A Qualitative Study to Describe Behaviors that Exemplary Municipal Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Practice to Lead their Organizations through Conversation

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A Qualitative Study to Describe Behaviors that Exemplary Municipal Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Practice to Lead their Organizations through Conversation

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

March 2018

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A Qualitative Study to Describe Behaviors that Exemplary Municipal Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Practice to Lead their Organizations through Conversation

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Although this honor is being bestowed upon me, if I could, my loving wife’s name would be printed on my diploma. Without her support, sacrifice, and assistance, this would have never materialized. Cindy, as I always said, I am you and you are me, and this educational journey is a prime example. I love you dearly; we did it!

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ABSTRACT

A Qualitative Study to Describe Behaviors that Exemplary Municipal Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Practice to Lead their Organizations through Conversation

by Vincent Edward Plair

Purpose. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practiced leading their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, intentionality.

Methodology. A phenomenology qualitative method was used to describe the behaviors of exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs in southern California and their lived experiences related to conversational leadership. The study combined semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifact collection. These qualitative tools helped the researcher gain insight into participants’ conversational leadership behaviors. The researcher analyzed the data with the aid of NVivo software to reveal patterns and sort them into categories.

Findings. Examination of the data resulted in 20 themes and 574 references to the four elements of conversational leadership. Eight key findings were identified based on the frequency of references by study participants.

Conclusions. The eight key findings were summarized into four conclusions, one for each conversational element: (1) municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who want to provide an intimate, trusting environment must form comfortable conversational environments and create authentic, honest conversations to build trust; (2) municipal police chiefs and sheriffs committed to stakeholder interactivity and exchange of ideas...
create an environment for open dialogue and engage members in two-way dialogue; (3) municipal police chiefs and sheriffs committed to inclusion and sharing of ideas utilize effective conversation strategies for sharing, and create empowered internal stakeholders; (4) municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who want to ensure clarity of purpose with clear goals and direction should focus on methods to create clarity and purpose.

**Recommendations.** Further research is advised by replicating this study in other types of law enforcement organizations, as well as business, education, and possibly the military. Conduct a study to combine the results of this study with the peer-researchers in this thematic team to compare the results.
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PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) conversational leadership in multiple types of organizations, 4 faculty researchers and 12 doctoral students discovered a common interest in exploring the ways exemplary leaders practice conversational leadership using the four elements of intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of 12 doctoral students.

This phenomenological research was designed with a focus on the behaviors that exemplary leaders used to guide their organizations through conversations. Exemplary leaders were selected by the team from various public, for-profit, and non-profit organizations to examine the behaviors these professionals used. Each researcher interviewed 10 exemplary professionals to describe how they led their organizations through conversations using each of the four elements by Groysberg and Slind (2012). To ensure thematic consistency, the team co-created the purpose statement, research questions, definitions, interview questions, and study procedures. It was agreed upon by the team that for increased validity, data collection would involve method triangulation using interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Throughout the study, the term peer researchers were used to refer to the other researchers who were part of this thematic study. The peer researchers who also studied exemplary leaders and their areas of study were: Nikki Salas, city managers; Jacqueline Cardenas, unified school district superintendents; Chris Powell, elementary school superintendents; Lisa Paisley, educational services assistant superintendents; Kristen Brogan-Baranski, elementary school superintendents in southern California; Jennifer
LaBounty, community college presidents; Robert Harris, high school principals; John Ashby, middle school principals; Tammie Castillo Shiffer, regional directors of migrant education; Cladonda Lamela, chief nursing officers; and Qiana O’Leary, non-profit executive directors.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Paleoanthropologist Genevieve von Petzinger from the University of Victoria in Canada, went on an expedition to the French village of Les Eyzies-de-Tayac and found dozens of deer teeth each with similar piercings (George, 2016). Based on her findings, she thought her trip was a waste. When she turned one over and saw it had three etched symbols, a line, an X, and another line, she realized she stumbled upon something monumental. Her findings led her to believe these were not random shapes, but represented a change in our ancestor’s mental skills (George, 2016).

