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LEADER PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (LPD):  
IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING EFFICACY

By

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2019

LEADER PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (LPD):  
IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING EFFICACY

ABSTRACT

In the United States, the field of Professional Development is a \$160 billion per year market. The single largest audience of focus for professional development investment by organizations within the U.S. are leaders. Despite their position as important stakeholders, little is known or understood about their perceptions regarding leadership professional development (LPD). The purpose of this study was to explore how leaders in the U.S. understand and describe their viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes of LPD. A qualitative, multi-case investigation was launched to bring discovery of leader perspectives as to the impact of LPD at a personal, team, and organizational level. Moreover, the study sought to investigate leader beliefs and outlooks regarding the attitudinal, behavioral, and perceptual changes experienced by the leader as a result of LPD.

Using one-on-one interviews, followed by inductive coding, the researcher presents findings organized into themes emergent from the data. Each case study was analyzed individually, followed by cross-case analysis to elucidate findings that were common or unique among all five participant leaders. Several themes resulted from each of the four research questions, surfacing leader perceptions as it relates to their expectations and experiences with LPD at a personal, team, and organizational level. Additionally, the researcher reports on how

leaders understand and explain their role, as well as the role of the organization in leader development. Leader perceptions of the enablers and barriers to the efficacy of LPD, both at a personal and an organizational level, are also presented. Implications of the study for individual leaders, organizations, and the professional development industry at large are also explored. Finally, the researcher makes recommendations for further study to continue to broaden and deepen our understanding of LPD.

Keywords: Leadership, Professional Development, Leader Development, Training Evaluation, Growth.

University of New England

Doctor of Education  
Educational Leadership

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To my family and to our future generations, this personal accomplishment shall contribute to the legacy of our lives and our commitment to direct our strengths and talents in ways that are honorable and do good for ourselves and others. May we do life with integrity. May we always find our passion, the courage to pursue it, and the thanksgiving for the many, many favorable moments and circumstances along the way. I thank you, my dearest family, as the support system that propped me up with your love, encouragement, and assistance. You are daily my priority.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Existent in the literature is an understanding of the pervasive use of professional development (PD) across business sectors and organization types. “Organizations need a way to develop people when economic conditions fluctuate and in ways that deliver skills and knowledge when they are needed” (Meister & Willyerd, 2010, p. 154). Frequent mentions in the Harvard Business Review date as far back as 1993, referring to the concept of the “learning organization” where “management gurus like Tom Peters and Peter Senge are urging managers to create teams and organizations that can learn and even create knowledge together” (Campbell, 1995, p.14). According to Meister and Willyerd (2010), “firms can and do make large investments in extensive learning curriculum- and facilities-based courses” (p. 161).

A study conducted in 2015 found that in the year 2012, organizations within the United States spent \$164.2 billion on employee learning and development (State of the industry, 2015). Of the \$164.2 billion, 61% was spent by organizations with internal learning departments dedicated to ongoing employee learning efforts, while 28% was spent on external services (consultants, workshops, conferences), and 11% on tuition reimbursement (State of the industry, 2015). Institutional spending on employee PD options continues to grow. The largest subset group on which institutional spending is focused is on leaders, with an estimated organizational expense of as much as fifty billion U.S. dollars each year (Feser, Nielsen, & Rennie, 2017). This includes leadership development for current leaders, aspiring or future leaders, or those on a track for ascension into leadership roles within the organization.

Given the positional and otherwise influential power of leaders within an organization, leaders serve as important stakeholders not only in the availability and delivery of PD, but also in

any efforts to determine the impact of PD on the organization's employees and goals. Despite the organizational stake in PD efforts, the literature reveals a limited sophistication in connecting PD efforts with observable or measurable results (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). PD evaluation today is focused largely on assessing discrete and event-based activities of training or development (Harward & Taylor, 2014; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). Moreover, most measures tend to focus on collecting information around the participants' reaction to an activity or event, such as to a workshop, for example, and it is argued that drawing connections to higher gains such as learning and results is far less common (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Paine, 2016). Further, a real gap exists in the literature in the evaluation of PD from the lens of leaders, despite their place as the single largest group of focus in PD investment by organizations within the U.S. This study seeks to provide an increased understanding of this perspective. Exploring the leader's viewpoints on PD is the purpose of this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Organizations most commonly use participant user satisfaction to measure effectiveness of PD, and, specifically, of leadership development programs (LPD) (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2016). In a survey of over 700 business line managers and learning and development managers, it was found that only a quarter (26%) of respondents agreed that they have an effective way of measuring the impact of their programs (Harvard Business Review, 2016). Moreover, the same survey shows that respondents are just as likely to agree as disagree that they can capture their programs' effectiveness, which points to some confusion or lack of perceived ability to measure results of LPD effectively. Organizations have tried to better understand the impacts of PD efforts through various evaluation mechanisms that have been largely focused around the delivery of discrete events, for example, workshops or retreats

(Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Paine, 2016). For such events, the scope of data collection has oft been limited to participation in the event or activity, or to user satisfaction ratings on the event, logistics, and/or the event facilitator (Harward & Taylor, 2014; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). At times, the focus has extended, but still been limited to learner content retention in the short term or immediately following a PD event (Harward & Taylor, 2014). All of these measures, while important, are incomplete towards assessing the impacts of PD and LPD beyond user satisfaction and short-term learning retention. The result of this limitation is that aspects of personal impact to participants beyond levels of satisfaction or learning in the short-term, to include results of PD and LPD at the individual and organizational levels, are less understood.

Though PD can be understood as an industry and it is recognized that there is a rise in fiscal and time investment in it by organizations across industries within the U.S., accounts of PD and LPD experiences and how these are understood by employees who participate in them are less known or understood (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2013; Strack et al., 2010; Tsyganenko, 2013). For LPD in particular, the research clearly outlines the degree of fiscal investment, the available modalities for training delivery, practices around learning design, and leadership qualities to serve as the content for the training. However, there remains a gap as to what are the leader's viewpoints on the impact of LPD experiences on their own development, attitudes, and behaviors. Greater understanding is needed in this area so organizations can better recognize how the leader as a participant in LPD plays a role in the effectiveness of the learning program. A study on how leaders experience and perceive the impacts of LPD and what they describe as enablers and barriers to its application in their own development as leaders can add significant value to the study and understanding of LPD.

### **Purpose of the Study**

While much is known about LPD, less is known about the effects of the development on the participating leader (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). There is a scarcity of collection of evidence to inform understanding about how leaders perceive and explain their experiences and how they see and describe the impacts on them and their organizations (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), a case study approach can be used to gain such insights into the issue or phenomenon. The leader's experience with LPD is considered a phenomenon of interest to the researcher. Exploring how operational leaders in the U.S. understand and describe their viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes of LPD and its impact was the purpose of this study. In order to examine this phenomenon, a qualitative multi-case study approach was employed. The qualitative approach in this study was used to bring discovery of the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels, as described from the lens of the leader. Participating leaders in this study were included as individual case studies, each contributing to the findings of the research questions, and, further, lending to cross-case analysis and findings. Individual cases explored within the same study are commonly referred to as collective case studies, cross-case, multi-case, or comparative case studies, and constitute a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of findings (Merriam, 2009).

This approach is described as studying a phenomenon because it seeks to examine the experience of leaders with LPD through the accounts of the leaders themselves. Moreover, it is phenomenological because it is concerned with understanding the individual's personal perception or account of their experiences with the phenomenon of LPD. In this study, the researcher was interested not only in the physical events and behavior taking place, but also in how the participants in the study made sense of these and how their understandings influenced

their behavior (Maxwell, 2008). In this vein, the researcher was part of the process of interpretation to understand the phenomenon of LPD through a study based on the accounts of leaders who have participated in leadership development. As Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) explain, “access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and [...] the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience” (p. 3). The focus of the study was to first explore the accounts of each leader individually before moving to look for patterns, themes, convergence, or divergence across cases. This study adds to the existing literature on PD programs for leadership and documents the perceptions of leaders who participate in LPD.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined impacts, challenges, and facilitators in leadership development from the vantage point of leaders. The focus was to document, analyze, and describe how leaders view LPD and its results, first by examining individual accounts and then by looking for comparability and differences across accounts and cases in this multi-case study. To better understand the leaders' viewpoints on LPD, the researcher identified the following guiding research questions:

- RQ1: What do leaders believe are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels?
- RQ2: What do leaders believe are enablers and barriers of learning, results, and outcomes of LPD at a personal and organizational level?
- RQ3: How do leaders understand and describe their own role in participating, evaluating, and applying LPD experiences in their own development?



- RQ4: How do leaders evaluate and make decisions about LPD in regard to their own participation, engagement, willingness to learn, and openness to make attitudinal or behavioral changes?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Leadership is studied across industries, contexts, and applications and is, at its core, an essential function of any organization, entity, or business. While the definitions of leadership vary, coherence exists in the literature in recognizing that leadership, whether good or bad, makes a difference in the operations of any group, company, or organization (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). This agreement is then linked to another point of coherence in the literature regarding leadership, which is that leaders are a notable focal point of PD (Feser et al., 2017; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). Scholars identify the possibility that the growth of LPD is a response to growing national concern about the state of leadership (Harris Poll, 2013; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). In annual U.S. surveys spanning from 1996 to 2013, the Harris Poll reports a plummeting decline in sentiments of at least *some* confidence in the leadership of government, corporations, and Wall Street from 90% to 60% (Harris Poll, 2013). Coupled with a surge of \$7 billion in annual U.S. spending on LPD, the discouraging picture appears that U.S. organizations are spending more to develop leaders while dissatisfaction with leaders, generally, continues to grow as a national concern (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013).

The evaluation of the effectiveness of PD programs is a deep organizational concern (Bates, 2004) that is limited mostly to evaluating the PD experience at a level of participant reaction and learning in the short-term (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Paine, 2016). What PD practitioners and organizations are most interested in, however, are actual results of the programs, and, how PD efforts can benefit people and organizations (Bates, 2004; Dirani, 2017).

This rests on the need for the individual to make application of the content to which they were exposed during a training program or PD effort (Laker & Powell, 2011). In essence, the organization does not change unless the individual changes. Yet evaluation models do not align to measure this level of impact of the PD to the individual and/or to the organization (Bates, 2004; Harward & Taylor, 2014).

Furthermore, organizations struggle with answering the question of how the training process can be modified in ways that increase its potential for effectiveness (Bates, 2004; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). For organizations, a more comprehensive approach to evaluating their LPD efforts could yield insights to support decisions around planning, design, investment, and improvement of programs (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). PD evaluation informed by Kirkpatrick's (2016) four-level model for measuring training effectiveness could support organizations with evaluating their LPD programming and decisions.

Kirkpatrick's model for measuring training effectiveness has come to be considered by far the most popular approach to the evaluation of training in organizations today (Bates, 2014; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). The model expands the evaluation of impact of PD into a multi-level approach. Training and PD is measured at four levels: *Level 1: Reaction*, *Level 2: Learning*, *Level 3: Results*, and *Level 4: Outcomes* (Kirkpatrick, 2016). Scholars note that most PD evaluation focuses at the first two levels of impact, namely *Reaction* and *Learning*, as these are often easier to measure and can be achieved through standard post-event evaluations (Harward & Taylor, 2014; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Paine, 2016). Levels three and four, *Results* and *Outcomes*, respectively, however, require a more systemically-collected, longer-term, and complex approach to evaluation (Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Harward & Taylor, 2014; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). However, they hold an essential key to whether reaction and learning by

participants ultimately translates into impacts at the individual and consequently organizational levels. For example, the distinction between level two (learning) and level three (behavior) in Kirkpatrick's model is credited with drawing increased attention to the importance of the learning transfer process in making training effective (Bates, 2004).

The popularity of Kirkpatrick's model is credited in part to its simplification of the complex process of evaluating training (Bates, 2004). The model reduces measurement demands for training evaluation to a focus on outcome data that are generally collected after the training is complete. Further, organizations can then draw conclusions about training effectiveness based solely on outcome measures, thereby reducing the variables training evaluators must contemplate in their training evaluation (Bates, 2004). However, it is this simplification that is also recognized as providing an incomplete guide to the measurement of PD evaluation (Bates, 2004).

A noted limitation of Kirkpatrick's model is that it narrows measurement of training to a view of training outcomes alone (Bates, 2004). The problem with this approach is that when training evaluation is limited to one or more of the four levels of outputs, no formative data about why training was or was not effective is generated (Goldstein and Ford, 2002). In other words, the evaluation data does not provide support with answering, specifically, an organization's question of how the training process can be modified in ways that increase its potential for effectiveness (Bates, 2004). Moreover, this limited perspective can inform misleading or inaccurate judgments about training program decisions such as whether to continue or cancel a program based on an incomplete picture of its effectiveness since evaluation is not considered in conjunction with other factors related to the learning process (Bates, 2004).

The trainee or the participant in the PD effort lies at the center of any evaluation model for training effectiveness. In 1988, Baldwin and Ford introduced a new model recognizing the

important role of the individual in the development process. In their “Transfer of Training Model,” they posit that the outcomes of training are impacted not only by training design, as had been the historical focus in the evaluation of PD, but, additionally, by the trainee and their work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). With this seminal work, Baldwin and Ford challenged existing paradigms of training design and evaluation to consider training outcomes from a more holistic perspective, to include *training inputs*, *training outputs*, and *conditions of transfer* (1988).

Whereas Kirkpatrick’s model for evaluating training effectiveness, originally published in 1976, delineates four levels of training outcomes, or outputs, the Baldwin and Ford model introduced the addition of *training inputs* and *conditions of transfer* into the environment within which learning is introduced to and transferred by the participant (1988). In doing so, the model addresses a recognized limitation of Kirkpatrick’s model, which is the assumption of causality of training impact without an account of the complex individual and contextual factors that can also have an influence in training efficacy (Bates, 2004). Baldwin and Ford’s model is used to measure factors affecting transfer of training and supports organizations with enhanced measures of training effectiveness by moving beyond the question of whether training works to why training works (Dirani, 2017). The model is considered seminal to the research around PD evaluation and critical to the research questions for this study, which sought to examine the understanding and perspective of participating leaders as trainees in LPD.

Baldwin and Ford’s model includes three distinct training inputs including: *Trainee Characteristics*, *Training Design*, and *Work Environment* (1988). The authors contend that all three inputs are necessary precursors to the application of new learning and, ultimately, to learning transfer and results from training and PD. In other words, training inputs are thought to

influence conditions of transfer and play a role in learning, retention, generalization, and the maintenance of targeted skills (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). Foremost in this model is the element of *Trainee Characteristics*, which are those crucial qualities that are particular to the trainee or learner and that have an impact on the way they perceive and engage with a training or PD effort. Trainee characteristics include *cognitive ability*, *self-efficacy*, *motivation*, and *perceived utility of the training*. Baldwin and Ford assert that this compendium of factors, which are inherent to the trainee/participant, will have a notable impact on the effectiveness of any training or PD effort (1988). For leaders and organizations seeking to develop their leadership capacity, the implication is that the inputs of training design and work environment alone do not constitute all of the necessary elements for an immediate and, moreover, lasting effect on training effectiveness (Bates, 2004). Instead, it is the case that the qualities, perceptions, and motivations of the leader play a vital role in the ultimate efficacy of any training program.

Current literature and evaluation methods focus on training design or on measuring the level of reaction of the participant to a training or PD effort (Paine, 2016). This strategy omits the auto-assessment of the leader about key trainee characteristics that influence whether or not they, as the participants, possess qualities, perceptions, or motivations that will influence learning transfer. An omission of the diagnosis of trainee characteristics, or failure to understand and assess the impacts of these on the PD effort, renders an incomplete picture in the model of the learning transfer process (Bates, 2004; Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Further, when key input factors, such as those outlined by Baldwin and Ford (1988) are not considered, the potential for misleading or inaccurate judgments about the merit and effectiveness of training increases (Bates, 2004). This supports a call in the literature for more robust evaluation of PD and LPD programs (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). Stronger evaluation methods for

measuring training effectiveness will account for inputs across Baldwin and Ford's (1988) categories of *trainee characteristics*, *training design*, and *work environments* as part of the larger ecosystem within which development takes place, bringing into foremost focus, by necessity, how leaders see themselves in and as part of the learning experience.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope**

It was the researcher's assumption that the leaders participating in LPD possess a perspective on what might be the individual and contextual factors that influence impact of LPD at the individual and organizational levels. This assumption supported the researcher's exploration of the topic of LPD from the lens of the leader. Although accepted qualitative research methods were used for this study, the researcher recognizes that the validity of the findings could be affected by certain limitations. For example, the case study approach for this study was both a benefit as well as a limitation in several ways. A case study allowed the researcher to get close to the experiences and accounts of those experiences by working directly with those who are the subjects of the research. Through interpretation, the researcher was able to provide a vivid portrait of the experiences and information that can illuminate meanings that expand reader's experiences (Merriam, 2009).

However, case studies can be time consuming and difficult to do in large-scale numbers (Creswell, 2015). For this reason, careful attention was given in the process of selection of cases for this study, including clear definition of criteria for participation in the study. Due to the intensive nature of such interpretation and work, the size of the case study would need to be limited. This could limit the perceived significance and generalization of the study, given its size. The researcher sought to include between four and six leaders as part of this multi-case study.

Following the selection criteria, five leaders were included in the qualitative multi-case investigation.

The selection criteria, as well as the mixture of participating case study leaders were designed to support the replicability of the study as well as the potential for generalizability of findings. A multi-case study approach supports a stronger representation of diversity of perspectives and experiences, bringing to light the individual cases, but also permitting cross-case analysis for points of coherence and difference. Examining multiple cases in a multiple-case study design occurs with replication, which strengthens research findings, making the study more robust than single case studies (Yin, 2009) and permitting for greater possibility of generalizability of findings to other cases and study replication (Creswell, 2015).

Further, given the focus on leaders who participate in LPD with their organizations, the desired scope for this study was less focused on a single setting or industry as central to the investigations, but rather on the inclusion of a multi-case study approach of leaders who come from varying companies and industries. The researcher concluded that the multi-case study approach lends generalization whereby a study within a particular context and situation can be reviewed and applied in different contexts (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2009). This multi-case study, therefore, albeit limited to five leaders from small and large companies, can lend a level of generalization for application in different contexts.

Limitations also exist as they relates to the method of interviews for the purposes of data collection. Due to geographical considerations, the researcher was not able to conduct in-person interviews of the leaders. The researcher utilized web conferencing software to introduce voice, tone, and inflections through audio communication to support detection of verbal cues and enhanced interactivity during the interview processes. The researcher had to lean on audible cues

of voice, tone, and inflections for communication, understanding, and, further, to identify probing opportunities. The researcher sought to minimize bias of her role during data collection and the interview process by holding a neutral stance of tone during the interviews (Creswell, 2015). In addition, the researcher employed a pilot study of the interview questions in an effort to reduce the introduction of bias into the data collection process for this study (Creswell, 2015).

### **Research Approach**

This study adds to the existing literature on LPD by evaluating leader viewpoints and documenting the experiences of the leaders who participate in LPD. To do so, a multi-case study research method was used. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), a case study approach can be used to gain insight into an issue. The issue at hand was to gain an understanding of how leaders view the impact and effect of LPD at multiple levels. With a qualitative multi-case study approach, this study sought to gain understanding as to what is not known about LPD, particularly as it relates to the leader's perception of LPD and its impact at an individual, team, and organizational level.

Interviews were conducted with multiple leaders as an appropriate qualitative research method to gain an understanding for the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of leaders who participate in LPD programming (Creswell, 2015). Qualitative data collection where the leader reflected on questions about their experience and perceptions regarding LPD was used to discover:

- leader perspective on the impact of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels
- leader beliefs or attitudes regarding enablers and barriers to learning transfer and how they connect LPD with their work
- leader beliefs or attitudes regarding their role in LPD



- leader experience with LPD in terms of their own engagement, openness to learn, and openness to change their behaviors and attitudes as a result of LPD

Interview questions in this study facilitated a reflection on the participant's perceptions of the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Question wording was a critical consideration in extracting the type of information desired (Merriam, 2009). The interview protocol included open-ended questions designed by the researcher and based upon the primary and secondary research questions for this study. It was the intention of the researcher that the open-ended nature of the questions would encourage participants to describe, explain, answer, and to clarify their responses (Creswell, 2015).

