *International Journal of Business and Management, 8*, 34-41. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v8n13p34

Salmona, M., & Kaczynski, D. (2016). Don't blame the software: Using qualitative data analysis software successfully in doctoral research. *Qualitative Social Research, 17*(3), 1-23. doi:10.17169/fqs-17.3.2505

Sánchez-Cardona, I., Soria, M. S., & Llorens-Gumbau, S. (2018). Leadership intellectual stimulation and team learning: The mediating role of team positive affect. *Universitas Psychologica*, *17*(1), 1-16. doi:10.11144/Javeriana.upsy17-1.list

Sethi, R., Chhimpa, A., & Khinvasara, S. (2015). Multilevel mischief – A myth or reality. *International Journal of Recent Research Aspects*, *2*, 60-64. Retrieved from http://www.ijrra.net/Home.php

Simon, M. K. & Goes, J. (2013). *Dissertation & scholarly research: A practical guide to start and complete your dissertation, thesis, or formal research project.* San Bernardino, CA: Kendall Hunt.

Sparks, J. R., & Schenk, J. A. (2001). Explaining the effects of transformational leadership: An investigation of the effects of higher-order motives in multilevel marketing organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *22*, 849-869. doi:10.1002/job.116

Sparks, J. R., & Schenk, J. A. (2006). Socialization communication, organizational citizenship behaviors, and sales in a multilevel marketing organization. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *26*, 161-180. Retrieved from www.jpssm.org/

Sulphey, M. M., & Alkahtani, N. S. (2017). Economic security and sustainability through social entrepreneurship: The current Saudi scenario. *Journal of Security & Sustainability Issues*, *6*, 479-490. doi:10.9770/jssi.2017.6.3(12)

Taylor, K. L., Parshuram, C. S., Ferri, S., & Mema, B. (2017). Communication: A description of the “event manager” role in resuscitations: A qualitative study of interviews and focus groups of resuscitation participants. *Journal of Critical Care*, *39*, 254-258. doi:10.1016/j.jcrc.2016.12.015

Timmermans, J., Van Der Heiden, S., & Born, M. P. (2014). Policy entrepreneurs in sustainability transitions: Their personality and leadership profiles assessed. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, *13*, 96-108. doi:10.1016/j.eist.2014.06.002

Torraco, R. J. (2016). Writing integrative literature reviews: Using the past and present to explore the future. *Human Resource Development Review*, *15*, 404-428. doi:10.1177/153448431667160

Tumele, S. (2015). Case study research. *International Journal of Sales, Retailing & Marketing*, *4*, 68-78. Retrieved from www.ijsrm.com/

Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *Qualitative Report*, *15*, 754-760. Retrieved from nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/

Tyre, T. A. (2016). Political aspects of network marketing organizations. *Insights to a Changing World Journal*, *2016*, 210-214. Retrieved from http://franklinpublishing.net/insightstoachangingworld.html

Tyssen, A. K., Wald, A., & Spieth, P. (2014). The challenge of transactional and transformational leadership in projects. *International Journal of Project Management*, *32*, 365-375. doi:10.1016/j.ijproman.2013.05.010

Ucbasaran, D., Shepherd, D. A., Lockett, A., & Lyon, S. J. (2013). Life after business failure: The process and consequences of business failure for entrepreneurs.

Journal of Management, *39*, 163-202. doi:10.1177/0149206312457823

United States Department of Commerce. (2017). Historical income tables: People. Retrieved from www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html

United States Department of Labor. (2016). Business employment dynamics. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/bdm/entrepreneurship/entrepreneurship.htm

United States Small Business Administration. (2007). Business creation in the United States. Retrieved from www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/sb_econ2008.pdf

Van Rooij, A. (2015). Sisyphus in business: Success, failure and the different types of failure. *Business History*, *57*, 203-223. doi:10.1080/00076791.2014.909808

Vaughn, P., & Turner, C. (2016). Decoding via coding: Analyzing qualitative text data through thematic coding and survey methodologies. *Journal of Library Administration*, *56*, 41-51. doi:10.1080/01930826.2015.1105035

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S. A., & Sullivan, Y. W. (2016). Guidelines for conducting mixed-methods research: An extension and illustration. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *17*, 435-495. Retrieved from aisel.aisnet.org/jais/