Communication existed in various forms since the advent of man. Early forms of communication were a disorganized set of signs that meant different things to different people (History, n.d.). Around 130,000 B.C., cave paintings were created and were since identified as the most well-known primitive form of communication (History, n.d.).

Understanding the importance of communication and how it could be used is important to the vitality of organizations. Some advances in technology were intended to make communication easier. However, the world continues to become increasingly more complex and interconnected (Weber, 2013). Significant changes in communication impacted the workplace negatively. Less than half of the American workforce reported being happy at work and feeling a sense of inclusion, which led to a substantial decrease in work productivity (Crowley, 2011). If organizations want to build healthier, more capable teams, they must be more mindful of their conversational capacity and how they share information (Glaser, 2014; Weber, 2013).

Communication regarding leadership was studied since the early 20th century. Over the course of time, researchers wrote about many developments in leadership
theories. In a law enforcement setting, recent worldwide events caused speculation about effective law enforcement leadership. Traditional para-military structures used in policing created communication and accountability issues, which police leadership was slow to correct (Batts, 2014). The *International Journal of Police* discussed the need for leadership adaptation in law enforcement as a critical component for success (Vito, Higgins, & Denney, 2014).

Many change drivers are forcing an evolution policing and police leadership. Recent nationwide conflicts such as those in Ferguson, Missouri and Dallas, Texas, and incidents with Black Lives Matters, sparked community uprisings. Police leaders are searching for ways to work with the community and their rank and file staff (Batts, Smoot, Michael, & Scrivner, 2014). The multigenerational workforce required law enforcement leaders to find creative ways to engage the talents of the new generation and involve them in initiatives to move organizations forward (Batts et al., 2014, Smoot, Michael, & Scrivner, 2014). Advances in law enforcement technologies impacted the investigative, operational, and budgetary capabilities of law enforcement agencies, which affected morale, retention, and police services (G. Campbell, 2011).

New studies suggested conversational leadership presented some helpful tools police executives could use in dealing with 21st century problems and issues. Past leadership approaches focused on top down communication, which had noted shortfalls (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Effective conversations empowered both leaders and internal stakeholders to move from just using communication to relay information to using it to engage employees in dialogue that promotes connectivity, collaboration, understanding,
and trust (Glaser, 2014; Zeldin, 2000). However, more information is needed about this new theory of leadership as a police leadership practice.

**Background**

The world is constantly changing, which forces frequent changes in communication (Zeldin, 2000). During the industrial age, workers were paid a wage to complete mundane tasks and a company’s goal was to produce more goods and services at a cheaper cost than competing businesses (Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011). The motivation for employees was the wage, which was sufficient for that time. People were satisfied meeting their most basic needs of food and shelter. Pay remains important, but the world evolved and mundane tasks were replaced with highly technical jobs (Crowley, 2011). Today, employee knowledge is not as easily replaced and the workforce is motivated by factors other than pay alone (Crowley, 2011; Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011). As nations continue to face challenges based on globalization and technology, organizations must change practices to meet the demands of free market access (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Crowley, 2011; Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011). New technologies gave rise to different ways of communicating with employees, but many leadership models remained archaic. Now, a critical part of leadership is how leaders manage communication in their organizations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Law enforcement leadership encountered its own challenges in recent years. Even executives with strong analytical and communication skills needed to be better equipped to meet the technological, strategic, political, and chaotic nature of the profession (Batts et al., 2014). Policing is at a transformational era where agencies need to improve upon the policing systems from past decades (Batts et al., 2014).
Traditionally, law enforcement went through shifts in policing ranging from the political era in the 1800s to the current homeland security era in the 2000s. The shift from community policing to the current homeland security era caused by the terrorist attacks in 2001 added yet another dimension to police leadership (Brandl, 2018; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Additionally, the advancement in the public’s access to social media contributed to existing problems. In this age of police transparency, vivid images of police interactions are easily posted on personal and law enforcement social media sites, often misleading the public about police conduct (Brandl, 2018; Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

With the popularity of social media and its uses, this is yet another leadership concern (Stuart, 2013). Police leaders need to address cultural, mindset, and training concerns that led to the breakdown of public trust in many communities (Task Force, 2015).