The interview questions were validated through a pilot study, which is a process of review and feedback to aid in the design and analysis of appropriateness of the questions. The validation process consisted of administering the instrument to a small number of individuals and making changes based on their feedback (Creswell, 2015). This process helped to support good question construction by testing that individuals could understand the questions and, further, that they could complete the instrument (Creswell, 2015). This process also served to reduce the introduction of researcher bias into the instrument by allowing individuals to complete and provide feedback on the questions, including any detection of the introduction of researcher bias.

By working directly with leaders using semi-structured interviews, the researcher posed questions for leader reflection and collected answers regarding leader viewpoints, perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes about LPD. Member checking is a form of respondent validation of the data collected and was achieved in this study by sharing with each leader a written transcription of their interview and asking them to comment on the accuracy of quotes (Creswell, 2015).

Through this process, participants were afforded the opportunity to further explain or clarify their thoughts and meanings.

Next, the researcher reviewed the data, made notes, and utilized coding techniques to surface themes, which pointed to findings from the study of leaders' as central to LPD, learning transfer, and LPD effectiveness. Each leader case study was first reviewed individually in order to uncover meaning and the emergence of themes within a single case. Next, cross-case analysis was used to identify and confirm codes, themes, and findings, including similarities and points of distinction across cases. In this way, multiple sources of data, that is, cases, were used to collect relevant study data from different perspectives and, further, to be able to compare and cross-check collected interview data (Merriam, 2009).

### **Significance**

Studies focused on the evaluation of LPD can serve to support better decisions about investment, design, and delivery of leadership programs (Harward & Taylor, 2014; Keiser & Curphy, 2013). It was the researcher's contention entering this investigation that a study on how leaders experience and describe the impacts of LPD could add significant value to our understanding of PD efforts and their impact. The researcher recognized an opportunity to develop further research to expand upon current industry awareness and standards in training efficacy evaluation for the purposes of improving upon LPD as a mechanism for building and supporting leadership within the organization (Keiser & Curphy, 2013).

The study rendered several significant implications including considerations for policy, practice, and further research at the level of the individual employee, leader, and/or the organization. First, the findings and conclusions of this study further inform understanding of PD, and, specifically, development of leaders, adding a much-needed approach from the lens of

the participating leader. Additionally, for the individual, this study presents implications in evaluating one's own role and active responsibility in professional development, to include making connections between learning experiences and application on the job.

Organizationally, the study presents implications for institutions to evaluate their existent PD investments and programming and to consider in the design of such programs the many forms in which one can learn professionally, and to examine how to measure the impact of their programs (Bates, 2004; Keiser & Curphy, 2013). Moreover, for the organization, the study highlights the need to consider the active role of the trainee in the learning process and to understand the breadth of impact of trainee characteristics on the ultimate success of learning transfer and results from LPD (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

This study is also significant in that the practice of PD and LPD is not going away (Keiser & Curphy, 2013). It is a burgeoning field with a promise for upward trending in the years to come. However, it is not without challenge. There continue to be increasing calls for how training and PD is having any form of return on investment for organizations (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Further, increasing dissatisfaction with the state of leadership at a national level is a dissatisfying reality for organizations who together are spending more on developing leaders than on any other group in the workforce (Keiser & Curphy, 2013).

### **Definition of Terms**

- *Leader*- one who holds a position of leadership within their organization and responsibility for providing direction to others (The Law Dictionary, 2018).
- *Leader development*- training, learning, or development designed and delivered for a leader audience (Day et al., 2013).

- *Leadership professional development (LPD)* – a term conceptualized by the researcher in this study and defined as development activities or processes focused on developing individual leaders or on enhancing leadership capacity.
- *Professional development (PD)* - A systematic methodology to learning and development to improve individual, team, and organizational effectiveness (Goldstein & Ford, 2002) and/or “activities leading to the acquisition of new knowledge or skills for purposes of personal growth” (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009, p. 452).
- *Training*- for the purposes of this study is used interchangeably with “PD”.
- *Training / PD effectiveness*- Training and follow-up leading to improved job performance that positively contributes to key organizational results (Kirkpatrick, 2016).
- *Training evaluation*- the systematic investigation of whether a training program resulted in knowledge, skills, or affective changes in learners (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).
- *Transfer of training* – The ability of employees to transfer skills acquired from a particular training or learning experience into practice (Kirwan & Birchall, 2006).
- *Transfer of learning*- Throughout this work, transfer of learning is used interchangeably with transfer of training.

## **Conclusion**

There exists pervasive use of PD across business sectors and organization types. Organizations within the U.S. spent \$164.2 billion on employee learning and development in 2012 alone (State of the industry, 2015). Leader development constitutes the single greatest line item in the total budget of industry spend on PD annually (Feser et al., 2017). This is an indication that the development of leadership capacity is a clear priority in the investments into and program offerings of PD for and within organizations. Though PD can be understood as an

industry and it can be recognized that there is trending rise in fiscal and time investment in it, accounts of PD events and how these are understood by employees are scarce and have not been the focus in the design, delivery, and literature around PD, or, further, LPD.

As the single largest recipient group of training and development investment, leaders are an important audience group to consider in PD evaluation. Acquiring an increased understanding of how leaders experience leader development can add significant value to our understanding of PD efforts and their impact. To lean into a greater understanding of leader experiences with leader development and to better understand their perceptions of the impacts of such experiences was the purpose of this study, which sought to provide important insight for considerations around PD planning, investment, evaluation, and the improvement of LPD programs to build and support leadership within organizations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was based on an underlying premise that PD is a viable tool for personal and professional growth. When organizations offer their employees formalized PD programs, it is often to the end of participating employees' acquisition of new knowledge, skills, values, and/or abilities. LPD, in particular, holds a strong focus in the landscape of the training and development industry as a whole, being recognized as the number one area of focus and fiscal spend by organizations who invest in PD for their workforce.

This qualitative case study examined how leaders who participate in leadership development programs perceive it as a practice to grow professionally. For leaders, specifically, much is known about the degree of spend on leadership development as well as of the ample options for leadership development including formal education, in-house training programs, and external development programs. What is less known is the viewpoint of the leader and, namely, their perspective regarding the effect or influence of PD on their leadership. The researcher theorized that the measurement of the leader's viewpoint regarding the impact of PD on their own leadership could yield an insightful new layer of information for organizations and the industry at large. Findings from such work could serve to inform the evaluation, design, and improvement of PD programs for leaders in future cases and contexts.

The theoretical frameworks that guided this study were based on learning transfer of new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or abilities, as well as on the design, effectiveness, and evaluation of formal learning experiences. Baldwin and Ford (1988) proposed a model for the factors inherently critical in learning transfer and in the evaluation of the results of a training program or PD effort. Their model focuses on the input and output realities of the process of

learning transfer, which is essential towards the efficacy of any PD or learning endeavor. Additionally, Kirkpatrick's model for measuring training effectiveness has come to be used widely in the evaluation of PD programs. The model expounds the evaluation of impact of PD into a four-element approach measured at the levels of reaction, learning, results, and outcomes. The concepts and associated models related to learning transfer, learning design, learning efficacy, and the evaluation of PD programs provide a framework for organizations as they utilize LPD to build leadership capacity within their organizations.

Websites, online databases, books, professional journals, and industry articles were used to collect research and current thought on the topics of PD and LPD. Within this chapter, a review of scholarly sources related to historical and current practices of PD is explored. Additionally explored is specifically leadership development investment and programs, including an examination into the role of the leader as trainee in leadership development programming. Finally, a review of scholarly sources related to PD effectiveness, methods of evaluation, and implications on the design, delivery, and assessment of PD programs is presented.

For the purposes of this review, PD is defined as formal training or learning events and programs designed for the development of an individual or employee within the organization. Given the prolific use of the terms "training", "human resource development", "employee learning and development", and "professional development" within the literature, such terms will be used interchangeably in this review and are intended to pose the same general meaning of a formal learning experience designed for employees within an organizational context.

### **Professional Development Industry**

PD is a formal or intentional program for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and/or abilities (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). In a workplace context, training and PD are used by

organizations to develop their workforce. That is, the authors further state that training and PD are used as mechanisms for organizations to aid their employees in acquiring new knowledge, skills, values, and/or abilities. PD is used across sectors and organization types. According to Meister and Willyerd, “organizations need a way to develop people when economic conditions fluctuate and in ways that deliver skills and knowledge when they are needed” (2010, p. 154). Training and development activities allow organizations to produce, compete, improve, adapt, innovate, reduce costs, be safe, improve services, expand offerings, and reach goals (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

The literature shows substantive organizational investment by organizations on PD. U.S. organizations invested \$164.2 billion on employee learning and development in 2015 alone (State of the Industry, 2015). The breakdown for this spend shows investments made in internal as well as external sources of PD for employee development. For example, 61% of the \$164.2 billion was spent by organizations with internal learning departments dedicated to ongoing employee learning efforts. External services, which includes consultants, workshops, and conferences account for 28% of the \$164.2 billion. Moreover, organizations spent 11% on tuition reimbursement benefits for employees attending a college or university as part of their PD (State of the Industry, 2015).

PD has seen notable change in recent years. Rising investments in the PD industry, advances in technology, as well as changes in the demands of organizations and trainees, have all given rise to new delivery modalities and approaches to PD. Increasingly, how individuals prefer to learn has shifted over the years toward a more on-demand approach (State of Leadership Development, 2016). In response, the PD industry is increasingly embracing and planning for greater use of technology in the delivery of PD programs. The data shows that organizations are



starting to experiment with alternate models of instruction and make significant investments in digital learning. Harvard Business Review found that 55% of training professionals said they were using eLearning in 2013, with that number rising to 64% in the same survey in 2015 (State of the Industry, 2016). Surveys of industry practice show that an increasing number of organizations are implementing technology-based training in support of, or instead of, traditional or face-to-face forms of training (Patel, 2010). These include mobile, tablet, or computer-based training (CBT), simulations, gaming, webinars, freeware, massive open online courses (MOOCs), and e-learning / online coursework. Such PD models leverage the ubiquity and access of both devices including mobile phones, computers, and tablets as well as of content such as MOOCs, freeware, and eLearning to support learning in the workplace.

Data shows that both training professionals as well as business managers agree that the most growth in learning technologies will come in eLearning and freeware, with both groups showing optimism about the use and effectiveness of these technologies (State of the Industry, 2016). Investments in technology-enabled PD is clearly on the rise, as are studies on the impact of the use of technology in training contexts. A meta-analysis by Sitzmann, Kraiger, Stewart, and Wisher (2006) found that both traditional and computer / web-based models could yield essentially equal mean effects, given the application of instructional principles and content held constant. Moreover, web-based training resulted, on average, in slightly greater learning than classroom training. Such findings pose supportive evidence to the use of eLearning, CBT, web-based media, or otherwise technology-based training as functional delivery channels for PD across contexts and industries as appropriate.

## **Leaders and Leadership Development as Key Focus of Professional Development**

The development of effective leaders and leadership behavior is a prominent concern in organizations of all types (Day et al., 2013). Significant time and fiscal resources are allocated annually to the development of leadership and to the nurturing of leadership capabilities. Modest annual estimates of organizational spend on leadership development estimate its industry value at fifty billion U.S. dollars; while less conservative estimates assess the reach much higher (Feser et al., 2017). Moreover, this notable investment in leadership development shows no signs of slowing. Annual spending rose by 14% in 2014 (Wartham, 2016), and similar growth is expected to continue. A Chief Learning Officer Business Intelligence Board report shows 94% of learning organizations either plan to increase or keep their level of investment the same in leadership development (Prokopeak, 2018).

The widespread investment in leadership development training programs is not limited to corporate or workplace providers. Top universities in the United States are rendering various forms of executive leadership programs consisting of deeply competitive degrees and certifications aimed at building leadership skills (Leon, 2005). Such leadership development programs bear a significant price tag, with a two-year cost of attendance nearing \$193,000 (Jackson, 2016).

Beyond the fiscal investment in leadership development, the question of building leadership capacity is of central concern for executives and human resource departments. According to The State of Human Capital 2012 report, more than five hundred executives ranked leadership development as one of the top three human capital priorities, with nearly two-thirds of the respondents listing “leadership development” as their primary concern (McKinsey, 2012). Additionally, findings from a survey conducted by Deloitte Consulting show that 38% of 2,500+

human resource leaders and executives cited leadership as an “urgent human-capital priority” (Maheshwari & Yadav, 2017). Despite the amount of annual spending, the proliferation of training programs, and the organizational criticality concerning leadership development, there is little evidence in the research to provide firm indicators of its success.

There is scarcely any evidence that all this spending on development is producing better leaders. To the contrary, there is widespread concern about the state of leadership today (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Maheshwari & Yadav, 2017). In a publication by the Harvard Kennedy School, results from the National Study in Leadership Confidence show that 70% of Americans report “a nationwide leadership crisis” is underway (Rosenthal, 2012). These findings are not limited to a single industry or sector, but rather focus on leadership within small and large businesses, the military, and governmental entities and organizations. So much so that the largest subset group on which organizations invest in terms of PD is on leaders (Feser et al., 2017) and organizations plan to continue their investment in developing necessary leaders (Prokopeak, 2018). “Growing discontent is not just a matter of public opinion; it is a practical problem as well. Organizations around the world are expressing grave concern about their supply of effective leaders” (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013, p. 295).

### **Improving Leadership Professional Development**

Leadership development has long been a critical concern for organizations. Today’s global and rapidly-changing economy necessitates that organizations seek to maintain a competitive advantage. It is widely recognized that to do this requires organizations prepare and develop their workforce as a key strategy to compete and succeed (Grossman & Salas, 2011). It is also recognized that employees have need of a wide set of skills that are essential to their success and, in turn, the success of their organizations (Salas & Stagl, 2009). For this reason, PD

takes a top spot as both a critical concern for organizations and one in which significant investment of over \$125 billion each year is invested by U.S. organizations. No single group in the workforce receives more attention and investment than employees who are being prepared for or groomed within positions of leadership (Feser et al., 2017). Despite all of the focus and spend on PD, however, leaders are still feeling disconnected from what they need to help them improve their leadership (State of the Industry, 2016).

While much attention is given in the literature to leadership itself, LPD is still an area where additional research is desperately needed. There is an established and long history of leadership theory and research spanning more than a century (Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2009). In contrast, there is a fairly short history of rigorous scholarly theory and research on the topics of leader and leadership development (Day et al., 2013). Whilst some attention is given to leadership development, the literature tends to focus foremost on the leader's use of the "correct" theory or approach to leadership rather than on the process of leadership development (Day et al., 2013). Alternatively, short-term approaches that focus on training of leadership behaviors that can be applied to solve known problems fail to recognize the complex and ill-defined situations leaders face, rendering an incomplete view of the difference between leadership theory / behavior and leadership development (Day et al., 2013). These challenges call for change in focus away from leadership theory as essential to LPD and rather toward understanding and enhancing LPD processes (Day et al., 2013). Defining what are the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a leader must possess is a primary area of research, however, this cannot be oversimplified to the degree that it fails to account for the complex set of processes that need to be understood around human development (Day et al., 2013).

Beyond this, notable focus in the literature has already been given to the best practices in designing training and PD (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Abundant literature exists on how to build development programs, how to consider the use of technology to support learning programs, and how to structure a set of learning units or tasks into a defined program for delivery. Knowing what considerations are important in both, the defining the content of a PD program as well as in its appropriate design for delivery, is undoubtedly important for organizations. It is clear that these elements hold implications for either the failure or success of training deployment. However, these elements are inputs into training and PD, or the things the organization provides and accounts for in to the development of learning programs (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Examples of inputs include logistics, physical space for face-to-face training delivery, facilitators or instructors, training duration and content, curriculum design, and frequency of offerings.

In tandem with a focus on “inputs” in training delivery, organizations have come to employ techniques for evaluating the “outputs” of their PD programs (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Here, the long-standing and well-recognized model for evaluation is Kirkpatrick’s (2016) model for measuring training effectiveness. Kirkpatrick’s (2016) model puts forth a four-element approach towards evaluating the impact of PD programs and has come to be used widely in the evaluation of PD programs. In the model, training effectiveness is measured at the levels of learner reaction, learning, results, and outcomes. These four elements focus squarely on the “outputs” of a training endeavor. Scholars agree most PD evaluation today focuses at the first two levels of measurement, reaction and learning, respectively, as these levels are often easier to measure and can be done through standard post-event evaluations (Paine, 2016). Levels three and four, results and outcomes, respectively, however, require a more rigorous and longer-term approach to evaluation (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013).

The literature demonstrates that organizations find it challenging to assess at these higher levels (Goldstein and Ford, 2002), however, these levels hold an essential key to whether the reaction and learning that occurs in the course of PD is ultimately translated by the participant into behaviors or impacts at a personal and organizational level. When training evaluation is limited to one or more of the four levels, no formative data about why training was or was not effective is generated (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; Harward & Taylor, 2014). In other words, the evaluation data does not support with answering how the training process can be modified in ways that increase its potential for effectiveness (Bates, 2004). Comprehensive PD evaluation, such as might be informed by Kirkpatrick's (2016) four-level model for measuring training effectiveness, is an area of needed future research for improving leadership development (Harward & Taylor, 2014). Moreover, effective evaluation of leadership programs could improve the design and delivery of programs that do not have their intended effects (Harward & Taylor, 2014). Examples of such efforts could yield a missing lens into the evaluation of LPD and the efforts to enhance programs for individual and organizational results.

### **Examining the Role of the Leader as Learner in the Learning Process**

Whilst a recognizable focus exists today for identifying important leadership competencies (learning content), preparing for training delivery (learning design), and assessing participant reaction and learning (learning evaluation), these elements are limited in their ability to yield actionable data as to the impacts to the individual and the organization (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Content, design, and evaluation are essential elements of consideration for a learning experience, however, what PD is most interested in is actual results of the programs (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). "Training is focused on producing permanent cognitive and behavioral changes, and on developing critical competencies for job performance" (Grossman

and Salas, 2011, p. 104). These results rest on the need for the individual to make application of the content to which they were exposed during a training program or PD effort (Laker & Powell, 2011). Without this transfer, the individual does not make significant linkages between the PD program and their behaviors (Grossman & Salas, 2011). In consequence, neither the individual nor the organization experience change. Despite this, little emphasis has been placed in training and PD on the individual and in this case, the leader's role as the participant in the learning process. It is the centrality of this role, however, that is widely understood as a critical and necessary part of supporting impacts of PD to the individual and, consequently, to the organization.

Research indicates that organizations could stand to benefit from knowledge of the specific factors that are linked to the learning transfer process, as well as those that have exhibited the strongest relationships to learning (Grossman & Salas, 2011). In their qualitative review of factors, Baldwin and Ford (1988) presented a model of the transfer process which includes inputs, outputs, and conditions of transfer. With this model, the authors acknowledge the importance of learning content, learning design, and learning evaluation, but they situate these within a larger framework as a model of the transfer process. Baldwin and Ford build on these factors with categorical distinctions of a dynamic system of inputs, outputs, and conditions for learning transfer. The result is an ecosystem of the factors that must be present in LPD in order to support transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes into behaviors and impacts.

Central in Baldwin and Ford's model of the transfer process lies the trainee or the participant in the PD process. Baldwin and Ford (1988) outline three distinct training inputs including: *Trainee Characteristics*, *Training Design*, and *Work Environment*. Training inputs are thought to influence conditions of transfer and have proven to be highly crucial for the learning,

retention, generalization, and maintenance of targeted skills. They identify the element of *Trainee Characteristics* as foremost in the learning process and these include those crucial elements that are particular to the trainee or learner and that have an impact on the way they perceive and engage with a training or PD effort. The trainee characteristics that have shown strongest, most consistent relationship with transfer include cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation, and perceived utility of training (Grossman & Salas, 2011). All of these factors are inherent to and inextricably linked to the individual who is participating in the training. This is in sharp distinction to a predominant focus in the literature on learning content, learning design, and learning evaluation without direct attention to the individual participant and what they bring to the PD effort.