Wach, D., Stephan, U., & Gorgievski, M. (2016). More than money: Developing an integrative multi-factorial measure of entrepreneurial success. *International Small Business Journal*, *34*, 1098-1121. doi:10.1177/0266242615608469

Wahyuni, D. (2012). The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research*, *10*, 69-80. Retrieved from https://maaw.info/JAMAR.htm

Walsh, J. (2016). "'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind": how the IRS can prevent pyramid-scheme formation (and why it should). *Case Western Reserve Law Review*, *67*, 577-60. Retrieved from scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/caselrev/

Walter, F., & Scheibe, S. (2014). A literature review and emotion-based model of age and leadership: New directions for the trait approach. *Leadership Quarterly*, *24*, 882-901. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/leaqua

Wang, W., Li, J., Sun, G., Cheng, Z., & Zhang, X. (2018). Achievement goals and life satisfaction: The mediating role of perception of successful agency and the moderating role of emotion reappraisal. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica, 30*(1), 1-17. doi:10.1186/s41155-017-0078-4

Weinbaum, R. (2016). Getting more out of your interview data: Toward a framework for debriefing the transcriber of interviews. *Macrothink Institute*, *2*, 248-264. doi:10.5296/jei.v2i1.9216

Williams, E. A., Scandura, T. A., Pissaris, S., & Woods, J. M. (2016). Justice perceptions, leader-member exchange, and upward influence tactics. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *37*, 1000-1015. doi: 10.1108/LODJ-02-2013-0021

Wiggins-Romesburg, C. A., & Githens, R. P. (2018). The psychology of diversity resistance and integration. *Human Resource Development Review*, *17*, 179–198. doi:10.1177/1534484318765843

Wolgemuth, J. R., Erdil-Moody, Z., Opsal, T., Cross, J. E., Kaanta, T., Dickmann, E. M.,

& Colomer, S. (2015). Participants' experiences of the qualitative interview: Considering the importance of research paradigms. *Qualitative Research*, *15*, 351-372. doi:10.1177/1468794114524222

Wolgemuth, J. R., Hicks, T., & Agosto, V. (2017). Unpacking assumptions in research synthesis: A critical construct synthesis approach. *Educational Researcher*, *46*, 131-139. doi:10.3102/0013189X17703946

Wyness, L., Jones, P., & Klapper, R. (2015). Sustainability: What the entrepreneurship educators think. *Education & Training*, *57*, 834-852. doi:10.1108/ET-03-2015-0019

Yammarino, F. J., & Dubinsky, A. J. (1994). Transformational leadership theory: using levels of analysis to determine boundary conditions. *Personnel Psychology*, *4*, 787-811. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.1994.tb01576.x

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research: Design and methods* (6th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Zaech, S., & Baldegger, U. (2017). Leadership in start-ups. *International Small Business Journal*, *35*, 157-177. doi:10.1177/0266242616676883

Zyphur, M., & Pierides, D. (2017). Is quantitative research ethical? Tools for ethically practicing, evaluating, and using quantitative research. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *143*(1), 1-16. doi:10.1007/s10551-017-3549-8

Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Member Checking

The purpose of the interview protocol is to confirm each semistructed interview follows an identical process for each participant. The interview protocol ensures that all steps required in preparation for each face-to-face interview, the duration of the 30-45-minute interview, and completion of the follow-up member checking interview comply with all ethical considerations and within the realm of the rights of the participants.

Protocol

1. Complete introductions.
2. Present copy of emailed consent form, review consent form, and answer any questions or concerns.
3. Turn on the recording device.
4. Introduce participant(s) using pseudonym identification.
5. Begin the interview with question #1 and continue to the final question.
6. Follow up with any additional probing questions.
7. End the interview; discuss member checking process.
8. Thank participant(s) for their participation in the study and confirm participant(s) have access to contact information for any questions or concerns at the completion of the interview or member checking process.
9. Turn off recording device. End protocol.

Member Checking Process

1. Transcribe each recorded interview.

2. Write a one-paragraph synthesis of question #1 and continue to the final question.
3. Provide a printed copy of the synthesis to each participant.
4. Ask the participant if the synthesis accurately represents the answers to the question and if there is any additional information.
5. Continue the member checking process until no new data. End member checking.