**Theoretical Background**

Traditionally, executive leadership determined strategic objectives and the direction of organizations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Information was passed down to employees, who merely did as they were told. Over the course of time leadership theories evolved.

**Trait theories.** Personal traits in leadership and how to measure them were the focus of the 1930s. Professor Ordway Tead (1935) was one of the earliest theorists who listed inherent traits of leaders, noting purpose, direction, enthusiasm, friendliness, affection, energy, integrity, intelligence, knowledge, decisiveness, teaching skills, and faith were valuable leadership qualities. Other theorists in this realm listed similar traits such as dominance, assertiveness, physical stature, and social sensitivity (Chemers, 2000; Johns & Moser, 1989). The typical research study was to find leaders and followers, and
test the differences in selected traits (Chemers, 2000). The fundamental assumption was leaders were born and those who possessed certain characteristics were more suited to be leaders (Johns & Moser, 1989). This theory attempted to examine a set of skills needed to be a good leader (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Although much research was done to identify these traits, a clear answer was never found regarding which traits consistently showed a great leader (Horner, 1997; Johns & Moser, 1989). Trait theories failed to mention situational and environmental concerns playing a role in effective leadership (Horner, 1997). Over time, trait theories lost their popularity based on findings of empirical studies (Horner, 1997; Johns & Moser, 1989).

**Exploitive-authoritarian leadership.** An exploitive-authoritarian leader had little to no trust in subordinates and did not include them in decision-making (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert, 1961). Policies were made by upper management and subordinates had minimal contact with management. Fear and threats of punitive action were used as a motivational tool for compliance. Employees were expected to be submissive to supervisor’s requests and orders (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert, 1961).

**Benevolent-authoritarian leadership.** Leaders exhibiting a benevolent-authoritarian leadership style were not as controlling as the exploitive leader, but most policies and decisions were made by upper management (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert, 1961). In turn, information was relayed down to lower levels through organizational communication channels. On occasion, leaders listened to concerns of employees in their chain of command. Thus, subordinates had limited input in decisions and policies (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert 1967).
**Consultative leadership.** Leaders with a consultative leadership style set goals and established organizational objectives with some input from subordinates (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert, 1961). Management, supervisors, and line personnel generally had positive relationships because of the free exchange of information. A positive reward system was established and punishment was used in extreme cases to motivate employees (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert, 1961).

**Participative leadership.** With participative leadership, line personnel (subordinates) had a great deal of input into decision-making (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert, 1961). It emphasized a team decision-making approach. Decisions were made with the input of personnel affected by the decisions, which made it more democratic and created a sense of shared responsibility (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert 1961). Proponents of this model asserted it was usually associated with a motivated and inspired work environment that satisfied employees’ higher-level needs (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Johns & Moser, 1989; Likert, 1961).

**Behavioral theories.** Prior theories focused on how leaders dealt with employees but neglected organizational goals. Behavioral theories surfaced in the 1960s, 1970s and focused on how leadership motivated goal attainment (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). It was concluded the goals of the organization and employee satisfaction were equally important. Behavioral theories focused on specific behaviors leaders exhibited. Researchers sought to determine which behaviors were the best determinant of success (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Hannah, Sumanth, Lester, & Cavarretta, 2014; Johns & Moser, 1989).
Blake Mouton’s managerial grid. Robert Blake and Jane Mouton’s (1964) theory of the managerial grid surfaced in the 1960s. This model studied specific behaviors displayed by leaders. A person’s behavior acted as the best indicator of their leadership influences and were used to determine the likelihood of leadership success. In turn, an organization could develop better leaders (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Tead, 1935). A four-quadrant leadership grid was developed and it was believed leaders fell within one of the following leadership behaviors: high-performing, supportive, task leader, or bureaucratic (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Each quadrant had specific attributes fitting the description. This model examined both structure and consideration, and the need to balance the welfare of employees and the need for production (Blake & Moulton, 1964; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Johns & Moser, 1989).