Baldwin and Ford (1998) assert that this compendium of trainee characteristics will have a notable impact on the effectiveness of any training or PD effort. For leaders and for organizations who are seeking to develop their leadership capacity, the implication is that the inputs of training design and work environment alone do not constitute all of the elements which will have an immediate and lasting effect on training effectiveness. Instead, the characteristics and perceptions of the leader play a vital role in the ultimate efficacy of any training program. Any omission of the consideration of trainee characteristics will render an incomplete picture in the learning transfer process. Moreover, an understanding of key trainee characteristics that influence whether or not they will transfer learning is an essential area of thought for organizations and a relevant area of study for future research. Stronger methods for supporting learning transfer will account for inputs across the categories of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environments, as well as the categories of training outputs and conditions of



transfer. These elements must be considered in concert as directly and indirectly affecting the success of PD efforts as well as how leaders see themselves in and as part of the experience.

### **Conclusion**

This literature review explored the current body of evidence surrounding LPD. This chapter introduced and expounded upon four major areas of research. The researcher first explored the area of the *Professional Development Industry*. Secondly, the researcher explored *Leaders and Leadership Development as Key Focus of Professional Development*. The third area presented a focus on research around *Improving Leadership Professional Development*. And, finally, the fourth was focused on *Examining the Role of the Leader as Learner in the Learning Process*. Together these comprise a look at the research around LPD and informed the study approach and methodology of the researcher, which is explicated in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to understand how leaders experience and perceive leadership development. The researcher's operating premise was that a deeper understanding of LPD as a phenomenon would result in a more informed perspective of the practice of LPD. A more informed perspective could yield impact to multiple stakeholders in conversations and efforts around LPD, including allowing organizations to structure and design leadership development opportunities with the leaders' perspectives in mind. While there is strong research support for the utilization of training to develop necessary skills in leadership, little is known about the perceptions of leaders undergoing the process (Day et al., 2013; Strack et al., 2010; Tsyganenko, 2013). This study adds to the existing literature on LPD by capturing and examining its impacts from the leader viewpoint.

In order to examine this phenomenon, a qualitative and multi-case study approach was employed. "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 6). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), a case study approach is a research methodology that can be used to gain such insights into the issue or phenomenon. The qualitative design of this study included conducting interviews of leaders who had participated in LPD programming. The interview process allowed for the leaders to reflect on their experience from participating in LPD, lending insight into the leader's vantage point. Merriam (2009) identifies that interviews are a primary tool used to collect data to better understand phenomenon. Interviews provide the researcher with visibility into the perspectives

of others, focusing on what they are thinking and experiencing, thus clarifying information (Patton, 2015).

The researcher set out to examine the perceptions of leaders who participated in leadership development opportunities, resulting in a rich description and analysis of their accounts. Qualitative and one-on-one interviews used for data collection helped to provide an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives on the issue of LPD. Once interviews were transcribed, the researcher analyzed collected data through a process of codification and analysis for themes. As anticipated, the researcher conducted several reviews of the data to both surface and verify emergent themes. The researcher's analysis of the data provided further substantiation of the findings and results (Merriam, 2009). Through these methods, the research questions explored were:

- RQ1: What do leaders believe are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels?
- RQ2: What do leaders believe are enablers and barriers of learning, results, and outcomes of LPD at a personal and organizational level?
- RQ3: How do leaders understand and describe their own role in participating, evaluating, and applying LPD experiences?
- RQ4: How do leaders evaluate and make decisions about LPD in regard to their own engagement, openness to learn, and openness to make attitudinal or behavioral changes?

The researcher used a case study design that included leaders from multiple industries and organizational contexts. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), a case study is “an intensive description and analysis of a bounded social phenomenon.” In this study, the case was bounded, or defined, through context and sample selection criteria rather than through a focus

into a particular industry or single organization. The context is participants who hold leadership positions with their organizations. Boundedness occurred in this design through studying leaders who have participated in LPD programming. Variable backgrounds with LPD coupled with varying levels of organizational support around LPD necessitated a multi-case study design (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2009) states that examining multiple cases in a multi-case study design occurs with replication, which strengthens research findings. The author further states that when considering case study design, multi-case studies are considered more robust than single case studies. Therefore, it was the researcher's contention that a multi-case study approach of a minimum of four individuals would afford greater generalizability of the study to other institutions and organizations desiring to examine leader perceptions around LPD. Following the selection criteria, five leaders were included in the qualitative multi-case investigation.

Participating leaders for this multi-case study, further described in the next section, came from several industries within small and large organizations. The researcher's rationale was that it was less relevant to the purpose of the study and its focal research questions that participants be leaders within the same organization or single setting. Moreover, because LPD is used for leaders across industries and business types, it was not the focus of this case study to examine leaders and LPD within a single industry application. In essence, a particular setting or industry was not a part of the phenomenon the researcher sought to examine. Rather, it was the intention of the researcher to draw from the experiences and perceptions of multiple leaders across organizational and industry settings. A multi-case study design facilitated the process of achieving data collection and analysis necessary to study the phenomenon of impacts of LPD, leader attitudes, and understanding what leaders identify as outcomes from their experiences. Only leaders who participated in U.S. based LPD programs and who are leaders for U.S. based

organizations were included in the study given that the literature, practices, and research gaps on LPD internationally might vary from the literature review and framework for this study.

The desired outcome of the research design was dual in its contribution to the body of research. First, the intent was to use a multi-case study approach for greater applicability of findings because the participating leaders come from more than a single organization type, setting, or industry. The second outcome of the research design was to lend greater replicability of the study in future studies because the methodology can be applied within multiple contexts and settings.

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the case study, selection of participants, and methodology around data collection and analysis. Moreover, data collection instruments will be discussed, as well as the processes for how data was analyzed and how participant's rights were protected. The chapter will conclude with an explanation of the known limitations of the study.

### **Participants/Sample**

Patton (2015) suggests that the researcher identify the sample size of the study, “based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study” (p. 314). For the purposes of representing multiple industries and organizational contexts, the researcher sought a pool of a minimum of four participants for this study. The intent was not to represent a specific number of leaders from each industry or organizational context, but to be inclusive of leaders from various organizational and industry settings to represent leaders within U.S. based organizations. The focus of this study necessitated that a purposeful sampling of participants be used to ensure they met specified criteria in order to be considered appropriate for the research design. According to Merriam (2009), “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample

from which the most can be learned (p. 96).” The following comprise the criteria all participants were verified to meet at the time of their invitation and selection to be part of the study and as necessary to be eligible to participate:

- Criterion 1: Participants must work for a U.S. based organization, as the research on LPD that informs this study focuses on practices and organizations that operate largely in the U.S. It was the researcher’s contention that international contexts and research were not represented in this study and could vary from those in the U.S.
- Criterion 2: Participants must currently hold a formal leadership role. Leadership capacity with their organization was defined by the researcher as having formal charge over a function, division, or people group.
- Criterion 3: Participants must have personally engaged in an LPD program or activity within the last five years. This experience was necessary, as participants would be asked to share about their viewpoints pertaining to their experience with LPD.
- Criterion 4: Participants must possess a minimum of one year of experience holding a leadership role. This experience may be with their current organization, a former organization or entity, or a combination. The researcher set this criterion as a part of the study with the assumption that it would support the study and findings. With this criterion, the researcher sought to ensure that a recent promotion into leadership did not affect a natural congruence of emerging themes based on factors relating less to LPD and more to the newness of the role and responsibilities of a leader.
- Criterion 5: Participants must elect to serve as study candidates through their voluntary desire to participate in the study. In other words, participation in the study was voluntary

and invited candidates were permitted to elect either to confirm or to refuse their participation without any repercussion from their decision.

- Criterion 6: Notwithstanding aforementioned criteria, the researcher sought to confirm eligibility to participate to a maximum of two leaders from either the same organization or who had participated in the same leadership program. This consideration was designed to ensure that the study reflected leader insights about LPD and their perceptions of its impact. The researcher was endeavoring to control against results that would be skewed by an analysis of a particular organization, setting, or LPD program rather than participant experience.

Given the outlined criteria, along with the desired resulting scope of four to six participants, the researcher extended invitations to a pool of eight potential candidates. The researcher first extended an invitation to a group of six, then later to another group of two until the researcher had secured at least four eligible participants for the study. Since participants had to meet the selection criteria to qualify to participate, the researcher extended invitations in small batches to allow for screening and confirmation of participants, while maintaining the desired size for the study. Discussions with potential participants about the selection criteria were used to determine if they met the selection criteria for the study.

Following discussions around selection criteria, an invitation to participate in the study was extended if the leader met the criteria. Given the iterative nature of the invitations and confirmation of participants, the researcher anticipated that the resulting and confirmed number of participants could deviate slightly from the planned design of four to six candidates. For this reason, the researcher was willing to increase sample size slightly, up to eight total participants, but worked to continue the selection process until a minimum of four cases were eligible and

confirmed. At the end of the participant selection process, a total of five contributors were selected and five case studies were generated.

The pool of potential candidates was drawn from the researcher's professional network, including contacts established through formal past and current projects, business networking, or online networking sites such as [www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com). In some instances, then, the invited candidates were a part of the researcher's professional network. In other instances, the invited candidates were referrals of additional leaders who might also meet the criteria for the study. In all cases, the researcher ensured that selected cases were appropriate for participation by ensuring participants confirmed meeting all the selection criteria for the study.

### **Data**

Case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed (Yin, 2009). Moreover, the Yin (2009) further states that use of the case study methodology lends for in-depth analysis of data collected. For the purposes of this study, methods of data collection and analysis included in-depth interviews, document analysis, and codification. According to Merriam (2009), using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking interview data collected from people with different perspectives, as was the design of this multi-case study approach. Interviews were conducted with multiple leaders to achieve these different perspectives and to gain an understanding of the leader viewpoint from leaders who participated in LPD. Data collection from interviews was used to collect attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices of leaders in their experience with LPD, supporting the research questions of this study with an appropriate qualitative research method (Creswell, 2015).

Each interview was recorded into an audio file which was used post-interview to create a written transcription. Responses from each leader interview were transcribed in writing by the



researcher and served as the base of information for analysis. Member checking is a form of respondent validation of the data collected and was achieved in this study by sharing with each leader a written transcription of their interview and asking them to comment on the accuracy of quotes (Creswell, 2015). Next, the researcher began the data analysis process, examining each case individually as a starting point. The researcher's review, analysis, and note taking pertaining to the review of each case served to generate a second set of data in researcher's notes from document analysis.

Codification was used to analyze all the information from each case with the purpose of identifying emergent themes. Multiple reviews were conducted to identify and confirm emergent themes and to substantiate the data further. Each case was first reviewed individually in order to uncover meaning and the emergence of themes. Following this, cross-case analysis was used to identify and confirm themes, similarities, and points of distinction across the cases of all participating leaders. In doing so, each case served as a source of data to help achieve collection of information from different perspectives and, further, to then compare and cross-check interview data collected (Merriam, 2009). Reported findings presented in Chapter 4 include accounts from each leader to substantiate themes and to draw points of similarity and distinction.

The qualitative focus of this study included conducting interviews of leaders who have participated in LPD programming. The interview process allowed the participants to reflect on their experiences participating in LPD programming (Creswell, 2015). The interview questions were developed to stimulate personal reflection in order to better understand if and how the leader perceived impact of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels. The questions were not only designed to prompt reflection not limited to a single LPD event, but to instruct subjects that the researcher was interested in looking at the experience(s) for each individual on

potentially more than one LPD event. The collection of data for this study focused on the participant's experience in LPD programming from the leader viewpoint through conducting one-on-one interviews. The information provided by participants was based on their opinions, thoughts, and experiences with LPD. The data collected provided the researcher rich data and a deeper understanding of leader experiences with LPD. Moreover, analysis of the data shaped the researcher's understanding of how LPD programming impacts at the individual, team, and organizational levels, from the vantage point of the leader.

The researcher took several steps toward reducing bias, encouraging response rate, and respondent validation, as further described in this section. Each leader was invited to participate in a one-on-one interview with and facilitated by the researcher. According to Merriam, interviewing is necessary when the researcher cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (2009). Interviews allowed for a deeper, more holistic understanding of the participants' perceptions and their explications of their attitudes, beliefs, practices, and experiences with LPD. According to Creswell (2015), collection of information through interviewing can be used to determine individual opinions about issues, help identify important beliefs and attitudes of individuals, and to describe trends in thinking. For this study, the purpose of the interviews was dual. First, the one-on-one interviews would serve as a data collection method to allow the researcher to collect data relating to the research questions for this study. The second purpose of the interviews was to provide the researcher and the participating leader a chance to expand upon or to clarify their questions and answers during a live interview format.

The design of the interviews was individual and qualitative survey, whereby the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with each leader by asking open-ended questions

without response options and listening and recording the comments of the interviewee (Creswell, 2015). According to Creswell (2015), one-on-one interviews offer a useful research methodology for several reasons. First, they enable the researcher to ask sensitive questions to help examine interviewee attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices. Secondly, one-on-one interviews enable interviewees to ask questions and to provide comments that go beyond the initial questions. Third, because they are scheduled in advance, one-on-one interviews tend to have a high response rate, perhaps due to a sense of obligation in interviewees to maintain the commitment to the scheduled interview.

Participants were invited via email to select a date and time that worked for their schedule (See Appendix B). The design of the interviews was for a 90-minute timeframe and to take place via web conference software. The web conference software used is called GoTo Meeting, accessed via their webpage. The researcher used this software in all instances. The researcher understood that in some cases a respondent may have a preferred system and, in such cases, was open to use an alternative method. This was not required, however. The researcher provided support for respondents to be able to use the software by providing a call-in number and direct web link that did not required them to download additional software or have additional resources beyond a computer with internet connection.

As the preferred design for interaction, the participants and the researcher would make use of the software's telephone capabilities to facilitate a live interview. The relied-upon mode of interaction was voice, be it through a landline, mobile phone, or use of the software's VOIP telephone conference capability. This was in an effort to enhance communication and interactivity by allowing the researcher to listen for audible cues during the interview, including exclamations, silence, pausing, and other potential verbal cues. This method maintains audible

cues through synchronous communication with the participant during the interview, allowing both parties to hear each other's voices, tone, and other verbal cues, which enhances the data collection. The stance of the researcher during the interviews was to remain neutral by using strategies that included maintaining a positive tone of questioning and refraining from sharing researcher opinions (Creswell, 2015). This strategy was an appropriate one to reduce researcher bias when using qualitative research methods including interviews (Creswell, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were used to collect in-depth and detailed accounts from the participant sample. The researcher used open-ended questions that elicit participant reflective responses about their experiences with LPD (See Appendix C). The open-ended nature of the questions was used to follow qualitative best practices to encourage participants to describe, explain, answer, and to clarify their responses (Creswell, 2015). Additionally, it permitted the researcher to further probe with additional questions to elucidate, clarify, or seek added respondent input related to the interview questions. Question wording was a crucial consideration in extracting the type of information desired (Merriam, 2009). The interview protocol included questions designed by the researcher and based upon the primary and secondary research questions for this study. The researcher used an interview transcript to guide the facilitation of the interview (See Appendix C).

The interview transcript included questions designed by the researcher and validated through pilot study. Pilot testing of the questions is a process to support good question construction and is conducted ahead of administering the instrument to the sample for the study (Creswell, 2015). The pilot test for this study consisted of administering the instrument to a small number of individuals and making changes based on their feedback. Pilot testing the questions was in support of good question construction by testing two elements: that individuals could

understand the questions and, further, that they could complete the instrument (Creswell, 2015). This process also served to help reduce the introduction of researcher bias into the instrument by allowing individuals to complete and provide feedback on the questions and detection of bias or confusion.

The researcher selected three respondents from her professional network to participate in the pilot study of the interview questions. Respondents were individuals who currently held a formal leadership position with their organization and who were willing to review the questions for the purposes of signaling areas of confusion, possible researcher bias, or problems in question construction that could lead respondents in a prescribed direction or to be unable to complete the questions. The researcher invited respondents via email and asked that they review the questions in written format, providing their comments either within the document or through an email response. The researcher then reviewed and incorporated any feedback in the modification of the interview protocol, clarifying any comments as needed directly with each respondent in the pilot study. The pilot study was completed prior to conducting the one-on-one interviews with the participating leaders. As outlined by Creswell (2015), participants in the pilot testing process were excluded from the sample for this study.

Several strategies were employed as appropriate to support higher response rates by the sample. First of these strategies was to pre-notify participants (Creswell, 2015). Pre-notification was achieved in the introductory email asking them to participate in the study and telling them that the process would include data collection using a one-on-one interview (See Appendix B). Use of follow-up procedures is the second strategy to promote higher response rates for data collection methods (Creswell, 2015). The researcher followed-up with a reminder email asking participants who had not already done so to return details of their consent to participate in the

study and their availability to schedule an interview with the researcher. A third email was sent to individuals who had not responded to earlier requests. According to Creswell, this three-step administration procedure, which includes the first invitation, followed by a second and third to non-respondents can help researchers attain a good return rate and to complete data collection within approximately six weeks (2015). Following this approach, the researcher was able to attain a good response rate, securing five participating leaders and completing the data collection process within four weeks.

The researcher used several techniques to capture information shared by the participants during the interview, and, further, to protect as best as possible their confidentiality during the study, as well as in any follow-up publication. First, each one-on-one interview was recorded, with verbal consent obtained from each leader at the start of the interview as a pre-requisite before proceeding with the interview. Once the interviews were complete, recordings of each participating leader were named with generic labels of Leader 1, Leader 2, and so forth and saved for transcription by the researcher. Transcribed interviews were saved along with each corresponding audio file, in the researcher's personal and password-protected computer. The researcher intends to retain this information only as long as necessary to complete and publish the study and to maintain records for an appropriate three years following, which is estimated as May 2022.

The written transcriptions of the interviews served as the basis of collected data to which the researcher then applied analysis techniques for categorization related to the research questions and findings of emergent themes across data sources, or cases. Member checking, a form of respondent validation of the data collected, was used to ensure that the data the researcher would review and analyze for meaning represented the intended responses of each

participant in each case (Creswell, 2015). After data collection directly from respondents was completed, the researcher generated document analysis. This process supported substantiation of the data in that the researcher created documentation consisting of the researcher's interview notes and notes from reviews of each transcribed interview. According to Merriam, interview transcripts, field notes, and documents of all types, including online data, can help a researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem (2009). The researcher used document analysis to make additional notes for understanding and meaning and, later, to codify information and to look for themes within the notes through a rigorous and iterative analytic approach using categorization of data. Information collected from each one-on one interview, along with researcher's notes, were reviewed several times to discover meaning and, further, to identify and confirm emergent themes. Multiple reviews to confirm emergent findings were used to substantiate the data further. Through this process, the researcher used qualitative, semi-structured interviews to support useful data collection and, ultimately, discover what Creswell refers to as "trends in thinking" on an issue (2015, p. 378).

### **Analysis**

Merriam (2009) suggests that "rigor in a qualitative research derives from the researcher's presence, the nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and rich, thick description" (pp. 191-192). By working directly with leaders using one-on one interviews based on open-ended questions, the researcher was able to pose questions for reflection (Creswell, 2015) and collect information regarding leader viewpoints, perspectives, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and practices about their leadership development experience. The next step was to analyze the information collected.

Creswell (2015) provides a three-step process for analyzing the data from the interviews, which the researcher followed for this study. Step one in the process was to identify response rate and response bias, placing results into a table to prepare for analysis and reporting of findings. Step two was to descriptively analyze the data to identify general trends. This step also included analysis of data to develop a demographic profile of the sample. Step three was to draft a report presenting the results. This can include tables or listings of aggregate responses to each item on the instrument. This process helped the researcher to discern general patterns of responses and variations in the results (Creswell, 2015).

Content analysis was used to begin analyzing the data to reduce the interview narratives into more relevant and manageable data (Merriam, 2009). According to Krippendorff (2013), content analysis is “an unobtrusive technique that allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and of the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data's sources” (p. 49). The researcher captured data and expression through meticulous notes. Next, a rigorous and iterative analytic approach was employed to search for categories that formed the basis of meaning. This included a line-by-line review of each case and transcript to identify themes which were later used in cross-case comparison and in reporting of findings particular to a single case or common across cases in the multi-case study. Categorization of data consisted of coding, including open and axial coding, to conduct the content analysis. Data was reviewed multiple times and also coded, giving way to the emergence of themes (Creswell, 2015). The researcher managed the focus of the thematic elements in the data by limiting the number of themes so as to not produce an unwieldy number (Creswell, 2015). A continual process of review, along with iterative testing



and refining of categories, created the resulting codification of data findings presented in the next chapter.