Contingency leadership theories. Also in the 1960s, Fred Fiedler (1964) developed contingency approaches to leadership, which remained prominent until the 1970s. Contingency theories asserted leadership was adaptive and there was no best way to perform leadership functions (R. Campbell, 1968; Johns & Moser, 1989). Contingency leadership consisted of knowing various environmental factors that were present during given situations, and then applying the most appropriate style for the situation (R. Campbell, 1968; Fielder, 1964; Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

Transactional leadership theory. Started in 1980s by Bernard Bass (1985), transactional leadership theory was based on motivating employees toward a shared vision by using rewards, active management, passive management, or laissez faire methods to accomplish work tasks. Leaders’ outlooks were broadened to focus on organizational goals and missions (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). However, this approach did
not seek longstanding effects, but rather sought to improve the status quo (Bass, 1999; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Transactional leadership involved the continual exchange of information coupled with a reward system to meet objectives (Bass, 1985; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Giltinane, 2013).

**Transformational leadership theory.** First introduced by James Downton in 1978 and further developed by James Burns, transformational leaders quickly adapted to the rapidly changing environment to create change within an organization (Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders got subordinates to change their mindsets to affect positive, permanent change. Attributes of transformational leaders included courage, trust, values-driven, lifelong learners, visionary, and analytical. Leaders who possessed these attributes could enact longstanding change in organizations (Burns, 1978; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Giltinane, 2013; Johns & Moser, 1989)).

**Conversational leadership.** A new source of organizational power or leadership recently emerged, conversational leadership, which built upon past theories (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In chaotic times, the disconnect between employees and organizations grew. To improve this situation, proponents suggested dialogue was a way to build on similarities, work through differences, and nurture an organization’s shared vision (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). Conversational leadership examined how leaders transformed their organization through conversation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In this strategy, leaders used effective ways of communicating to create change in organizations. It was complementary to other theories, but focused on ways to talk and think collaboratively to create change and maximize productivity (Hurley & Brown, 2010). Many past leadership approaches focused on top down leadership

**Elements of Conversational Leadership**

**Intimacy.** The intimacy element encompassed leaders speaking to employees honestly and encouraging free-flowing, candid conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). If leaders established open, honest conversations, employees’ hearts were engaged, leading to increased commitment (Crowley, 2011). Successful organizations discovered making employees feel valued was a motivating factor to increase productivity (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). According to Glaser (2014), “When people feel valued, we are able to create the conditions for quelling fear. We encourage people to talk openly about threats and fears that are standing in the way of building trust” (p. 47). As responsibilities increased, the need to develop deeper, more intimate, trusting relationships grew (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013).

**Interactivity.** The interactivity component supported intimacy because it built relationships with employees. Technological changes altered the way employees interact with each other. Emails, virtual meetings, and various forms of social media connect employees (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). The benefits included lower organizational costs and better time management, but they sometimes left behind the intent of the messages (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). However, meaningful conversations could be attained when involved personnel had equal input into the messaging (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Leaders needed to learn to effectively use the
technological tools available to support interactive, meaningful conversations (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

**Inclusion.** Employees must be invited to share their ideas to shape the organizations goals and vision (Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Empowering employees helped build trust, and boosted engagement and innovation. Line personnel and mid-level managers were key components in supporting organizational messaging to line level staff (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). This meant they should foster a culture of sharing ideas as the norm and depart from traditional command and control relationships (Herrington & Andrew, 2015).

**Intentionality.** The first three components were based on conversation, whereas intentionality was meant to align organizational strategic goals (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Conversations should be focused and aligned with organizational goals. Intentionality was a way of developing corporate knowledge and involved sharing best practices utilizing the other components of conversational leadership (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). An essential task was to get personnel to focus on issues that mattered while adapting to changing circumstances (Weber, 2013). Executing the right plan was essential to success and an important aspect of intentionality (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

**Law Enforcement Leadership**

According to 2012 figures released by the United States Department of Justice (2013), 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States employed over one million staff members. Approximately 750,000 employees were sworn officers and 325,000 held non-sworn support positions. These numbers did not reflect sworn and un-sworn federal law enforcement positions (Banks, Hendrix, & Kychelhahn, 2016).
Based on these sheer numbers, the need for police leaders who can galvanize this workforce into high-performing teams is crucial (Batts et al., 2014). Recent world events involving civil unrest, corruption, and use of force created challenges for police leadership. Mismanagement of police agencies’ handling of widely publicized events pointed to a severe need for training at all levels (Batts et al., 2014; Task Force, 2015). Highly volatile incidents involving people of color were occurring more frequently, resulting in an increased level of public and media scrutiny rarely seen before (Batts et al., 2014; Task Force, 2015). The popularity of social media and electronic devices recording police incidents increased negative public opinion toward law enforcement. In addition to negative police perceptions in inner city communities, some police authorities believed police were less proactive (Nix & Wolfe, 2016). Termed the Ferguson effect named after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, police officers were less inclined to conduct proactive policing in fear of increased public scrutiny leading to departmental discipline (Nix & Wolfe, 2016).

Based on Linda Ackerman-Anderson and Dean Anderson’s (2010) book *The Change Leaders Roadmap*, wake up calls such as significant events, like the protests led by community groups over police shootings, send impactful messages to an organization. When such an event occurred, it was important to identify and understand what the wake-up call meant and what would be done to have an impact (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010). These wake-up calls are ever-present in law enforcement. In keeping with the changing nature of leadership, contemporary police leaders need to be better prepared for today’s complex society.
Research defined leadership in numerous ways, resulting in many approaches to measuring the effectiveness of leadership styles (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011). More information is needed to determine the best practices of police leaders in using current theories to meet the challenges of today’s law enforcement.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Law enforcement executives in the 21st century need to embrace changes in society. Lack of leadership and vision for creating change caused law enforcement to be a target of media and public scrutiny (Batts et al., 2014). Based on the complex society, law enforcement leadership needs to adapt to ever-changing demands and problems. From 2010 to 2015, reports indicated Chicago averaged an officer-involved shooting every five days (Richards, Caputo, Lighty, & Meisner, 2016). In that same timespan, police killed 92 people and injured 170 others (Richards et al., 2016). High-profile police incidents raised communities’ expectations of swift discipline levied upon law enforcement. These incidents negatively impacted citizens’ perceptions of police and the morale of police officers (Blum, 2002; Cappetelli, 2016; Masterson, Weyand, & Hart, 2015; Nix & Wolfe, 2016; Tyler, 2016).

A key component of changing citizens’ perception about law enforcement is fostering better relationships between police and the community. This core leadership belief was vital to the stability of communities, the criminal justice system, and providing varying and creative police services (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Kappeler & Gaines, 2015; Lawrence & McCarthy, 2013).

It would be impossible to address community concerns without addressing internal concerns. Internal issues continue to plague law enforcement (Task Force,
The Oakland police department was subjected to a federal consent decree in 2003 and forced to payout $10 million because of an internal investigation where officers were accused of planting evidence and beating up suspects (Sidner, 2016). In 2016, this agency was rocked with another scandal where an Oakland police officer committed suicide amid accusations he and in excess of 20 officers from multiple neighboring agencies had sexual relationships with an underage girl. This investigation was subsequently reassigned from the Oakland Police Department to federal authorities (Sidner, 2016). In 2016, Oakland had four different police chiefs in eight days because of various reported scandals (Brinkley, 2016).