### **Participants' Rights**

This study focused on the perception of leaders as they reflected on LPD of which they have been part as leaders. At the time of the data collection, participating leaders held formal leadership roles with organizations based in the U.S. In order to minimize potential harm, the researcher followed the Institutional Review Board (IRBs) protocols in the process of this study. Informed consent was an important component of the researcher's process concerning participant rights. To this end, participants were informed as to the nature of the study and their participation. The purpose of the study was shared with each participant. Participants were also given a description of the methods that would be used for data collection and analysis, which included in-depth interviews, document analysis, codification, and categorization of findings. If the candidate agreed to participate in the study, they signed and returned to the researcher the informed consent document (See Appendix A) confirming their participation in the study.

Participant confidentiality was always maintained. Identities were protected by keeping the names of each participant confidential. Privacy in publication is also a chief focus of the researcher and the confidentiality of interviewees was ensured in any follow-up publication, including privacy as to information collected from each participant during the interview process. The data and materials used as part of this study will be kept safe by being accessed and stored only in a password-protected computer accessed by the researcher. Files will be stored for the time required for completion and publication of the study, which is estimated to be May 2022. Protection measures used by the researcher seek to ensure that only the researcher will be able to access the information.

### **Potential Limitations of the Study**

The case study approach for this study was an appropriate qualitative research method for collecting information relating to how leaders understand and describe their experiences with and the impacts of LPD at different levels. Despite the use of appropriate research methods, findings can be impacted by certain limitations. First, a case study allows the researcher to get close to the experiences and accounts of those experiences by working directly with those who are the subjects of the research (Merriam, 2009). Through content analysis of collected data, the researcher can then provide a vivid portrait of the experiences and information that can illuminate meanings that expand reader's experiences (Merriam, 2009). A benefit is that a case study methodology lends generalization whereby a study within a particular context and situation can be reviewed and applied in different contexts (Creswell, 2015). However, due to the intensive nature of such interpretation and work, the case study was limited to five leaders based on response from the target population and, ultimately, confirmed eligibility of each participant to be a part of the sample. This affects the perceived significance and generalization of the study, given the number of cases.

Having taken this into consideration, the researcher identified that a stronger study would be one incorporating a multi-case study design, an approach which supports a stronger representation of diversity of perspectives and experiences, bringing to light the individual cases, but also permitting cross-case analysis for points of coherence and difference (Merriam, 2009). According to Yin (2009), examining multiple cases in a multiple-case study design occurs with replication, which strengthens research findings, making the study more robust than single cases studies. Moreover, a multi-case study method, as was used in this study, permits for greater possibility of generalizability of findings to other cases and study replication (Creswell, 2015).

Further, given that the participants come from small and large organizations based on aforementioned selection criteria for eligibility to participate in the study, the researcher contends that the multi-case study approach can have increased generalizability to the field of study on LPD, as the findings are not limited to examination within a single industry, setting, or site. This multi-case study, therefore, albeit limited to five cases, affords a level of generalization for application in different contexts.

The researcher endeavored to recognize and mitigate issues of researcher bias and response bias, which can affect the validity of findings. The researcher took several steps toward reducing bias, encouraging response rate across a minimum of four cases, and ensuring respondent validation, as described earlier in this chapter. First, the researcher employed a pilot study of the interview questions in an effort to reduce the introduction of bias, confusion, or challenge in completing the data collection process during the interviews (Creswell, 2015). Second, the researcher made attempts to minimize bias of the researcher's role during data collection and the interview process by maintaining a neutral stance of tone during the interviews and by refraining from sharing personal opinions (Creswell, 2015). Third, the researcher encouraged the necessary participation and engagement of participants to complete the data collection process in order to provide collected data of a minimum of four cases as part of the multi-case study research design.

The researcher employed several strategies including pre-notification and follow-up procedures, as outlined earlier in this chapter. These strategies are considered good practices and appropriate for qualitative research studies requiring participant completion of a data collection instrument or interview (Creswell, 2015). Finally, the researcher also applied thoughtful and recognized methodology to the data analysis process. Member checking, a form of respondent

validation of the data collected, was used to ensure that the data the researcher reviewed and analyzed for meaning represented the intended responses of each participant in each case (Creswell, 2015). The author further states that these strategies support the reduced potential for the introduction of researcher and response bias and are appropriate qualitative research methods for similar studies.

### **Conclusion**

Using a qualitative and case study approach, this multi-case study supports a greater understanding of LPD through the purposeful investigation into what leaders perceive are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels. Several supporting research questions were utilized to support a study into the centrality of the leader in the participation and evaluation of the efficacy of LPD programs and activities. A multi-case study design using semi-structured interviews facilitated the process of data collection and analysis necessary to study the phenomenon of impacts of LPD, to examine leader attitudes, and support greater understanding of what leaders identify as outcomes from LPD experiences. The data from this study supports discovery and understanding of the personal perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of leaders who participated in LPD programming.

Findings from this study are presented in the upcoming Chapter 4. Analysis of LPD related to its impact, leader attitudes and beliefs toward LPD, their role in LPD, and what they gain from the experience assisted the researcher in addressing the outlined research questions for this study. Detailed accounts from participants, as well as the resulting themes from individual and cross-case analysis are presented in the next chapters. It is the researcher's hope that a better understanding of the leader's perspective of LPD can serve to help address concerns and research gaps around the efficacy and outcomes of providing LPD programming.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS/OUTCOMES

This study sought to capture leaders' viewpoints regarding leader perceptions of the impacts of LPD. This chapter describes the findings to the research questions presented in Chapter One and, further, summarizes the responses of the participants within this multi-case study. Using qualitative research design, this chapter addresses what leaders believe are the impacts of LPD as well as how leaders describe their personal approach to LPD. This chapter is organized by the four specific research questions for the study and the findings relevant to each question. Findings presented in this chapter are discussed through a thematic approach, elucidating the emergent themes in the data. "Data" here refers to the participant responses amassed during data collection for this study, which included one-on-one interviews with the researcher and participating leaders.

#### **Review of Methodology**

In this multi-case study, each leader's transcribed responses form the basis for data analysis and a unique case study of one leader. A total of five leaders, or case studies, form the total participant set for this study. Beyond the individual case study, this qualitative multi-case study presents findings that appeared across cases, some cases, or to a particular/single case. In doing so, the study research questions are discussed from a thematical framework informed from single-cases as well as cross-case analysis. The research questions outlined for this study were as follows:

- RQ1: What do leaders believe are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels?

- RQ2: What do leaders believe are enablers and barriers of learning, results, and outcomes of LPD at a personal and organizational level?
- RQ3: How do leaders understand and describe their own role in participating, evaluating, and applying LPD experiences?
- RQ4: How do leaders evaluate and make decisions about LPD in regard to their own engagement, openness to learn, and openness to make attitudinal or behavioral changes?

A qualitative case study approach was particularly relevant for this study in order to uncover the meaning and understanding of leaders regarding LPD and the four research questions. The results presented in this chapter were derived from five transcribed one-on-one interviews, each lasting approximately 90 minutes (See Appendix C).

### **Participants**

As stated in the methodology chapter, the researcher sought to include a minimum of four cases, or participating leaders, in this qualitative multi-case study. The final participant set for this study is made up of five leaders who work in distinct industries/professional fields. There were two women and three men, all of whom currently hold and have held a leadership role for a minimum period of one year. Further unifying characteristics derived from the selection criteria include that each participating leader currently works with a U.S.-based organization and has participated in one or more forms of LPD within the last five years. Moreover, as stated in the methodology chapter, the researcher took measures to ensure that no more than two participating leaders for this study work for the same institution.

Table 1 presents the profile of the participants for this study and outlines demographic details for each participant. This includes self-reported gender, age, years of leadership experience, and organization type/industry. In keeping with the methodology outlined for this

study, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to each participant in order to protect their identity.

Table 1 describes the organizational affiliation of each leader, focusing on the type of organization or industry in which they worked during the time of the data collection process.

Table 1

*Participant Demographic Detail / Profile*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years of Leadership Experience</b>	<b>Organization Type / Industry</b>	<b>Institution Size</b>
Leader 1	M	41-50	17+	New Corporation, Technology Startup	25
Leader 2	M	30-40	5+	University, Higher Education	3,000
Leader 3	F	41-50	25+	Corporation, Professional Research and Consulting	300+
Leader 4	M	61+	20+	Corporation, Technology	250+
Leader 5	F	41-50	5+	University, Higher Education	3,000

### **Data Analysis**

Overall, the guidelines described in the methodology chapter informed the process for data analysis and determined the themes presented in this chapter. The researcher followed the six steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data, as outlined by Creswell (2015). First, the researcher collected data by conducting one-on-one interviews with each participating leader, recording each interview with the participant's permission. Second, the researcher prepared the data for analysis by hand-transcribing each interview. Data validation occurred through member checking in which the transcription was shared with participant, allowing for clarification and confirmation of accuracy. Next, the researcher read through the data with the intent of capturing

the “general sense of the material” (Creswell, 2015, p. 236). Once this process was complete, the researcher began coding the data set.

Coding the data began with one transcript. Open coding was used and generated a list of initial codes, to which the researcher added more codes with analysis of the second, third, fourth, and fifth transcription. Coding entailed assigning a code label to text segments in the transcript in order to codify that raw data. The data for this study was extensive in that 90-minute interviews rendered in many cases 25+ pages of transcribed text, single-spaced. This initial coding process rendered a little over 100 codes. Though it was possible to render many more codes, the researcher employed the idea of lean coding, in which the first time through each transcript, only a few codes are assigned (Creswell, 2015). Next, the researcher sought to return to the transcripts and codes, this time looking for codes used within each transcript and seeking to combine similar codes used across transcripts in order to reduce the total number of codes.

At this point, the researcher performed multiple reviews of the transcript and versions of the codes in an iterative and simultaneous process of data analysis, as described by Creswell (2015). Moreover, axial coding was used to for relationships among the open codes, leading to discovery of categories or concepts. Through this process, the researcher reduced the number of codes to 15. These codes were continually tested and used to further code text segments of the data. Though there is no single, accepted approach to analyzing qualitative data, the researcher employed the guidelines set forth by Creswell for analyzing and interpreting qualitative data (Creswell, 2015). The coding process allowed the researcher to make sense of the data, be able to divide it into segments, label segments with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and, finally, collapse these codes into broad themes (Creswell, 2015).



The resulting findings for this study are explored in the coming sections and are organized by the four research questions for this study. Within each research question, the research presents the themes discovered in data analysis and relevant to addressing the respective question. A total of seven themes form the findings explored across the four research questions. Care has been taken to organize these themes and to name them in such a way as to attempt to capture the meaning of each theme. Tremendous care was taken to iteratively review and codify the transcripts as well as to look into the interrelationship and layering of themes whereby minor themes subsume within major themes. Thematically, the findings explore four major areas of leader perceptions on LPD and these are:

- Leader viewpoints on the impacts of LPD
- Leader viewpoints on factors that serve as enablers and/or barriers to the impacts of LPD
- Leader viewpoints as to the role of the leader in LPD
- Leader perceptions of their own decision-making related to engaging in LPD

Each of these corresponds to the associated research question. Moreover, each is explored in this chapter in detail, whereby the researcher includes, for each research question, the major themes, minor themes, and selected key quotes or exemplars to support the researcher's interpretation and findings. The researcher sought to follow the guidelines proffered in the Qualitative Research Guidelines Project (2008) by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for displaying data for qualitative research.

### **Research Question 1**

The first research question outlined for this study is: What do leaders believe are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels?

## Findings

Two major themes are included for this research question. The first theme is *Perceived Effects/Results of LPD*. The second theme is *Organizational Impact of LPD not easily understood*. Table 2 provides a listing and corresponding description of each of the major themes.

Table 2

### *Themes in Leaders' Description of Impacts of LPD*

Major Theme	Description
Perceived Effects/Results of LPD	Leader descriptions as to what they perceive as the effects/results of LPD
Organizational Impact of LPD Not Easily Understood	Perceived challenges in understanding the impact of LPD at an organizational level

### **Theme 1: Perceived Effects/Results of LPD**

The first theme is *Perceived Effects/Results of LPD*. This theme includes two sub-themes, which are first described in Table 3 and later explored in more depth.

Table 3

### *Subthemes in Perceived Effects/Results of LPD*

Subtheme	Description
Effects/Results at the Individual Level	Leader descriptions as to what they perceive as the personal effects/results of LPD
Effects/Results at the Team Level	Leader descriptions as to impact of LPD they perceive at the level of their team(s)

Participating leaders were asked to describe what they see as the impacts of LPD. Leaders were invited to share their perspective around perceived impacts at a personal level, at the level of their work team(s), and at the level of the organization.

## Effects/Results at the Individual Level

All five leaders cited most commonly and most often effects/results that relate to awareness. This includes self-awareness, awareness of others, and awareness of other ways of seeing, being, or doing. Table 4 provides leader-specific reflections on LPD leading to greater awareness of self and others.

Table 4

### *Awareness of Self and Others*

Leader 1	"It comes down to cognition...I did not think about this for the first decade of my professional career...that's just sort of maturing I've tried to do."
Leader 2	"Investing into LPD has allowed me to refine what I believe were my core values and beliefs."
Leader 3	"I am much more self-aware that we all have different strengths and blind spots."
Leader 4	"Personality assessment models in LPD are useful to help you compare...and you begin to see some of your blind spots. And so, you start to explore other things and realize there's useful other perspectives, attitudes, behaviors, things there that I might want to take up."
Leader 5	"What has been the most positive individual impact from LPD is understanding enough about myself to recognize some of the differences between my approach with others, and then being able to modify my behavior, tweaks here and there to meet other folks needs."

Table 4 includes several variations of participant comments related to perceptions of LPD leading to gains in self-awareness, including leader knowledge of their strengths or blind spots, for example. Leader 2 also signals a connection between his self-awareness and his refinement of values and beliefs as a result of LPD. Table 4 shows reflections as to leaders perceiving a gain in their awareness of others, including recognizing differences in strengths and blind spots, but also in needs.

Again, awareness is the most commonly cited effect/result of LPD from the participant's perspective. The researcher sees this next umbrella of awareness as valuable to be distinguished

from self or other awareness. Table 5 provides leader-specific reflections on LPD leading to greater awareness of new or other ways of seeing, being, or doing:

Table 5

*Awareness of Other Ways of Seeing, Being, or Doing*

Leader 1	“The most benefit that I typically got was when an older veteran, more experienced leader came in and basically told stories, explained situations, that narrative approach allowed us to put ourselves in positions that we had not found ourselves yet.”
Leader 2	“LPD opportunities offered by the institution have allowed me to network and meet those in other positions.”
Leader 3	“For me, as a leader, I want to be able to access new trends. I want to be able to access experts from industries and organizations...experts in other industries to give me a different perspective.”
Leader 4	“It is ultimately the outcome of any LPD to be able to make attitudinal and behavioral and perceptual changes. That's fundamentally what learning is all about anyway. And so, any kind of development ought to give you a new awareness and new perspective that you can begin to put into some kind of practical use.”
Leader 5	“I think that sometimes professional development can be impactful enough to where it can lead to a new way of seeing things.

Table 5 describes brief thoughts shared by participants as to perceived increased awareness in terms of new or other ways of seeing, being, or doing.

Awareness of other's perspective includes for leaders, for example, learning something through the shared lessons of another leader. In describing this, Leader 1 shared:

My grandfather used to say that the sign of an adult is someone who can learn a lesson from someone else's life. And I think that's probably true of leaders, the best leaders are those that don't necessarily have to learn the lesson firsthand.

Leader 4 also elaborated on LPD that enables awareness of what others are doing and how they might approach situations. Leader 4 noted:

I'm highly committed to those kinds of activities and events. They're tremendously important because they give you that opportunity you don't always see day to day. Where am I in relationship to others? How are others like, or similar, or dissimilar or different? And how do I make good use of that?

The findings seem to indicate that for leaders, awareness of new or other ways of seeing, being, or doing can be very valuable and even influential towards perceptual changes, at times behavioral changes, and, still, at other times, changes in attitude or approach.

### **Effects/Results at the Team Level**

Participating leaders also described results/effects they perceive LPD has had at the level of their team. Leader 2 reflected on how he can take what he learns in his own LPD and apply that with his team. He noted, “with the team, I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to continue to not only grow and be able to for all intents and purposes try out all these wonderful ideas I hear with my own team.” Similarly, Leader 3 also shared her experience with applying LPD at the level of team, noting:

The positive LPD experiences that I went through enabled me to create empowering situations for my team. I was able to exhibit or help to create an environment where teams could also benefit from their own development, feeling part of organizational change, or feeling empowered to contribute in different ways.

Leader 1 shared a practical example from his experience applying what he learned during an off-site LPD program with his team upon his return:

And I made sure that when I came back, I spent a full hour detailing for my team what we had gone over, and it was almost a mini workshop. Here's some leadership principles that

I was just taught. What do you think? What does it mean to you? I wanted them to see that I did what I was asking to them to do.

Similarly, Leader 5 also noted a practical example of acquiring new learning and skills during an LPD program and brought that new knowledge and toolset back to her team. Leader 5 shared an example of when she made a team process change after participating in a training program that centered on personality awareness and development. In that program, Leader 5 learned about her personal decision-making style, which she characterized as quick and efficient. She also reflected learning that her style differs from the style and preferences of others.

To apply this learning, Leader 5 instituted a change in process whereby the operational decisions for the team would no longer be made by herself, but rather in a collaborative approach with the team leaders who report to her. Leader 5 describes this change:

And so one of the things that I did a few years ago is I established a different approach to decision making on the teams I lead, which was something that I learned from professional development, which was instituting decision making that invited others to the table so that it was more of an advisory capacity instead of just one person making a decision.

Leader 5 went on to note that the change has been a lasting adoption: “To this day, I have a leadership team that I invite to make some decisions about our day to day operations. Some decisions are critical, some not so critical, but I invite them to the decision-making table.” For Leader 5, a perceived effect/result of her LPD was to be able to recognize her go-to decision-making approach and to have the tools to make a process change to be able to include the decision-making styles and preferences of others. This resulted in team-level impact through a

new approach to day-to-day operations characterized by a more distributed or collaborative decision-making approach.

These examples appear to highlight that leaders perceive that their personal experiences with LPD have an impact on the teams in which they work or that they lead. Additionally, the sense shared by leaders is that the impact is one that results from the leader taking what they are exposed to during their own LPD and applying it in their work with their team(s). There appears to be an understanding that the resultant impact of LPD at the level of team occurs through the leader's intentional application of their own LPD experiences.

### **Theme 2: Organizational Impact of LPD Not Easily Understood**

A finding within the exploration of leader perceptions on the effects/results of LPD is that the ultimate impact of LPD on the organization is not easily understood. Leaders cite a disconnect between their expectations around LPD and the reality of their experience as to how organizations address LPD. This disconnect seems to present a certain complexity with the process for leaders to be able to perceive or to evaluate the effect/results of LPD at the level of the organization. For example, in reflecting on her experience of organizational impact of LPD, Leader 3 shared:

I have experienced leadership development is a thing that you may check off your list of employee benefits that you offer, without the strategic vision of what we should be accomplishing as an organization because of leadership development.

Leader 3 described her experience as one that highlights that the existence of the organization's strategic vision around leader development is essential to whether there can be an understanding of achievement of leader development. For Leader 3, an important element to understanding LPD impact on the organization involves knowing what the organization set out to achieve

through its LPD efforts. A lack of this strategic vision, for Leader 3, contributes to challenge in discerning the impact of LPD on the organization.

Similarly, when asked to describe the effects/results of LPD at the level of the organization, Leader 1 shared:

One of my fears with most leadership training is that the time is not adequate for what the desired outcomes really are. And, so, the attendees get short changed. And as a result, the organization doesn't really see the ROI or the benefit for performing it.

Here, Leader 1 shares a perspective that for him, LPD is often not aligned to the level of the desired outcomes. For Leader 1, an important connection exists between the amount of time an organization dedicates to LPD and the outcomes it seeks to garner from it. A lack of alignment in this connection contributes to making it difficult to discern the impact of LPD on the organization.