Based on internal issues and declining police-community relationships, former President Barack Obama created the Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) to discuss and suggest changes for law enforcement. The final report (Task Force, 2015) provided law enforcement leaders with a blueprint for transforming operations, building public support, and addressing police training issues. It identified six areas of concern in law enforcement: trust and legitimacy, policy and oversight, technology, community policing, training, and wellness (Task Force, 2015).

Communication skills were at the heart of each of the six areas for concern identified by the Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015). New communication skills required an adjustment from the former command and control leadership culture (Batts et al., 2014; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). It was essential that law enforcement executives fostered new forms of leadership to inspire police organizations and repair their tainted image in many communities (Tyler, 2016). Employees in law enforcement needed more mentoring, coaching, and guidance to accomplish these changes. Conversational skills
could help leaders work with their employees to bring about a greater commitment to organizational vision, goals, and standards of conduct (Batts et al., 2014). However, more information is needed to understand how the use of conversational strategies to help bring about a culture of high standards.

**Gap in the Research**

The complexities of modern day policing gave rise to many concerns within law enforcement organizations and the communities they serve. The literature suggested leadership was evolving, and more information was needed about newer approaches that could be more effective in changing the culture and skills of police officers (Gordon, 2010). An abundance of information was found about the history of leadership, leadership styles, and transformational leadership. However, no literature was available on how conversational leadership could aid law enforcement executives and leadership development programs in bringing harmony to the divide between communities and within police organizations.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors that exemplary municipal police chiefs/sheriffs practice to lead their organization through conversations using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

**Research Questions**

One primary research question and four sub-questions guided this study. The primary research question was: What behaviors do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practice to lead their organization through conversation using Groysberg and
Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality? The four sub-questions were:

1. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?
2. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?
3. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?
4. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

**Significance of the Problem**

Excessive use of force issues and lack of transparency with national incidents such as the death of Sandra Bland in Tyler County, Texas in July 2015, highlighted a growing list of concerns about police practices and law enforcement leadership (Chammah, 2016). A national study revealed that more than half of African American males reported being a target of racial profiling by police (Cox, Marchionna, & Fitch, 2017). Nearly 40% of African Americans and 30% of Hispanics believed they were unfairly contacted by police because of their ethnicity (Cox et al., 2017). In addition to pressure placed on police executives by media and governmental entities, they also faced the challenge of building trust and reducing fear of crime in many neighborhoods (Cox et al., 2017; Kappeler & Gaines, 2015).

The responsibilities of police executives were complex. Studies such as the 1979 Flint foot patrol experiment served as the early foundation for community policing
The study showed law enforcement that communities deserved service consistent with community needs and modern police practices (Kappeler & Gaines, 2015; Lawrence et al., 2013). The Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) provided a blueprint for change in law enforcement organizations. It mentioned establishing trust and legitimacy was not just a concern for law enforcement. The criminal justice system was built on the ability of many agencies to collaboratively communicate to better serve and protect communities (Task Force, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative for police executives to seek training to be better equipped to expand their communication skills to include new approaches such as conversational leadership to bring people together on creating and executing a new vision of policing.

Conversational leadership started in 1995 (World Café, n.d.), but was not deeply explored within law enforcement. Current concerns in law enforcement set the stage for the importance of this study. This study sought to fill the gap in academic research regarding law enforcement conversational strategies and best practices. Insights and results of this study could help determine the role conversational leadership plays in a police executive’s leadership toolbox.

Findings from this study could be used for future police executive leadership training and fill the existing gap about incorporating components of conversational leadership in policing. Organizations that provide executive law enforcement training such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Organization for Black Law Enforcement Executives, as well as various state peace officer training organizations and agency training bureaus, could use findings from this study to develop leadership training programs. Implementation of conversational strategies could serve as
a catalyst to move police organizations past the troubles that negatively impacted the profession.

**Definitions**

This section provides definitions of all terms that are relevant to the study.