When asked to describe the impact of her LPD on the organization, Leader 5 harkened to an organizationally-sponsored leadership development program to which she had been nominated. Regarding the impact of that experience, Leader 5 noted: "I was very disappointed because I felt that tasks that they were addressing under this sort of banner of leadership were not leadership at all, they were basically administrative tasks about approving timesheets, for employee attendance and time-off policies." Leader 5 explains the result of her experience:

And, so, I walked away from participation in the program, which was a four- or five-week event where we met a couple of times a week, without any real takeaways in terms of improving me as a leader, which in turn, I think, it's not going to have a very positive impact on the organization.



Leader 5's perception above highlights a sense of connection between the impact of LPD on the leader and impact of LPD on the leader's respective organization. Leader 5 describes reflecting that because the content of the LPD program was limited to administrative tasks, it did not lead to improving her as a leader personally, which in turn meant she did not perceive that it might have an impact on the organization. For Leader 5, discerning the impact of LPD on the organization is difficult without first understanding the impact of LPD on the individual leader.

Discerning or understanding the impact of LPD on the organization are further complicated, as described by the leaders, by the evaluation approaches used to assess the efficacy of LPD programs and efforts. When asked about her experiences with how the LPD is evaluated, Leader 5 shared:

Surface level in the sense that they just ask us what we thought about the training. Did you like it? Was the layout of the room good? Was the food ok? And even though information about logistics is what event planners want to know about, logistics have very little to do with whether or not I have learned something that I'm going to be able to take back to my daily job and test out.

Here, Leader 5 shares that the way organizations have measured LPD impact, in her experience, is not aligned to the desired outcomes for that LPD. This further complicates the earlier issues raised by Leader 1, where the time invested in LPD may not align to the desired outcomes for the organization. It also further adds to Leader 5's perspective on the misalignment between the content/focus of LPD, its helpfulness to the leader's development, and, ultimately, the desired outcomes for that LPD.

Discerning the impact of LPD on the organization can be a difficult endeavor for leaders. Overall, assessing the impact of LPD on the organization, from the lens of the leader, appears to

relate to how (and if) they were personally impacted by the LPD. This appears to highlight an understanding that the leader is the first recipient of impact of LPD, and that the organization is a secondary (and contingent) recipient of impact. Whether LPD programs are indeed having an impact on the organization, and, further, whether this impact is occurring independently of impact at the level of the leader, is unknown. This adds to the complexities around understanding the organizational impact of LPD.

### Research Question 2

The second research question outlined for the study is: What do leaders believe are enablers and barriers of learning, results, and outcomes of LPD at a personal and organizational level?

### Findings

A single major theme is presented for this second research question. The theme is *Personal and Organizational Factors Influence Effects/Results of LPD*. This theme reports on leader viewpoints on factors that they perceive and describe as enablers and/or barriers to the impacts of LPD. The researcher subsumed two subthemes within this finding and those are: *Personal Factors* and *Organization Factors*. Table 6 provides a listing and description of the subthemes for this finding.

Table 6

#### *Subthemes in Leaders' Description of Enablers and Barriers*

Subtheme	Description
Personal Factors	Leader descriptions of the personal or work-based characteristics/situations they perceive as enablers and barriers to outcomes of LPD
Organizational Factors	Leader descriptions of organizational factors they perceive serve as enablers and barriers to outcomes of LPD

### Theme 3: Personal and Organizational Factors Influence Effects/Results of LPD

Participating leaders were asked to reflect on questions around the personal and organizational factors that enable or support them in their own LPD. They were also asked to reflect on the personal and organizational factors that impeded or serve as barriers for them in their own LPD. Table 7 lists what leaders shared in each category, *Enablers* and *Barriers*. This is followed by an explication of the factors, as addressed by the participants in this study.

Table 7

#### *Perceived Enablers and Barriers to the Effects/Results of LPD*

Enablers	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Willingness (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Commitment / Self-Discipline (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Time (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Bandwidth (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for LPD (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Organizational culture/commitment to LPD (noted by all leaders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commitment / Self-Discipline (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Time (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Bandwidth (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Organizational culture/commitment (noted by all leaders)</li> <li>▪ Funding for LPD (Leader 1, 2 &amp; 5)</li> </ul>

#### Personal Factors

Across all leaders, the concept of willingness was shared as a key personal factor that influences the effects/results of LPD. Willingness in this data set addressed the leader's approach to engaging in LPD and to considering changes in the leader's attitude, behavior, or perceptions as a result of LPD. Leader 5 noted, "what helps me in LPD is my willingness to do it. I think like many things in life, if you're not willing to do something, it's just going to be that much harder." Leader 1 referenced willingness as a practical commitment to one's own development. He noted, "I think, number one is conscious commitment, which means all sorts of things that underlie that, like time. You have to give yourself time to make those things happen."

Leader 4 expands on willingness from the standpoint of self-discipline, which he notes as a possible counter to leader willingness. Leader 4 explains:

I think what hinders is the other side of the coin is sometimes just self-discipline. It's like, yeah, I know, I got to do that. And it takes some work, and it may not happen all at once. So being able to stick to it to actually follow-through on that change, and not fall back into something else.

For Leader 4, willingness for LPD is perceived as an ongoing commitment characterized by follow-through and effort necessary to see the desired changes and outcomes. Leader 3 also reflected on personal enabling factors and shared willingness as an ongoing dynamic, noting: “I believe I have an openness to continuing to practice, make changes, and then try something different if I didn't feel successful.”

A second significant area of enabling factors or barriers for LPD can be organized into a framework of logistics. All of the leaders noted time and bandwidth when prompted to describe factors that serve as enablers and barriers to LPD effects/results. Interestingly, these two factors appear in both the enabler as well as barrier categories, denoting that their existence alone is not a factor in either category, but rather it is the degree of each that is relevant to whether it serves as an enabler or a barrier to the effects/results of LPD.

Time is a factor of significant factor for leaders. When describing this aspect, Leader 1 noted:

You have to give yourself time to make those things happen, whether that's simply time to think, my colleague would say that he needs time to think and you have to dedicate that sometimes. You have to actually put it on your calendar to say, no one interrupt me.

For Leader 1, time for LPD requires his intervention to set aside that time and to separate himself from distractions. Time indeed seems an important and perhaps anticipated findings as to the perceptions from leaders on enablers and barriers in their own LPD. Time, or the lack thereof, can also be a source of real frustration for leader. When describing her perceptions on time as a factor in her own development, Leader 5 noted:

I know that this is going to sound crazy, but there are times when I wish that I would have a day or two where I can just think about the team and myself, and my role as a leader, and what we're doing with our goals, and what we're accomplishing.

For Leader 5, the description of her perspective on time is expressed with a seemingly aspirational tone where she wishes for the time that she feels she needs to support her own development.

Bandwidth refers to the availability a leader has to carry out LPD in the midst of standard or operational functions of their leadership role. This is highly related to time and could be considered similarly in terms of its definition. For example, Leader 5 expresses concern over the limited bandwidth she has to dedicate to LPD, noting: “In my role, managing 40 full time employees, plus 18 part-time employees, and solving the problems that I do, I don't ever get a single day where I can just think about what we're doing.” Similarly, Leader 1 notes: “There are a lot of leaders who get caught up in the day to day to the point where they give up on the strategic. They give up on leadership. I think that’s a shame...I get why it happens.”

Leaders perceive their availability of time and bandwidth for LPD to directly compete, so to speak, with the day-to-day of their roles. When this occurs, time and bandwidth become impediments to effects/results of LPD. Leader 5 shared:

Time is one of those things that tends to fall more in the impede category, right? There are many times when I go to participate in LPD and there's a wonderful idea that I want to implement, but it takes me a while to implement it. Because I don't have the time to do it, you know, we're so busy at work, usually what's directly in front of us, it's what's more urgent, that's what's going to get our attention.

Here, Leader 5 offers a similar reflection to that of Leader 1 in terms of the potential for leaders to get caught in the day to day to the point where their development receives less of their time and attention. It is relevant to note here that time and logistics are perceived as very necessary factors to being able to see effects/results of LPD.

### **Organizational Factors**

A finding within the category of organizational factors is that of time. While the researcher addressed time under personal factors, there is an aspect of time that leaders appear to perceive is largely controlled by the organization of which they are a part. In this aspect of time, the leader perceives that the organization has a direct influence to change this factor toward becoming either an enabler or a barrier to effect/results of LPD. For this reason, the researcher considers it fitting to elucidate the factor of time once more, but this time from the lens of the leader's expectations for organizational support.

Reflecting on the aspect of time as a factor and its connection to the organization, Leader 5 shares:

It's not uncommon for me to be in back to back meetings from 9am to 5pm. And what that does is, I suffer from being able to make some necessary changes, which, incidentally, are the changes that sometimes organizations expect their leaders to make. So, I would say that time falls into that sort of impediment category where you can have

the best of intentions, but you just don't have the time...or your organization does not do something to ensure that leaders have the time.

Leader 5 here highlights not only her perceptions of her role and the lack of time she can dedicate to LPD, but she highlights an expectation that her time and workload are a contextual reality that her organization could influence on her behalf. That is, the leader perceives that the organization has some level of influence over her work demands and the amount of time she is able to commit to LPD.

Leader 5 later addresses the factor of time again, but this time, from the standpoint of the sanctioned amount of time her organization provides her relief from her day-to-day job for the purposes of her own development. Leader 5 described her situation like this:

Time speaks to just how much the organization values growth from the person. So, for example, the organization where I work currently, a leader is given sort of a symbolic 12 hours per year to develop themselves. That's 12 hours out of 2,080 potential working hours in a year. From that perspective, I can't say that it's very important to the organization for the leader to develop themselves.

In this explication, Leader 5 describes the organization's policy on formal time off for the leaders for the purposes of LPD. Leader 5's perception is that the organization's allotment of time leaders can spend on LPD says a great deal about the degree of importance the organization places on LPD.

This common theme continues with Leader 2's shared perspective on time afforded by the organization for the purposes of LPD:

Well, the organization does require a certain number of professional development hours per year... And those hours, I believe, are not enough to adequately maintain the skills of the current leaders, nor is it enough to promote and invest in future leadership personnel. Leader 2's perspective indicates that while his organization defines a certain amount of time to be dedicated to LPD each year, the proffered amount of time is insufficient for supporting leader development. Similarly, Leader 1 reflects on this aspect, noting:

One of my fears with most leadership training is that the time is not adequate for what the desired outcomes really are. And so, the attendees get short changed. And as a result, the organization doesn't really see the ROI or the benefit for performing it.

Leader 1's comment highlights a continuing thread of leader perceptions related to the factor of time and the perceived influence the organization has, or can have, on the factor of time for the purposes of supporting leader development.

When speaking to time and LPD, Leader 2 shares a similar reflection on the connection or implication to the organization of time spent on LPD: "If an employee spends 100% of their time on day to day tasks and it's up to them on their own time to develop, if they choose, that's not a value that I think an organization should portray." It is important to note that the aforementioned comments on the factor of time and organizational influence over this factor appear to draw towards a connection for leaders between what the organization says it values and how it evidences those values to its leaders and employees. This connection will be further explored as organizational culture.

**Organizational culture.** Perhaps one of the key findings around organizational factors that influence the effects/results of LPD is that of organizational culture and its connection to leader development. The leaders in this study perceive that the organization's culture has a lot to



do with LPD in terms of the ultimate effects/results of LPD at various levels. When reflecting on organizational opportunities for LPD, Leader 2 shared:

I want my organization to value professional development. That's first and foremost. It is not something that is valued everywhere, as sad as that is to say, because it does take effort and time. It takes effort and time for an organization to, you know, to give to individuals to pursue those types of interest.

For Leader 2, it is important that his organization values PD and he reflects on the disappointment of when an organization does not possess this value.

Similarly, Leader 3 shared how the organization must encourage and support leader development:

Those organizational factors are having a system in place, or coaching and mentoring, whether it's formal or informal, and providing space for an employee to develop.... And within the framework of it being encouraged in their work day, as opposed to 'if you want to do this, it better be on your own time.' So being supportive, not just in writing, really helping a lot, not just talking the talk.

Here, Leader 3 shares a perspective common among the study participants, which is an expectation for the organization to invest in leader development and to evidence this commitment in specific ways that support the leader in the development process.

Leader 5 continued this thread and noted:

Where I work currently, a leader is given 12 hours per year to develop themselves. That's 12 hours out of 2,080 potential working hours in a year. From that perspective, I can't say that it's very important to the organization for the leader to develop themselves...that's

.005% of the leader's time is what the organization is endorsing as the amount of time that a leader is supposed to spend developing his or herself.

For Leader 5, the organization's culture toward leaders and leader development is weighed for her in the light of the amount of time the institution endorses for her to dedicate to LPD. For Leader 5, this evidence yields a perception that her organization must not deem LPD as important.

Additionally, leaders described the institutional conditions relating to organizational culture and how these can nurture or impede leader development. For example, Leader 1 shared:

If you want innovation, then you've got to be prepared for failure. That has to be okay. And, so, as leaders experiment and grow, you've got to be prepared for things they tried to not work...And there's got to be language and actions that support that belief that says, you're not going to get in trouble.

For Leader 1, the institutional conditions afforded to leaders must match what the institution is looking for in terms of desired outcomes of leader development. The example he shared, related to innovation, described what he envisioned as a safe environment for the skill of innovation to be practiced and to flourish in the leaders. Similarly, Leader 5 shared: "There are organizations that are very sort of pro-learning. They invite it, they create opportunities for acquiring new knowledge. They test things out. There is not a punitive nature to you trying something out that then later doesn't work." In these examples, leaders describe how the organization's culture in terms of its approach to leader behaviors such as change, adoption of new idea, and the possibility of failure can create or impede the necessary institutional context for leaders to practice applying LPD and seeing results/effects from it.

**Organizational opportunities and funding.** Leaders cite opportunities for LPD as an important organizational factor influencing the effects/results of LPD. Reflecting on the criticality of opportunities for LPD, Leader 3 shared:

It's critical that a leader have various experiences, not exclusively formal training, or not exclusively on the job training. One of the key values of LPD is a variety of methods available to a leader so that they have expertise and access to people outside of that organization from which to learn and grow, and that they are able to be in a situation where they can practice their own leadership skills with their own employees and their own teams.

For Leader 3, LPD can take many forms, including outside of the organization, and this can translate into many different types of learning opportunities for leaders. Leader 3 continued in terms of describing her expectations for the organization:

Not every organization is able to internally provide everything that their leaders need. So, if there are gaps in the organization, I would want my organization to supplement so that I feel I have access to the development I need despite any gaps my organization has.

For Leader 2, the organization providing opportunities for LPD is directly connected to time and funding. Reflecting on this aspect, Leader 2 noted: "it takes time and money and other resources for to take time out of their day to day to, to invest that in themselves." Similarly, Leader 1 reflected on the need for organizational funding: "Very pragmatically, money, it doesn't necessarily have to be a lot of money, but it has to be money, that I have some discrepancy to spend around what I perceived to be valuable leadership training. So very tangibly money."

Finally, Leader 5 describes her perspective around the ultimate result of when there is a perceived lack of organizational opportunities or funding needed for LPD. She noted:

If the organization does not provide the leader the time, if they're not given the funding, if they're not given an opportunity to go develop themselves, then it's probably something that only the leader who is connected to wanting to do that will do it for his or herself.

In this statement, Leader 5 highlights the importance of organizational support for leader development, as well as the ultimate effect on the leader when necessary organizational support is not afforded. The comments above reflect what the leader sees as organizational factors that can either support or hinder them in their own LPD.

### Research Question 3

The third research question outlined for this study is: How do leaders understand and describe their own role in participating, evaluating, and applying LPD experiences in their own development?

### Findings

A single major theme is included for the third research question for the study. The theme is *LPD is Participant-Driven*. This theme describes leader viewpoints as to the role of the leader in LPD. The researcher subsumed several distinct subthemes within this broader theme. Table 8 provides an outline and description of the subthemes, which serve to distinguish the unique role-based descriptions proffered by the participants in this study.

Table 8

#### *Subthemes in Leaders' Description of their Role in LPD*

Subthemes	Description
Leader Viewed as Driver	Leader descriptions on the role the leader as driver of their development journey
Leader Viewed as Learner	Leader descriptions on the role of the leader as a learner or student in their development process and in LPD
Leader Viewed as Evaluator	Leader descriptions on the role of the leader in evaluating LPD efficacy

#### **Theme 4: LPD is Participant-Driven**

During the one-the-one interviews, leaders were asked to reflect on and describe their understanding of their role as participants in LPD. Across all participants, there was an expressed sense of openness and optimism to participating in LPD. When asked to describe her approach to LPD, Leader 5 shared: “Every time I sign up for leadership development, I'm always very optimistic about it. I am looking forward to it. I am excited about the session.”

##### **Leader Viewed as Driver**

Several of the leaders reflected on their perceptions of their role in regard to LPD and shared insights as to their expectation for leaders to view themselves as drivers of LPD. The central meaning in this subtheme is participants sharing a perspective that leaders must take up responsibility for their own leader development journey. This theme highlights a sense of ownership for LPD and how that appears to be understood as leader-driven.

Leader 2 shared his perspective in terms of highlighting his experience with LPD opportunities:

I would honestly say, I have never been told you have to go through this training in any way, shape, or form. And I have never been told any of it is required by any means. So, I think if I wasn't seeking it out, you know, I could have done nothing over these years, and probably not been as successful.

Leader 2's description highlights a sense that LPD, for him, has been a personal pursuit and not one that he has been asked to participate in. He also notes the decision for engaging has rested with him and that he could have not participated in leader development of any form to this point in his career.

Leader 3 similarly shared an the active or driving role of the leader in leader development. She noted:

It should be an active role and not a passive role, I don't believe LPD could be successful if it is simply a transfer of knowledge from one person to another. Leadership development is...a complex offering or system. It requires a very fluid, active participation with the leader as participant in leadership development and being proactive to seek out what they need.

Leader 3's description includes a sense of pursuit or intentionality by the leader in an ongoing way. Leader 5 also described the sense of personal ownership of one's LPD, adding her viewpoint on this responsibility in light of the organizational context:

Somebody has to take the baton for LPD responsibility, right? If it's a critical task, somebody has to do it. And if the organization isn't doing it, or if the organization is doing it to the level that the leader may want, then the leader has to take the baton, and has to take the responsibility to do it.

Leader 5 notes an understanding that because LPD is critical, the responsibility of LPD must be assumed. Further, when the organization does not address LPD or when it's LPD efforts do not support the leader's expectations, Leader 5 sees this an invitation for the leader to take on the responsibility. She further comments: "LPD has to be critical to the leader and the leader has to invest in it. And if nobody else is doing it, the leader has to say, well, it may as well be me." The next role-based description will further explore leader perceptions on their roles toward LPD.

### **Leader Viewed as Learner**

Several of the participants provided descriptions of how they see themselves, as leaders, in relation to participating in LPD. Many of the participants proffered that they see themselves in

the role of a learner when engaging in LPD. This was perhaps the most common thematic description of how leaders see themselves in regard to LPD. For example, when asked to describe her approach as participant in LPD, Leader 3 shared:

I'm always looking for other people to learn from, for other insightful opportunities.

Whether it's something I try differently, something I get involved in, that I can learn from, and it helps me grow as a leader. So, it's just that eagerness to learn and grow.

Leader 3 further described her approach, taking on a more evaluative point of view on her own perspective of the leader being a learner in the process:

Personally, I enjoy learning, I enjoy growing... And if I were to put blinders on, I would say, well, doesn't everyone enjoy learning and growing? But the answer is, if you take the blinders off, not everyone does. Some people get to a point in their career, and whether they want to describe it as they met their goals, their career goals, they don't have anything else to learn.

Leader 3's description provides a viewpoint highlighting her own pursuit of learning and an evaluative stance as to how representative her approach might be in other leaders.

When asked to reflect on her approach to LPD, Leader 5 described her disposition in this way:

If I sign up for a session or for a course, there's something to me that's very intriguing about it. And I would also say that I approach it as a learner. I approach it with a kind of open heart and open mind, to say, let me see what's here for me that I might be able to take away.

Leader 5's description reveals a sense of anticipation for new learning, which she describes as part of her approach as a learner in LPD. When asked to further expand on the role of the leader in relation to LPD, Leader 5 shared:

The role of the leader in LPD needs to be one of learner and, more, one of an open-minded, flexible learner who is willing to allow new information, to 'move their cheese.'

I know that's probably an old statement. I'm not sure if you remember the book that came out many years ago, *Who Moved My Cheese?*, but where I have found most effective as the role of leader in LPD is basically to be completely an open-minded learner.

Additionally, reflecting on the reasons for why she believes the role of the learner is so important to the leader, Leader 5 added: "because that is, in my opinion, the way that you are going to get out of the training the most value." For Leader 5, the role of learner is an important one and appears connected for her to the ultimate value she might be able to take away from an LPD experience or process.

For Leader 4, the role of the leader as learner is expressed in a sense of the resulting changes in the leader's approach. When describing his perspective, Leader 4 shared:

That is ultimately the outcome of any LPD is to be able to make those attitudinal and behavioral and perceptual changes. I mean, to me, that's fundamentally what learning is all about anyway.

Leader 4's description addresses the role of the leader as learner and adds a seemingly implicit understanding that any LPD or learning endeavor should hold as its ultimate outcome some form of learning to include attitudinal, behavior, and/or perceptual change in the learner. The next role-based description will further explore leader perceptions on their roles toward LPD.



### **Leader Viewed as Evaluator**

Some of the participants provided an added viewpoint of the role of the leader and descriptions as having to do with evaluation of LPD and its efficacy. Under this subtheme is included a focus distinguished as the leader having a role around the evaluation of LPD programs, activities, or models. That is, some of the participants shared seeing their role in LPD, at times, as one of evaluator to what they are being exposed, how that is occurring, and how helpful it is to the participant.

Leader 1 began describing his perspective in this way:

I think Drucker was right, you know, if you don't measure it, you won't fix it... I would hope that a development experience has got some aspect of reflection built in that they're asking for evaluation. I would hope that's true. If that's true, then I think it is inherent for the participants to share what would truly make it better.

Leader 1's description begins to elucidate his viewpoint as the opportunities he hopes are built in to LPD and, further, the role of the leader to provide reflective feedback to drive improvement of LPD. Leader 1 further drilled down into this vein of thought and offered this explication:

I think that the leader as participants really should give feedback.... if it is not asked for ...I don't think it's necessarily inappropriate to share it anyway. Although I understand that sometimes seems like a fruitless effort, if it's not going to be listened to. But I think, you know the training, the development exercises, the seminars, the workshops, can only get better if they're taking feedback for people and leveraging that feedback.

After reflecting on this perspective, Leader 1 offered a sort of motivational or philosophically-based reason for his investment in offering feedback: "So, just as I want to be able to benefit

from the 13 workshop groups that came before me, I think I owe it to the person in the 15<sup>th</sup> workshop to make it a little bit better.”

Leader 5 also describes a role of the leader as evaluator of LPD. Specifically, Leader 5 shares her perspective on the leader providing feedback on the LPD programs of which they are a part. Leader 5 noted:

So, I think that the role of the leader, if the leader is indeed serious about improving the organizational approach to leadership development, or whatever program they did around LPD, then I think the leader will take the time to provide honest and constructive, even actionable feedback in terms of the evaluation, which is sometimes the only opportunity that the leader is given to provide input, just a survey at the end of an development activity or program.

Leader 5’s description highlights what she perceives as the evaluative role of the leader as participant in LPD.

In this subtheme, participants highlight a perceptual understanding of the role of the leader in LPD as including an evaluative component. This subtheme interrelates with the other roles of Leader as Driver and Leader as Learner in that they each describe a distinct role of the leader in regard to LPD. They are also interrelated in that these all imply a level of active engagement on the part of the leader as participant in LPD. Together, they comprise the broader theme of “*LPD is Participant-Driven*”.

#### **Research Question 4**

The fourth research question outlined for this study is: How do leaders evaluate and make decisions about LPD in regard to their own participation, engagement, willingness to learn, and openness to make attitudinal or behavioral changes?

## Findings

The themes in this research question relate to the original intent of seeking greater understanding as to leader perceptions of their own decision-making related to engaging in LPD. Three major themes are included in the findings for the fourth and final research question of the study. The first theme is *LPD is Considered Essential*. The second theme is *Leader Decisions about LPD Moderated by Leader-Situation and Context*. The third theme is *Leader Decisions about LPD Moderated by Leader Philosophy/Values*. Table 9 includes a listing and description of each of the three major themes for this research question.

Table 9

*Themes in Leaders' Description of their Approach to LPD and Attitudinal and/or Behavioral Changes*

Major Theme	Description
LPD is Considered Essential	Leaders perceive that LPD is essential
Leader Decisions about LPD Moderated by Leader-Situation and Context	Leader descriptions as to criteria in their evaluation and decision-making processes for LPD as relating to their own situation and context
Leader Decisions about LPD Moderated by Leader Philosophy/Values	Leader descriptions as to criteria in their evaluation and decision-making processes for LPD as relating to their personal philosophy and/or values

### Theme 5: LPD is Considered Essential

When asked to describe their perspective, generally, on LPD as a tool to develop leaders, all of the participants provided a common perception. Each participant noted their perception that LPD is essential. Table 10 includes excerpts depicting the viewpoints and terminology leaders used during their one-on-one interviews to describe their sense of the essential nature of LPD.

Table 10

*Leader Descriptions of their General Perspective on LPD*

Leader 1	Described LPD as “in the best interest of organizations”.
Leader 2	Described LPD as “extremely critical”.
Leader 3	Described LPD as “essential”.
Leader 4	Described LPD as “tremendously important”.
Leader 5	Described LPD as “absolutely necessary”.

Table 10 summarizes the basic response each participating leader provided to a question that asked them to describe their general perspective on LPD as a tool to develop leaders or leadership capacity.

The following will provide each participant’s statement within the context of their interview response. Leader 1 noted:

I think that if an organization is committed to developing leaders, that is only in their best interest. It helps every aspect of the organization from management, to communication, to developing younger employees into future leaders. I mean, it really starts to develop a culture that is healthy...

Leader 2 responded: “I would say LPD is extremely critical to study and evaluate what research and what others have learned through experience. I think everybody has a unique perspective.”

Leader 3 noted:

Leader development is essential...a balance between having organization-specific learnings, having an opportunity to practice and having an opportunity to access expertise outside of an organization so that new perspectives are brought into their own leadership style.

Leader 4 shared: “I think that it's tremendously important and in application more often overlooked or not paid attention to.” Finally, Leader 5 described her perspective in this way:

I think LPD is absolutely necessary. I think that a lot of people are born with innate leadership, I want to say abilities, or maybe a propensity for leadership or a desire for leadership, but I think that everyone who is in a leadership position should have some kind of LPD.

These individual descriptions show that when reflecting generally on LPD, each leader perceives LPD as a critical practice for the development of leaders. This theme is included within the fourth research question for this study for the reason of sharing how the participating leaders generally view LPD, before progressing into deeper reflection and dialogue around how they approach decisions about LPD.

#### **Theme 6: Leader Decisions About LPD Moderated by Leader Philosophy/Values**

There exist several instances in the data where leaders describe their decision-making approach as it relates to participating in LPD and to applying what are they exposed to during LPD. An interesting and key finding in the data analysis for this study is the discovery of a potential connection between how the leader makes decisions regarding LPD and the leader's own philosophy of leadership and/or values of leadership. In their sharing, leaders described what appears to be a dynamic interplay between their personal leadership philosophy/values and their perceptions of LPD, which in turn, influence their decisions about LPD. The researcher will provide one notable example, proffered by Leader 5, and which seems to aptly exemplify this theme. Given that the spirit of this theme is to bring understanding as to the leader's decision-making process, the researcher will use a several direct excerpts of the example to help paint the fuller picture.

Leader 5 elucidates this finding when she addressed how she evaluates LPD of which she is a part. She begins: “It starts with how I view myself as a leader and how I view my responsibility towards those that I lead.” Leader 5 goes on to share an example from her experience of a group LPD opportunity in which all of her division’s executive leaders participated. In this example, Leader 5 recalled that the LPD program was addressing how individual team members, based on psychological assessments and personality preferences, each have very different needs in terms of communication.

Leader 5 recalled that while all of the executive leaders were hearing the same things and, further, were highly-engaged during the LPD program, their takeaways varied greatly. In describing her own takeaway, leader 5 noted:

What I learned was that I was going to take steps to improve my awareness of what were my employees needs for communication, because in a lot of ways, I see myself as a leader responsible to my employees and I see a responsibility on my end to actively get to know them and to do things in a way that will help them do their jobs better.

Leader 5 went out to share the takeaways of another leader, who also participated alongside her in the same LPD program. Leader 5 noted:

I want to compare that to another person in the room and this was actually the vice president. When it was his turn to share about takeaways, he said, well, out of everything we've learned, I don't want to talk about what I have to do to improve my communication. Instead, I'm going to tell you guys how you need to communicate to me and how you need to mold your behavior to what I want.

For Leader 5, the shared example highlights an important reality in LPD and that is the role of the leader's beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of their role and the influence of these on leader decisions around evaluating and applying LPD of which they are a part.

Leader 5 summarizes her interpretation of this LPD experience with:

So, I think it starts with how the leader perceives themselves. If the leader perceives himself as somebody that people need to sort of just, I guess, follow and almost listen to blindly, then they're not going to feel an impetus for taking LPD to modify their behavior in any way...I'm very cognizant of the fact that, you know, I manage 40 individual people that have individual needs, and that some are going to need a little bit more than others.

Leader 5's re-telling of this particular LPD experience involves recalling a situation in which she and multiple other leaders underwent a leadership training and at the conclusion of that program, were asked to share what their takeaways for the session. Further, Leader 5 reflected on how the same program, with the same learning aims and facilitator, could render what for her represented quite vastly different outcomes in leader perceptions of takeaways. Finally, Leader 5 reflects on the experience and cites differences in how leaders see themselves as an influential factor in the evaluation and decision-making process of a leader.

Data analysis for this study also surfaced that a leader's values can serve as influential towards their decision-making process around LPD. To illustrate this, the researcher presents leader-specific values, as cited by the leaders during their one-one-one interviews. Table 11 includes an example of a cited value by each participating leader.

Table 11

*Leader Values Cited by Participants*

Leader 1	Better Results
Leader 2	Support of Others
Leader 3	Individual and Organizational Alignment and Effectiveness
Leader 4	Awareness and Sensitivity of Self, Others, and Diversity
Leader 5	Efficiency

Table 11 lists perceived/expressed values in the leader's evaluative and decision-making approach to LPD. For example, Leader 1 reflected on applying LPD and shared this example of a time he made a decision to self-evaluate and make a change as a result of LPD:

So, I used to do a lot more talking, I have scaled that back. I have for a couple reasons. I want to allow my leadership team to develop. I want them to develop their voice, to develop their ideas. I want to be able to use some of those as teachable moments. And I find myself able to do that much, much more if I'm not talking as much.

In this comment, Leader 1 points to making a change in his personal communication style in order to gain better results through the sharing of ideas and perspectives.

Similarly, Leader 2 described this personal experience:

If I believe that someone that I am responsible for, or that I'm leading can grow from the opportunity based upon their own, I guess themselves as an individual, then it's something that is worth bringing back or at least considering for the group.

Leader 2's description highlights that for him, part of his evaluation and decision-making process has to do with the support of others. Leader 2 further elaborated:

While I'm undergoing an LPD or at least evaluating one, I'm looking for ways to plug that into my team that I have in front of me right now. And fundamentally, if it would help



one person, then it's worth considering doing for the group because it might help more than one.

In his description, Leader 2 notes that for him, decisions about LPD, and, specifically, evaluating what to apply, including when to change or to adopt a new approach, behavior, or tactic, comes down to the human impact (or potential for impact) of that change.

For Leader 3, her evaluative and decision-making process for LPD is tied to the ultimate results she perceives LPD can have to contributing to her personal success, and, further, to her organization's success. She noted first this expectation, and, later an example:

I would want to see that from the very top there's some sort of cascaded goals and that my leadership development enabled me to be more effective in my part of the greater good and the greater good been helping my organization achieving our ultimate goals and objectives.

Next, Leader 3 shared an example from her own experience:

I had the benefit of working in an organization where their values aligned with my personal values. So, I felt I was able to flourish because of that alignment. I also gained skills and knowledge that from a business operational standpoint, have helped me throughout my career. I not only was able to contribute to that organization's success, but I felt that I was able to take those skills and knowledge and benefit from it personally in other roles.

Leader 3's example elucidates the general importance of values, as well as her own values toward individual and organizational alignment and success.

Continuing with the expression of values in personal approach, Leader 4 reflected and shared this perspective:

The whole idea of leadership development is to be able to go back and examine our own attitudes and beliefs, and reflect on them, and change them where they need to be changed, and adjust them and hang on to them where they need to be hung on.

Leader 4 added to his description, sharing how self-awareness and other-awareness connects to relating to others, and, ultimately leader success. He noted:

If you're not constantly adjusting, or reflecting on your attitudes, you're going to have a hard time dealing with people...To me, that's the number one skill of leadership is you got to be able to stand in the shoes of people whose experience and background is very different than yours. Because if you can't do that, you can't lead.

Leader 4's description expresses a connection between a personal value for self-awareness, other-awareness, and sensitivity for others, and the leader's approach to engaging in and applying LPD. He notes that in this value context, LPD can lead to self-reflection and adjustments for the sake of others and relationships with others.

Finally, take, for instance, Leader 5, who used the term "efficient" or "efficiency" seventeen times during her one-on-one interview. When prompted to describe her approach to evaluating and making decisions about LPD, she noted:

Willingness for me to change is driven by the fact that I want to improve my efficiency...I'm very motivated by that. If I think that's something is going to make me a more efficient communicator, or more efficient decision maker, then, yes, I want to try it out. I want to give it a whirl so to speak. So that's a motivator.

Leader 5's description highlights a value for efficiency, and in turn, the improvement of efficiency. Leader 5 perceived this value as a motivator linked to her willingness to enact personal changes in her leadership approach.

This theme centered on the expression of values as part of the leader's evaluative and decision-making approach related to LPD. All participating leaders in this study expressed one or more value-based statements as a part of their reflection and answers to questions about how they approach decisions about LPD. The expressed values contribute to their personal leader philosophy, which was introduced earlier in this theme. The next and final theme for this study similarly explores leader decision-making related to LPD but includes a look into the leader perspectives that are more situationally or contextually-focused.

### **Theme 7: Leader Decisions About LPD Moderated by Leader-Situation and Context**

When asked to reflect and share on their evaluative and decision-making approach regarding LPD, some of the participating leaders proffered perspectives that appear to draw a connection to the leader's situation and context. Situation/context here presents an interesting, though not completely understood factor in LPD. This includes the personal situation(s) and context, as experienced by the leader, and which appear to be particular to the individual leader. That is, they do not necessarily appear to be applicable across leaders, including the five leaders in this study.

Take, for instance, the following excerpt from Leader 1, which points to his evaluative and decision-making approach as tied to his perspective of his current place/stage in his career:

At this point in my career, having studied these things for 25 years, I look for work, content, assets that I've never seen before. That excites me. So, when they break out old or foundational works, I think to myself, this is not an advanced workshop. This is a beginner's workshop.

For Leader 1, level of experience is related to the leader's evaluative process around LPD, and, influences, ultimately, whether the leader perceives that the LPD is relevant and applicable. This

dynamic is a personal one. That is, it is understood from Leader 1's excerpt above that the LPD opportunity he references might present information that is new to/for other participants or leaders, but not for him personally. Additionally, by Leader 1's estimation, whether something is new appears to be connected to relevance. That is, if Leader 1 perceives he has already seen it, he might then conclude it is beyond the point of relevance for him personally. Finally, in Leader 1's estimation, the evaluation of whether something is beyond the leader's current situation or point of need may relate to the time or otherwise degree of study a leader has pursued around leadership.

Several other participants shared similar elements or factors that for them carry weight in terms of evaluating or making decisions about LPD from a personal situational or contextual perspective. When describing coming into new information or knowledge, Leader 5 noted:

In terms of willingness to sort of change my behavior, there have been a few times in my life where I have been humbled, so to speak, by new knowledge. That has resulted in direct changes of behavior and I have been, I think, willing to make those changes as soon the understanding of the need for change, I think, enters my mind. I'm very willing to do it.

For Leader 5, the awareness of new information or new knowledge as a result of LPD appears to influence decision-making for her around applying LPD or making a change. For Leader 5, being presented with information relevant to her specific situation or context has a motivating potential to which she applies her willingness to make changes.

Similarly, Leader 2 noted:

When there's something that comes to your attention, or comes in front of you, that you believe you handled the wrong way, or that could have handled better, then I think that is,

at least for me, where I start to re-evaluate my own attitude or approach. As far as LPD, if I see someone else handle a situation in a different way, or a similar situation in a different way, that's when I really try to evaluate what I did.

For Leader 2, coming into the awareness of new information or new knowledge is something that for him leads to a sense of relevance and applicability. It can lead to an evaluation of whether there is a better approach or room for improvement in previous decisions or approaches he has taken.

In terms of the findings for this theme, leaders cite situational or contextual factors that are particular to them and that influence their evaluative and decision-making approach in LPD. LPD in this finding is measured against the leader situation or context. Moreover, leader situation/context is a particularized element that cannot be assumed generally across leaders rather is derived from or specific to each leader.

### **Summary of Research Findings**

This chapter describes the participant profiles and presents the responses of the five participating case study leaders in this study. The researcher utilized one-on-one interviews and data analysis to summarize the findings. Findings were organized by emergent themes that were drawn from both individual analysis of each case study, as well as, further, cross-case analysis across all five leaders. The resulting findings, then, include supportive excerpts that are unique to a single leader or case, as well as those where commonality occurred across two or more cases.

Although the study found that leaders within U.S. organizations cite a disconnect between their expectations of LPD and their experiences with it, participants understood the value of LPD and its impact on their own development as a leader. The data revealed that all five participating leaders expressed an openness to participate in LPD and to consider changes to

their own leadership approach as a result of LPD. These changes include personal attitudinal and behavioral changes, changes in perception, changes in processes, and changes in interactions and relationships with others.

This chapter presented key findings and addressed each of the four research questions for this study. Seven total major themes were presented and nested within the respective research question to which each them relates. The next chapter will summarize the entire study and speak to findings in an interpretative sense from the lens of the researcher. The researcher will present conclusions, recommendations, and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The inspiration to study LPD derived, in part, from the researcher's personal interest in the topic of leader development. However, the impetus to examine LPD as a phenomenon and to do so from the lens of the leader evolved as a prompting from the researcher's inquiry and review of the literature. While much is known about LPD generally, less is known about the effects of the development on the participating leader (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). The evidence to help understand how leaders perceive and explain their experiences and how they see and describe the impacts on them, and their organizations, is scarce and lacking from the research dialogue around LPD (Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), a case study approach can be used to gain insights into an issue or phenomenon, such as the leader's experience with LPD, as in this case. Exploring how operational leaders in the U.S. understand and describe their viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes of LPD and its impact is the purpose of this study.

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of individual leaders regarding their experiences with and viewpoints regarding LPD. Five individual leaders, or case studies, served as the research participants for this multi-case study approach. Examining multiple cases in a multi-case study occurs with replication, which strengthens research findings, making the study more robust than single case studies (Yin, 2009) and permitting for greater possibility of generalizability of findings to other cases and study replication (Creswell, 2015). The researcher views the multi-case study approach as supporting that case study methodology can lend generalization whereby a study within a particular context and situation can be reviewed and applied in different contexts (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2009). Given the focus on leaders who

participate in LPD, the desired scope for this study was less focused, then, on a single setting or industry as relevant to the researcher's interest and design for the study, but rather on the inclusion of a multi-case study approach of leaders who come from varying companies and industries.

In this multi-case study, an individual and qualitative survey design was the appropriate research methodology to use. The qualitative research design allowed the researcher to examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices and, further, could delve into ways in which individuals think about issues and the behaviors they practice (Creswell, 2015). The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with each leader by asking open-ended questions without response options and listened and recorded the comments of the interviewee (Creswell, 2015). One-on-one interviews offer a useful research methodology because they enable the researcher to ask sensitive questions to help examine interviewee attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices, and, moreover, enable interviewees to ask questions and to provide comments that go beyond the initial questions (Creswell, 2015).

The researcher determined seven themes from the data analysis. The researcher derived these themes from the four research questions outline for this study. Table 12 outlines the four research questions for this study and the seven themes presented in Chapter 4. Further, it shows the thematic relationship between the two, nesting each theme within the research question addressed by that theme.