**Theoretical Definitions**

**Behavior.** An action, activity, or process that could be observed or measured (Dainton & Zelley, 2005; Griffin, 2012; West & Turner, 2010).

**County Law Enforcement Agency.** A law enforcement agency at the county-level, typically termed a sheriff’s department, granted power by the state to enforce laws in county jurisdictional areas (Brandl, 2018). Unique duties included oversight of county jail systems and court security (Brandl, 2018).

**Exemplary Leader.** Someone set apart from peers in a supreme manner based on their behaviors, principles, or intentions (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014).

**Internal Stakeholder.** Individuals such as employees within a law enforcement agency that have an interest in the organization and can be affected by organizational objectives, policies, and actions (Internal, n.d.; Law, n.d.)

**Municipal Police Agency.** A law enforcement agency controlled and funded by a municipal government or city where the jurisdictional area is the city where police services are rendered (Brandl, 2018).

**Operational Definitions**

**Intimacy.** The closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012).
**Interactivity.** Bilateral or multilateral exchanges of comments and ideas using a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Linden & Graen, 1980; Michael 2014).

**Inclusion.** The process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2010).

**Intentionality.** Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge, Down, & Johnson, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012).

**Delimitations**

This study was delimited to 10 exemplary law enforcement executives within California, and within a geographical area within 150 miles of Los Angeles, California. This area includes municipal police agencies within the following counties: Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino, and Riverside.

**Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter I introduced the topic of conversational leadership, the background information on conversational leadership, and the four behaviors of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Chapter I also provided the purpose, research questions, and definitions utilized for the study. Chapter II presents an overview of current literature regarding conversational leadership, its four elements, and how the elements could be used in a law enforcement setting to mitigate current challenges. Chapter III describes the research design and methodology of the study, and includes an explanation of the population, sample, and data gathering procedures, as well as the
procedures used to analyze the data. Chapter IV presents, analyzes, and provides a
discussion of the findings of the study. Chapter V contains the summary, findings,
conclusions, recommendations for actions and further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature relevant to this study and provides a historical background and theoretical context to describe behaviors exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs practice using the four elements of conversational leadership as depicted by Groysberg and Slind (2012). A literature review summarizes current knowledge of a topic to uncover research that may need further investigation (Roberts, 2010). Additionally, literature reviews present the contextual understanding of the research topic (Machi & McEnvoy, 2012). This literature review provides important concepts about leadership and conversational leadership in four sections. Part I discusses the history and evolution of leadership and its application. Part II is an in-depth discussion of leadership styles and how societal changes influenced leadership. Part III provides an overview of each element the four components of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Part IV discusses the state of current police leadership, highlighting recent challenges faced by law enforcement leaders.

The Changing World of Leadership

The American workplace is undergoing significant change, making the need for effective leadership in all professions paramount. Emerging leaders can be agents of that change (Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2011). Leadership theories evolved over time with many definitions used. James MacGregor Burns (1978) noted “leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (p. 2).

In his seminal work, Stogdill (1974) mentioned the origins of the word lead and leader were part of European languages since 1300. However, writings on leadership did not appear until the 19th century when the British Parliament wrote about political
influence and control (Stogdill, 1974). Although multiple definitions of leadership exist, common themes included influence, goal setting, and relationships between people in a group. Peter Northouse (2012) defined leadership as a “process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 5). Ruth Russell (2005) suggested leadership was the “interpersonal influence exercised by a person or persons, through the process of communication, toward the attainment of an organization’s goals” (p. 16).

**Evolution of Leadership Theories**

The topics of leadership and leadership research evolved over time. Theories moved from a focus on possession of certain traits made leaders to more adaptive theories where situations dictated leadership styles. More current theories focused on participatory styles engaging employees and conversation as a key component in leadership.