Table 12

*Research Questions and Related Themes*

Research Question	Major Theme(s)
RQ1: What do leaders believe are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Theme 1: <i>Perceived Effects/Results of LPD</i></li> <li>▪ Theme 2: <i>Organizational Impact of LPD Not Easily Understood</i></li> </ul>
RQ2: What do leaders believe are enablers and barriers of learning, results, and outcomes of LPD at a personal and organizational level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Theme 3: <i>Personal and Organizational Factors Influence Effects/Results of LPD</i></li> </ul>
RQ3: How do leaders understand and describe their own role in participating, evaluating, and applying LPD experiences in their own development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Theme 4: <i>LPD is Participant-Driven</i></li> </ul>
RQ4: How do leaders evaluate and make decisions about LPD in regard to their own participation, engagement, willingness to learn, and openness to make attitudinal or behavioral changes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Theme 5: <i>LPD is Considered Essential</i></li> <li>▪ Theme 6: <i>Leader Decisions around LPD Moderated by Leader Philosophy/Values</i></li> <li>▪ Theme 7: <i>Leader Decisions around LPD Moderated by Leader-Specific Situation/Context</i></li> </ul>

The next section presents the interpretations of the findings from this study and explores implications of the findings. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for action and/or further study.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The data analysis, based on responses from participants, was presented in Chapter 4. The findings that emerged from the data analysis were that:

1. LPD contributes to leader learning and development.
2. Leaders influence the efficacy of LPD.
3. Organizational approaches to LPD show signs of needed improvement.

As there is little in the literature from the lens of the leader as the central participant in LPD, it is the hope of the researcher that the findings and recommendations presented in this study can add to the conversations and overall body of evidence around the impacts and efficacy of LPD.

### **Finding #1: LPD Contributes to Leader Learning and Development**

There is an existent, recognizable focus today in the literature on LPD for identifying important leadership competencies (learning content), preparing for training delivery (learning design), and assessing participant reaction and learning (learning evaluation). However, these elements are limited in their ability to yield actionable data as to the impacts to the individual and the organization (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Content, design, and evaluation are essential elements of consideration for a learning experience, but what PD is most interested in is actual results of the programs (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). It is evident from the data gathered in this study that LPD is a source of effective learning and development for leaders.

As a reminder, leadership professional development or LPD is training, learning, or development designed and delivered for a leader audience. That is, LPD includes development activities focused on developing individual leaders or on enhancing leadership capacity (Day et al., 2013). When reflecting on the impacts of LPD, all five leaders cited most commonly and most often effects/results of LPD relating to awareness. This includes self-awareness, awareness of others, and awareness of other ways of seeing, being, or doing. As such, this finding has three components: (a) self-awareness, (b) other-awareness, and (b) awareness of other ways of seeing, being, and doing.

**Self-awareness.** The first component, self-awareness, relates to the leader's awareness of himself or herself. It includes several variations of participant comments related to perceptions of LPD leading to gains in leader knowledge of their personality, strengths, and/or blind spots, for

example. Learning strategies that leverage self-awareness, including reflection, self-direction, and self-evaluation have, for some time, been recognized as effective and learner-centered methodologies, especially when facilitating learning for adults (Leigh, Whitted, & Hamilton, 2015). Goleman (2004) defines self-awareness as the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drivers, as well as their effect on others. Goleman (2004) introduced the centrality of self-awareness as interconnected with emotional intelligence, a characteristic that has been associated with effective leadership heavily in the literature. All five leaders described self-awareness as an effect/result of LPD for them personally. Leader 3 noted that as a result of LPD, she was “much more self-aware that we all have different strengths and blind spots.” Leader 2 added an implication to this finding when he shared: “Investing into LPD has allowed me to refine what I believe were my core values and beliefs.” For him, LPD leading to self-awareness became an opportunity to evaluate and clarify his core values and beliefs.

**Other-awareness.** The second component, other-awareness, is related to the leader’s awareness of others. It includes several variations or participant comments related to perceptions of LPD leading to gains in leader knowledge of other’s styles and personality preferences around communication and decision-making, for example. For participating leaders, this component also includes support of their learning to recognize differences between themselves and others in strengths, blind spots, and, further, in needs. For instance, Leader 5 noted:

What has been the most positive individual impact from LPD is understanding enough about myself to recognize some of the differences between my approach with others, and then being able to modify my behavior, tweaks here and there to meet other folks’ needs.

For Leader 5, understanding and recognizing differences in the approach of others became an opportunity for her to identify the needs of others, and, further, to make adjustments in her own

approach in support of the differing needs of others. She reported that the resulting impact of this learning and development in her approach has been positive. Modifying one's behavior for the sake of others is related to self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, all of which form part of the leader competencies for emotional intelligence at work, as defined by Goleman (2004).

In a study evaluating the connection between effective performance and emotional intelligence, Goleman (2004) found that while intellect and cognitive skills were particularly important to leader performance, emotional intelligence was twice as important as other skills for job at all levels. McClelland (as cited by Goleman, 2004) found in a 1996 study of a global food and beverage company that when senior managers had a critical mass of emotional intelligence capabilities, their divisions outperformed yearly earnings goals by 20%. It is evident that other researchers have associated self-awareness, other-awareness, and regulation of one's behaviors based on empathy and social skill as linked to leader performance, together organizing such characteristics as one's level of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2004).

**Awareness of other ways of seeing, being, and doing.** This third component is related to leader's awareness of ways of seeing, being, and doing held or expressed by others. It includes several variations of participant comments related to perceptions of LPD supporting their opportunities to gain knowledge of other's approaches, behaviors, perceptions, models, and ways of dealing with issues, for example. Leader 1 illustrated this component when he noted:

The most benefit that I typically got was when an older veteran, more experienced leader came in and basically told stories, explained situations, that narrative approach allowed us to put ourselves in positions that we had not found ourselves yet.

For Leader 1, impact from LPD occurred when he had the opportunity to learn from another leader who shared his perspective and approach.

Such opportunities, as described by the participating leaders, lead to capabilities around recognizing, evaluating, and, further, adopting other ways of seeing, being, and doing in the leader's approach. Leader 3 described this opportunity for evaluation when he noted:

Personality assessment models in LPD are useful to help you compare...and you begin to see some of your blind spots. And so, you start to explore other things and realize there's useful other perspectives, attitudes, behaviors, things there that I might want to take up.

In this description, Leader 3 illustrated an important principle in what Long (2002), in his book, *Teaching for Learning*, detailed as a critical area for supporting adult learners in turning principles into practice. Long (2002) described that a vital characteristic in adult learning methodology is to aid adults in the process of learning how to change perspectives, shift paradigms, and replace one way of interpreting the world by another. Finally, Leader 1 evaluated his own process on experiencing other ways of seeing, being, and doing and shared that for him, such learning experiences had become a value he seeks in LPD. He noted: "Perception determines reality. And I believe that so as I get older, I really enjoy trying to find other people's perceptions."

For leaders, the effects/results of LPD expressed personally shared a common thread of increasing or leading to greater levels of awareness. This awareness could be about self, about others, and/or about other approaches, models, or perspectives. The learning opportunities around awareness, as described by the leaders, begin with being able to recognize one's approach/the approach of others and then, more importantly, being able to make that learning actionable by appreciating the needs of others, adjusting one's behavior to support the needs of others, and/or evaluating other ways of seeing, being, and doing for the sake of taking up new information in one's leadership approach.

## **Finding #2: Leaders Influence the Efficacy of LPD**

A second and pivotal finding for this study is that leaders influence LPD and the efficacy of LPD efforts, programs, and activities. This finding includes the components of: (a) the individual leader, (b) individual characteristics, and (c) learning transfer.

**The individual leader.** Central to this finding is the understanding that the term leader does not refer to a generalized or representative term referring broadly to leaders. Rather, leader here refers to an individual leader participating in or engaging in LPD. Similarly, Galbraith (2004) discussed the concept of *adult variability* where he contended that it is erroneous to speak of “the adult learner” as if there is a generic adult that can represent all adults (p. 25). Rather, it is important to recognize that individual differences exist among groups of leaders as learners to the degree that a leader, or learner, cannot be understood generally, rather possesses individual idiosyncratic characteristics as an adult learner.

**Individual characteristics.** Galbraith (2004) explored an understanding of adult learners as individuals through a framework for recognizing individual characteristics including motives for learning, physiological variables (vision, hearing, energy, and health), psychosocial variables (cognitive characteristics, personality characteristics, experiential characteristics, and role-based characteristics). Participating leaders in this study exemplified adult variability and differences in individual characteristics. Moreover, these differences were highlighted in the results presented in Chapter 4 through Theme 6: *Leader Decisions Moderated by Leader Situation/Context* and Theme 7: *Leader Decisions Moderated by Leader Philosophy/Values*. In these themes, the data evidenced that individual leaders are influenced by their individual characteristics specifically as it relates to their own evaluation and decision-making about learning.

The data for this study illustrated that the way leaders view their role as a leader (leader philosophy), what they believe (values), and what they consider relevant and practical to their lives (leader situation and context) are individual to each leader and that, further, leaders make decisions about LPD based on their individual characteristics. In doing so, leaders influence the efficacy of LPD through their evaluation and decision-making about how and to what degree to engage in and to apply LPD. For this reason, the researcher elected to qualify leader philosophy/values and leader situation/context as “moderators” of leader decisions about LPD.

As presented in Chapter 4, the theme of *Leader Decisions Moderated by Leader Philosophy/Values* is an example of how leaders influence the efficacy of LPD. As a reminder, “leader” here refers to the particular or individual leader and to how their particularized values and philosophy influence their decision making around LPD. Leader 5 elucidates this finding when she addressed how she evaluates LPD of which she is a part: “It starts with how I view myself as a leader and how I view my responsibility towards those that I lead.” She continued:

What I learned was that I was going to take steps to improve my awareness of what were my employees needs for communication, because in a lot of ways, I see myself as a leader responsible to my employees and I see a responsibility on my end to actively get to know them and to do things in a way that will help them do their jobs better.

In the excerpt above, Leader 5 went on to describe her takeaways from LPD, whereby she again elucidated individual characteristic, such as motivation for learning and expectations of self as a leader.

One of the contemporary arguments for the need to understand the individual characteristics of a leader can be observed in the changing workplace demographics of leaders. In a 2018 Leadership Development Survey, Leimbach outlines that the new organizational

reality regarding leaders is the priority and urgency of preparing new and successive generations of leaders to fill the necessary leadership roles that are being vacated by earlier generations of leaders (2018). “Organizations are realizing that large numbers of middle managers and supervisors will be retiring soon—and if they don’t begin to prepare the next generation for these roles now, they will have difficulty filling them moving forward” (Who Receives Leadership Development? section, para. 2). The generational shift occurring in the demographics of the American workforce support the need for organizations to consider that “the leader” is not defined generally, with a single representative profile of all leaders, but, rather, is nuanced by a compendium of factors that are particularized at the level of the individual leader, including generational differences and years of leadership tenure.

**Learning transfer.** According to Grossman and Salas, training is focused on “producing permanent cognitive and behavioral changes, and on developing critical competencies for job performance” (2011, p. 104). These results rest on the need for the individual to make application of the content to which they were exposed during a training program or PD effort (Laker & Powell, 2011). Without this transfer, the individual does not make significant linkages between the PD program and their behaviors (Grossman & Salas, 2011). The result is that neither the individual nor the organization experience change. That is, the PD effort is experienced without effect/result when the individual or learner does not apply the experience (Laker & Powell, 2011).

Despite the little emphasis that has been placed in training and PD on the individual and in this case, the leader’s role as the participant in the learning process, the data and findings for this study evidence the centrality of the leader in the learning transfer process. Leader 5 explained it this way:



If the leader perceives himself as somebody that people need to sort of just, I guess, follow and almost listen to blindly, then they're not going to feel an impetus for taking LPD to modify their behavior in any way.

In this excerpt, Leader 5 shows a connection between the leader's view and expectations of their own role as a leader and whether (or not) there might exist for the leader an impetus to engage in and apply LPD, thereby evidencing learning transfer.

This finding illustrates the theoretical framework for this study, which posited that the trainee or the participant in a PD effort lies at the center of any evaluation of training effectiveness. In 1988, Baldwin and Ford introduced their *Transfer of Training Model*, a model recognizing the important role of the individual in the development process. In it, they posited that the outcomes of training are impacted not only by training design, as had been the historical focus in the evaluation of PD, but, additionally, by the trainee and their work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). With this seminal work, Baldwin and Ford challenged existing paradigms of training design and evaluation to consider training outcomes from a more holistic perspective, to include *training inputs*, *training outputs*, and *conditions of transfer* (1988). The findings for this study support a focus on understanding the leader as essential in the LPD equation. Moreover, the findings support that the ultimate efficacy of learning models applied to leaders rests, in part, in the decision-making processes of the leaders who participate in the effort, and, furthermore, that their decisions are moderated by individual characteristics including their philosophy, values, and context.

### **Finding #3: Organizational Approaches to LPD Show Signs of Needed Improvement**

The data for this study highlighted that leaders want and expect their organizations to invest its leaders and in their development. For example, Leader 2 shared: "I want my

organization to value professional development. That's first and foremost.” The organization’s investment in LPD, however, when compared to leader experiences and expectations, can present significant challenges based on few critical factors. One such factor is in the way the organization approaches the design of LPD for its leaders. This might include internal and external programs, content, assets, and use of experts, but centers on the design of LPD. The second critical challenge area in the organization’s approach to LPD is in the way the organization seeks to measure (or neglects to measure) the real and ultimate effects/results of LPD at various levels. As such, this finding has two components: (a) stronger purposeful design and (b) stronger evaluation methods.

**Stronger purposeful design.** As evident in the data, leaders perceive and report a need for the organization to consider ways to strengthen LPD in terms of its design. This requires a look at two main considerations. One is the need to identify the “requisite skills for each level of management” (Medcof, 2017, p.168). This approach considers the incumbent “responsibilities,” “functional activities,” and “primary skills” of leaders at the executive, middle, and supervisory levels (Medcof, 2017, p. 168). By drawing an alignment of “the most critical skills for effectiveness at each hierarchical level,” LPD practitioners can center the efforts of training on specific skills, rather than cater to generalized assumptions of leader attributes and characteristics in too broad terms (Medcof, 2017, p. 168). Honing into primary skills “inevitably means equipping leaders with a small number of competencies (two to three) that will make a significant difference to performance” (Gurdjian, Halbeisen & Lane, 2014, p. 2). In contrast, when the organization proposes too many goals from an LPD effort, this creates a challenge in terms of actual achievement of any real learning gains. Leader 1 signaled such an experience in this way:

One of my fears with most leadership training is that the time is not adequate for what the desired outcomes really are. And, so, the attendees get short changed. And as a result, the organization doesn't really see the ROI or the benefit for performing it.

In Leader 1's description above, he attempts to shed light on the resulting impact of tackling too many learning outcomes and over-burdening an LPD effort to the degree that it stunts its ability to have any real effect.

The second consideration entails noting the “inferred and intersubjective attributions” of the social context rendered by the organizational culture (Cohen, 2017, p. 3). Once again, the social context in which the leader operates emerges as an area of attention for LPD practitioners. “Leader effectiveness and an organization's social context are woven tightly together such that developing leaders must be aligned with that context, or the context must be changed to support the development process” (Cohen, 2017, p. 3). In some cases, studies yielded the notion that leader “attributions and inferences [even] varied by division suggesting that each business unit [within the larger organization] had its own unique social context; was situational; and often reflected specific needs, hopes, or aspirations that were valued, missing, or desired” (Cohen, 2017, p. 3).

This consideration yields several notable implications. To start, each organization or business unit can be viewed as having its own social context, which causes some leadership factors to be valued, while other factors are not. “If this premise applies, it means that the identification, development, and retention of future leaders are driven by a social system and operates on an informal and implied basis” (Cohen, 2017, p. 3). Further, it also means that it is less likely that an objective or universal individual profile of excellence exists, even within the context of a single organization. To the contrary, it suggests that leadership profiles are

subjective and shaped by a unique social context. Therefore, in practice, the development of leadership programs must account not only for the individual leader characteristics, but also how the social context in which the leader operates influences their role and ultimate markers of success, and, finally, how this social context and organizational culture informs the development process.

**Stronger evaluation methods.** Leaders indicated that the sort of evaluation measures they see routinely utilized following an LPD effort are often comprised of short-term reflections about the training event. Such assessment practices, though widely adopted by training developers, provide only surface-level metrics that do not capture a true alignment between the intended outcomes of the training and the goals of the organization. Training departments cannot adequately measure the true effects of LPD and gauge the efficacy of the results without a long-term assessment practice that may provide training practitioners an opportunity to learn more about the context in which the leaders operate.

Despite the immediate reactions to a training event, which may have received high ratings and high praise from participants, most leaders return to working environments that are less-than-favorable for supporting the intended behavioral changes that might have resulted from the training. “The reason why so many leadership programs fail to produce the desired outcomes is that they are built on questionable assumptions,” one of which is that the leader is “unaffected” by the culture and environment in which they operate (Cohen, 2017, page X). The author further states that this assumption “places a great deal of faith in the belief that individual capabilities are distinct from and unaffected by the day-to-day interactions with others; or by the cultural memes that inform people what is considered preferred behaviors, ideas, and priorities” (p. X).

The implication is that leader effectiveness cannot be assessed and developed independent of the social context in which a leader works (Cohen, 2017).

Training practitioners and providers of LPD will not be able to understand and consider the implications of the leader's work context without an intentional and more robust mechanism for ongoing and longer-term connection with the leader, diagnosis of their work context, and informed strategies for making the leader's daily landscape more amenable to applying LPD and reaping the benefits of such efforts. Further research corroborates this proposition. Beer, Finnstrom, & Schrader (2016) suggest that the organizational context sets the stage for success or failure. The authors state that "for the most part, the learning doesn't lead to better organizational performance, because people soon revert to their old ways of doing things" (p. 51). The authors further state:

Even well-trained and motivated employees could not apply their new knowledge and skills when they returned to their units, which were entrenched in established ways of doing things. In short, the individuals had less power to change the system surrounding them than that system had to shape them. (p. 53).

The important factors in making training great are how various training practices contribute to helping the organization perform at a higher level and, further, how the leaders of the organization impact the business by employing those practices in the organization's daily processes (Harward & Taylor, 2014). Here, again, learning transfer, whereby leaders apply LPD, is essential to realizing any level of organizational impact. That is, the organization does not improve or grow from LPD independently of the individual leader acting on what they learn or are exposed to in LPD.

### **Implications and Recommendation for Action**

The development of effective leaders and leadership behavior is a prominent concern in organizations of all types (Day et al., 2013). As evident from the data gathered in this study, LPD is a source of effective learning and development for leaders. However, what is less understood is whether the impacts of LPD, as cited by the leaders, represent the full breadth and depth of impact sought from LPD efforts and programming. That is, while the focus of this study was to unearth the impacts of LPD, as perceived by leaders, there exists an opportunity to evaluate those impacts in light of the results, outcomes, and effects desired from LPD by both the leaders, and, perhaps more significantly, by organizations who engage in any form of LPD. After all, success in any PD endeavor or program lies, foremost, in the degree of alignment between the intent of a development program and the actual results and, ultimately, in the achievement of those results.

In order to move in the direction of necessary changes and priorities in LPD, researchers call attention to several notable recommendations for action. First, for instance, is to adopt an approach to LPD that prioritizes the effectiveness of learning. Leimbach (2018) describes this impetus for action in this way:

It is clear from this survey that if the next generation is going to be prepared to take the lead, there must be a shift of focus toward improved effectiveness of the learning. When designing a leadership development process, the first question should be: “Will this improve the leadership behaviors of our people?” It should not be: “How do we make this less expensive or time consuming?” (Strengthening New Leader Development section, para. 2).

Secondly, it is critical that organizations better understand the individual leader whom they are trying to develop and to use that understanding of the individual characteristics of the

leader in order to tailor appropriate learning methods that will support their results of LPD. One example of this describes a major issue facing organizations and the landscape of leader development, which is the changing demographics of the American workforce and the number of needed leaders. According to Leimbach (2018):

Organizations have shown great progress in expanding the methods they use in leadership development. Yet despite this, the most frequently used method is still instructor-led classroom training. Newer generations have exposure to a much more diverse and integrated approach to learning than did prior generations, and their expectations are high for how learning can be conducted. A first step is to examine leadership development from a process or journey perspective” (Strengthening New Leader Development section, para. 5).

Finally, the changing demands for more successive leaders to take on leadership roles vacated by earlier generations of leaders means that organizations will, perhaps more intentionally than ever before, need to prioritize succession planning and preparing the next generations of leaders, in addition to the current leaders. Leimbach (2018) goes on to state: “High-performing organizations are significantly more likely to indicate that executives prioritize the development of the next generation, the organization has a clear focus on the next generation, and sufficient resources are directed toward developing the next generation of leaders” (High Priority section, para. 1).

The evaluation of the effectiveness of PD programs today is a deep organizational concern (Bates, 2004). Current literature and evaluation methods focus on training design or on measuring the level of reaction of the participant to learning and development effort (Paine, 2016). However, this approach neglects the account of the impacts or influence of the individual

participant as well as of their individual characteristics and how these might influence their evaluation and engagement with an LPD effort. This finding supports the theoretical framework for this study, which posited that stronger evaluation of LPD requires recognition and integration of the role of the participant in the learning process.

The consideration of the seminal work of Baldwin and Ford landmarked a shift in thinking about learning effectiveness and evaluation beyond the design of learning programs and episodic training events and into a more holistic viewpoint to include *training inputs, training outputs, and conditions of transfer* (1988). Foremost in this model is the element of *Trainee Characteristics*, which are those crucial qualities that are particular to the trainee or learner and that have an impact on the way they perceive and engage with a training or PD effort. Trainee characteristics include *cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation, and perceived utility of the training* (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The authors assert that this compendium of factors, which are inherent to the trainee/participant, will have a notable impact on the effectiveness of any training or PD effort.

As evidenced in this study, individual characteristics influence how leaders evaluate LPD and, moreover, whether the leaders, as the participants, will transfer learning. Yet evaluation models do not align to measure at this level of the impact of the PD to the individual and/or to the organization (Bates, 2004; Harward & Taylor, 2014). Comprehensive LPD evaluation, such as might be informed by both Kirkpatrick's (2016) four-level model for measuring training effectiveness as well as more holistic approaches like the *Transfer of Training Model* from Baldwin and Ford (1988), is an area of needed future action and research for improving leadership development (Harward & Taylor, 2014). Effective evaluation of leadership programs could improve the design and delivery of programs that do not have their intended effects



(Harward & Taylor, 2014). Examples of such efforts could yield a missing lens into the evaluation of LPD and the efforts to enhance programs for individual and organizational results.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

It is evident from the literature review for this study that while leader development has been an area of focus, little research has given focus to the voice and viewpoints of the leader. After the literature review, the researcher postulated that a better understanding of LPD from the lens of leader could give rise to a valuable new addition of evidence that would add to the conversations and research around LPD. It was the researcher's contention that as the central actor or audience of LPD, the leader's perspective on LPD deserved a seat at the table of dialogue around the practices and research surrounding LPD. After hearing directly from the participating leaders for this study, and, after presenting findings that elucidate their viewpoints, both unique and common, the researcher is more convinced than ever that the literature on LPD must continue to make strides for better understanding this perspective.

With that, the researcher encourages and makes a call for other researchers and LPD practitioners to find ways to address this gap in the literature. Filling this gap can provide evidence as to the impacts of LPD at the level of the leader, their team(s), and their organization(s). Specifically, researchers should explore, for example: (a) uncovering the role of the leader in the LPD process, (b) defining the role of the organization toward developing the individual leader versus leadership generally, (c) organizational practices and challenges in diagnosing and understanding the individual characteristics of their leaders, (d) supporting organizational strategic alignment that clarifies the interrelationship between the leader success and organizational success, (e) stronger approaches toward closing the evaluation gap and reaching higher and longer-term levels of LPD efficacy measurement, (f) supporting better

understanding of the emerging challenges in LPD as it relates to the changing workforce demands and need for more intentional successive leader development, and, finally, (g) additional studies that add to the methodology, research questions, and findings for this study or that replicate this study with additional leaders and in different situations and contexts.

### **Conclusion**

“Organizations need a way to develop people when economic conditions fluctuate and in ways that deliver skills and knowledge when they are needed” (Meister & Willyerd, 2010, p. 154). This need leads to pervasive use of PD across business sectors and organization types, and, specifically, of LPD to develop new leaders and build leadership capacity. The largest subset group on which PD investment is focused is on leaders, with an estimated organizational investment of as much as fifty billion U.S. dollars each year (Feser, et al., 2017). Despite this, the literature shows limited sophistication in connecting PD efforts with measurable results (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013). Even less understood is the perspective of LPD from the lens of the leader. The researcher’s interest in leadership, coupled with the realization of this gap in the literature on LPD, led to the study conceptualization to explore how leaders in the U.S. understand and describe their viewpoints, beliefs, and attitudes of LPD impacts.

In execution, a qualitative case study approach served as an appropriate methodology to gain insights into how leaders view LPD and what they perceive to be the impacts of LPD. The researcher explored, by use of open-ended interview questions to promote reflection, what leaders perceive to be enablers and barriers to LPD impact, and further, how they recount their evaluative and decision-making approach toward judgments about LPD. Five participating leaders provided their perspective and the data informed seven themes and resulting three areas of findings. The findings for this study add to the existent body of literature on LPD and include

evidence as to the effects/results of LPD, the influential role of the leader in the efficacy of LPD, and two important areas where organizational approaches to LPD can focus stronger efforts toward the strengthening of their LPD approaches.

Finally, the researcher explored recommendations and implications for action around focusing the design of LPD on learning effectiveness, considering the implications of the individual characteristics of a leader and how those inform LPD, recognizing the decision-making role of the leader as an adult learner in LPD, and considering more comprehensive evaluation models for LPD efficacy and the program enhancement. The researcher also submits a call for further study to continue to give voice to the leader as the central actor in LPD. Their voice, as reported in this study, now adds to the body evidence that leaders, organizations, and training practitioners can use to inform the necessary conversations not just about leadership, but about developing leaders and using LPD as a dynamic system for leader development.

As the marketplace responds to calls for increasingly sophistication of learning design, learner-needs diagnosis, delivery methodologies for the modern workplace, and stronger evaluation of LPD efficacy, researchers are still studying the effects/results and elements of LPD. The results of this study have provided insights from the leader's point of view, including both positive and negative aspects of their experiences with LPD, rendering an added vantage point of perspective and thought to contribute to the broader understanding and discussion around LPD. This study, and future ones, can serve to promote the ongoing integration of the voice of the leader in the burgeoning industry of PD and give rise to new and enhanced ways of approaching leader development as a result of enhanced understanding from the lens of the leader.

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## Appendix A:

## Consent for Participation in Research

Version 8.22.18

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND  
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH**

**Project Title:** *Leader Viewpoints of Impacts of Leadership Professional Development*

**Principal Investigator(s):** *Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson, Doctoral Candidate, University of New England, [cubasrachel@gmail.com](mailto:cubasrachel@gmail.com), 561-339-6053.*

**Introduction:**

- Please read this form. You may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document that choice.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

**Why is this research study being done?**

- This study is being performed to investigate the perspectives and experiences of leaders regarding leadership professional development (LPD).
- This study is in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Leadership.
- There is no consultative or financial interest to the investigator relating to the study.

**Who will be in this study?**

- You have been chosen as someone who holds a leadership role and who has experienced professional development designed for leaders.
- There will be approximately 5-15 individuals invited to participate in the study. The final number of participants will depend on who provides consent to participate. However, the desired number for the study is a minimum of 4 participants.

**What will I be asked to do?**

- You will be interviewed alone, by the researcher, to describe your viewpoints and experiences related with LPD. You will be asked to share about LPD from several approaches including your expectations of LPD, your experiences with LPD, and your viewpoints as to the impacts of LPD at a personal, team, and/or organizational level. You will be asked what enablers and barriers you have observed toward applying the purposes of LPD in your work as a leader. You will be asked four questions of demographic nature, to include age range, gender, years of leadership experience, and the industry where you work currently.

- The interviews will take place virtually/remotely, given the geographical-distribution of the researcher and participants. Web-conferencing software including *GoToMeeting*, *Skype*, or *Zoom* will be made available by the researcher to support the technological needs or personal comfort of each participant with a given software.
- As a backup, in the event of technological issues or inability to connect via the Web, the researcher and participants will revert to telephone for conducting the interviews.
- Following the one-on-one interviews, the researcher will transcribe the interview and you will be invited to review the transcript and data coding to verify that the researcher has not misunderstood any information you provided to her.
- You will also be invited to provide any clarifying comments you wish to add or append to the transcript.

#### **What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?**

- There are no foreseeable risks that may result from participation in the study.
- Participant privacy is a chief priority of the researcher and is addressed further down in this document.
- However, if at any point, should any risk arise, you will be immediately notified to determine whether you wish to continue in the study.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

- There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There may be a benefit to others, including, for example, LPD practitioners, as well as the research and practitioner community interested in the topic of leadership development, as this study will provide results to show how LPD is described and understood by leaders as participants.

#### **What will it cost me?**

- There should be no costs incurred to you to participate in this research.

#### **How will my privacy be protected?**

- The researcher will take precautions towards preserving the confidentiality of your identity in the data collected, materials saved, and in any follow-up publication.
- First, your identity will be disassociated from the study and from the interview documentation and data coding from the point of interview transcription. Only generic labels or pseudonyms such as *Leader 1*, *Leader 2*, or *Leader 3* will be used in documenting information collected and in the presentation of research findings. While the researcher will know your name, any direct mention of your involvement will be with the pseudonym.
- Next, any saved files will be stored in the researcher's password-protected computer and retained only for the purposes of completing the study and the doctoral program. Information will kept only as long as necessary to complete and publish the study and to maintain records for an appropriate three years following, which is estimated as May 2022.
- Finally, confidentiality of interviewees is ensured in any follow-up publication by the use of only generic labels of pseudonyms in reference to any and all information collected from each participant during the interview and transcription review processes.

- The study will be published as a dissertation in the researcher's pursuit of a Doctorate degree. Currently, there are no other plans to publish in any journal articles or presentations. You may request a copy of the dissertation once completed; however, there will be no mention of participant names, your name, or any organizational affiliation in the study.
- All communication, which includes invitation to participate in the study and invitation to review and verify transcription of interviews, will take place electronically via direct email between the researcher and the participant. Each email will be directed to participants individually and in exclusivity of visibility of any other participant in the study. That is, participants will not be aware of the identity or contact information of any other participant in the study.

### **How will my data be kept confidential?**

- This study is designed for only the principal researcher to be aware of your participation.
- All names will be removed from the formal study, and you will be identified by a pseudonym.
- Your interview will be recorded with a web conference application (GoToMeeting, Skype, or Zoom) as well as a digital recorder for back up.
- The researcher will take notes as needed.
- The researcher is the only individual who will have access to this information. They will be used only for transcription and analysis when discussing the information determined from the study. They will be erased/destroyed three years after the study is completed.
- Your interview will be transcribed, and the information will be coded to compare with other participating leaders.
- All communication, which includes invitation to participate in the study and invitation to review and verify transcription of interviews, will take place electronically via direct email between the researcher and the participant. Each email will be directed to participants individually and in exclusivity of visibility of any other participant in the study. That is, participants will not be aware of the identity or contact information of any other participant in the study.
- The transcripts and coding will be entered into a document saved on the researcher's personal and password-protected computer. Note, however, that names will not be used in the documentation or reiteration of the data.
- All the electronic information will be kept on the researcher's password protected computer, which is kept in the researcher's private home office.
- Individually identifiable information will be destroyed once the study is complete.
- The research records may be reviewed by regulatory agencies and the University of New England's Institutional Review Board.
- A copy of your signed permission form will be maintained by the researcher for at least three years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only members of the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.
- There is no current intent to use the data for future research purposes; however, if the opportunity presents itself, you will be contacted for further consent and description of the project. In any event, there will be no mention of participant names, your name, or any organizational affiliation in the study or in follow-up publication(s).

- The research findings will be provided to the participants if they request them from the researcher. The researcher's email address and phone number are provided above.

### **What are my rights as a research participant?**

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University of New England.
- Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with the researcher, Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason.
  - If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research.
- If you sustain an injury while participating in this study, your participation may be ended.

### **What other options do I have?**

- You may choose not to participate.

### **Whom may I contact with questions?**

- The researcher conducting this study is Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson.
  - For more information regarding this study, please contact her at 561-339-6053 or [cubasrachel@gmail.com](mailto:cubasrachel@gmail.com).
- If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact Dr. Ann Burch, [aburch1@une.edu](mailto:aburch1@une.edu) or (480) 219-6061.
- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Mary Bachman DeSilva, Sc.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4567 or [irb@une.edu](mailto:irb@une.edu).

### **Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

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### **Participant's Statement**

**I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.**

---

Participant's signature or  
Legally authorized representative

---

Date

---

Printed name

**Researcher's Statement**

**The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.**

---

Researcher's signature

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Date

---

Printed name

## Appendix B:

### Email Invitation to Participate in the Research Study

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As you may know, I am pursuing a Doctorate degree in *Transformational Leadership* through the *University of New England*.

I am studying leader perceptions about leadership professional development (LPD). More specifically, I am interested in interviewing organizational leaders to learn more about their perceptions of LPD, including its outcomes, ideal conditions, and role-based expectations for the leader and for the organization.

I consider that your participation could greatly contribute to my research and that, further, your experience, as well as shared perspective, could be a valuable asset to the central research question, which is to discover *how leaders explain and describe the impacts of LPD*. The nature of your participation would be to complete a *one-on-one online/virtual interview with me*, and, later to review and confirm transcript of the interview to ensure I have properly captured your intended responses.

#### About Participation:

- Privacy: Your name and any institutional affiliation will be kept confidential. Should you desire to, I would be happy to share my final dissertation with you, however, please note that no one's name, or institution, will be disclosed or published, as I will keep all data confidential and use pseudonyms to protect participant privacy.
- Time: Your total time commitment is estimated at 2 hours [90 minutes for a one-on-one interview (remote/online), followed by offline review of your interview transcript for validation purposes]. The timeframe for conducting the interviews is December 2018 – January 2019.

Below are the kinds of leaders I am looking for and would greatly value your participation in my research:

1. You currently hold a position of leadership within an organization that is based in the U.S., and
2. You have been in a leadership role for a period of at least 1 year or more. This means at least one year of leadership experience, even if not in your current leadership role. And,
3. You have, at any point within the last 5 years, participated in one (or more) forms of leadership professional development programs, courses, and/or activities (external or in-house). This can be any form of leadership training or professional development geared towards supporting you as a leader, building new leaders or leadership skills, or enhancing leadership capacity. This might include on-site training, online training

programs, external or in-house training, management development programs, certifications, mentoring or coaching, corporate training, performance review and improvement plans, etc.

If you meet the above criteria, I would love for you to consider participating in this study. Please remember my commitment to your privacy—your name and any institutional affiliation will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate, I have a consent form you would sign and return to me. The consent form outlines additional details about the study, your rights as a participant, and the measures I will take as a researcher to protect your privacy in future publications. There is no monetary compensation with this study and I ask for your participation on a voluntary basis. You may elect to remove yourself from the study at any time without penalty of any sort.

Thank you for your help and consideration to participate in my research.

Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson

## Appendix C:

### Researcher's Protocol for One-on-One Interviews

**Principal Researcher: Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson**

**Study: *Leader Perspectives on Leadership Professional Development (LPD): Impact and Implications for Training Efficacy***

### Questions for 1:1 Interviews with Participants

#### Demographic Questions:

The researcher will begin the one-on-one interview with demographic questions that will allow the interviewee to self-select on this section:

- (1) "Please select your age range:
  - a. 18-29
  - b. 30-40
  - c. 41-50
  - d. 51-60
  - e. 61-69
  - f. 70+"
- (2) "What is your gender?": \_\_\_\_\_ (Open-ended response)
- (3) "How many years of experience do you possess in formal leadership roles?"
- (4) "What is the current industry in which you work?"
- (5) "Briefly describe your organizational setting: (institution size, # of employees you manage)"

**As part of the screening process for this interview, you indicated participation in LPD. Can you describe some your experiences?**

#### Question Categories (Derived from Research Questions):

- A. General Viewpoints of LPD
- B. Leader Role / Personal Factors
- C. Work Environment
- D. LPD Programs and Methods
- E. Changes or Outcomes of LPD
- F. Closing



## Interview Questions by Category:

### A. General Viewpoints of LPD:

Question	Correlation
1. In general, what is your perspective on LPD as a tool to develop leadership capabilities including knowledge, skills, values, or abilities?	RQ1, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
2. Generally, what do you believe are the impacts of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational levels?	RQ1
3. What influence have you had on the types of LPD opportunities of which you've been a part?	RQ3, RQ4
4. What impacts do you want and expect LPD to have on you at an individual level?	RQ1 <i>“Training Outputs”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
5. What impacts do you want and expect LPD to have at a team level?	
6. What impacts do you want and expect LPD to have at the level of the organization?	
7. How do your experiences in LPD compare to your expectations of LPD at the individual, team, and organizational level? Please explain.	RQ1

**B. Leader Role / Personal Factors:**

Question	Correlation
8. What is the role of the leader as participant in LPD?	RQ3 <i>“Training Inputs”</i> and <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
9. How would you describe your approach, including personal interest and motivation to be a part of LPD experiences?	RQ2, RQ3, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
10. How would you describe your approach as to your engagement, willingness to learn, and openness to make attitudinal or behavioral changes?	RQ2, RQ3, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
11. What influence do you personally have on the impacts and outcomes of LPD of which you are part?	RQ3, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
12. What is your approach to evaluating for and making attitudinal and/or behavioral changes as a result of LPD?	RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
13. How confident are you, generally, in your own abilities to make the changes?	RQ2, RQ3, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
14. What personal factors help you make those changes?	RQ2, RQ3

15. What personal factors impede or slow you from making those changes?	<i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
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### C. Work Environment:

Question	Correlation
16. What is the role of the organization in LPD?	RQ2, RQ3 <i>“Training Inputs”</i> and <i>“Conditions of Transfer”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
17. What organizational factors help you make desired changes in your own behavior or leadership approach?	RQ2 <i>“Work Environment”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
18. What organizations factors impede or slow you from making those changes?	
19. What influence have you had on the types of LPD opportunities of which you've been a part?	RQ2, RQ3, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> and <i>“Training Design”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
20. What do you as a leader need from the organization to support you garnering desired impacts and outcomes from LPD?	RQ2, RQ3 <i>“Work Environment”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

**D. LPD Programs and Methods:**

Question	Correlation
21. What has been your experience in how the efficacy of LPD programs is evaluated?	RQ1, RQ2 <i>“Training Design”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
22. How do you personally evaluate the efficacy of LPD programs of which you are a part?	RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
23. What has been your experience in how LPD programs are evaluated?	RQ1, RQ2 <i>“Training Design”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
24. What is the role of the leader in evaluating the efficacy of LPD and its results at an individual, team, or organizational level?	RQ3, RQ4 <i>“Trainee Characteristics”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
25. What is the role of the organization in evaluating the efficacy of LPD and its results at an individual, team, or organizational level?	RQ1, RQ2 <i>“Work Environment”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

**E. Changes or Outcomes of LPD:**

Question	Correlation
26. How is your behavior and leadership different today than compared to before your experiences with LPD?	RQ1, RQ2 <i>“Training Outputs”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

27. What experiences with LPD have had impact on your personal leadership approach and behavior?	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3  <i>“Training Inputs”</i> and  <i>“Training Outputs”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
28. What experiences with LPD have resulted in impact on your team?	
29. What experiences with LPD have resulted in impact on your organization?	
30. What outcomes of LPD have you experienced at an individual level?	RQ1  <i>“Training Outputs”</i> (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).
31. What outcomes of LPD have you experienced at a team level?	
32. What outcomes of LPD have you experienced at an organizational level?	

## F. Closing

Question	Correlation
33. Is there anything else you would like to share as it relates to LPD, your own experiences, and outcomes of LPD at the individual, team, and/or organizational levels?	N/A

**Note:** Questions developed by Principal Researcher: Rachel Cubas-Wilkinson for the study: *Leader Perspectives on Leadership Professional Development (LPD): Impact and Implications for Training Efficacy*. No portion can be used or reproduced without written permission from the researcher.