**Trait Theories**

Trait theory was an approach to studying human personality that identified and measured the degree to which certain personalities occurred. Professor Ordway Tead (1935), an early researcher of leadership, studied the inherit traits of leaders. Trait theories assumed leaders were born and if the correct qualities and traits were possessed, those people were better suited for leadership roles. Ralph Stogdill (1974) and McGuire (2004) wrote about the evolution and progression of trait theory in the 1940s.

Early leadership studies focused on different traits leaders were expected to possess (Chemers, 2000; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Horner, 1997; Johns & Moser, 1989). One of the important concepts of this theory was the number of leadership attributes was
not the main indicator of good leaders, but the frequency by which the traits were shown by leaders (Bass, 1990; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Stogdill, 1974). Attributes associated with good leaders included physique, health, energy, athletic prowess, oral language skills, and confidence (Stogdill, 1974). Appearance was directly proportional to leadership, especially in males. People with higher IQ levels were thought to emerge as better leaders (Stogdill, 1974). Those with higher intellectual levels were believed to be better able to handle the demands of complex professions (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935).

Factor-analysis studies during the late 1940s were aimed at determining associated leadership factors. Studies concluded leaders should possess sound judgement, capacity to quickly assess situations, dominance, self-insight, socialness, and sympathy (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935). If leaders possessed these characteristics, it was thought they could adapt to new environments and quickly assert themselves. Other common leadership characteristics were initiative, ambition, responsibility, integrity, and conviction. Additionally, dispositions of potential leaders were studied. Positive attitudes such as cheerfulness and humor were thought to be positive attributes. Coincidentally, an indication for leadership traits in women was the ability to control emotions. The rationale was that women in control of their emotions were self-composed and balanced so they could interact with male counterparts in a better way (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935).

Social class had a huge impact on leadership (Stogdill, 1974). Leaders from higher socio-economic backgrounds were believed to have an advantage in becoming leaders. Among youth, popularity and success during formative school years was proportional to the perception of leadership. Youth who exhibited leadership skills in
school were more likely to attend college compared to those who did not. It was thought their success was attributed to higher socio-economic status and intelligence (Stogdill, 1974).

After a comprehensive evaluation of this theory, Stogdill (1974) shifted from promoting a set of universal traits among leaders to traits that were unique to situations. It was never determined that specific traits were consistent with being a good leader. The new model focused on leadership being situational, and individual features alone were inadequate in predicting a person’s leadership capabilities. Unlike past theories, physical features such as height and weight were removed from the equation. Physical stature might be an advantage, but was not a necessity (Stogdill, 1974). In looking at enthusiasm, high energy levels were a key attribute for leaders, but other situational and environmental factors had to be considered (Horner, 1997; Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935). Additionally, it was concluded that early life accomplishments were desired qualities (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935). Leaders who had achieved some degree of social status were thought to be more easily promoted. However, research indicated top executives also came from poor and middle-income upbringings (Horner, 1997; Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935).

Regarding education, senior managers with degrees achieved greater success (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935). However, for women, once they attained middle management, it was difficult to transition to higher levels due to the glass ceiling, which has since been diminishing. Nevertheless, the relationship between leadership and intelligence remained. Those in the low and high ends of the IQ spectrum were less likely to be promoted to managers because of their inability to communicate effectively
with others. Also, personality traits such as aggressiveness, independence, enthusiasm, assertiveness, and tolerance were positively related with leadership. However, traits such as dominance, outgoing personality, and self-control were not necessarily present in all leaders. The situation was the main determinant of the traits needed for success.

Concerning task-related personality features, good leaders displayed a need for accomplishment, a desire to be dependable, and a sense of responsibility. Also, good leaders were found to be active participants in their engagements (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935).

A factor analysis of leaders’ skills and abilities found social and interpersonal skills, administrative skills, technical expertise, intellect, friendliness, social nearness, supportiveness, and task motivation were the most common leading factors (Stogdill, 1974). However, leaders did not hold the same degree in all these factors as some were highly task motivated and others were proficient in preserving contacts. Those considered the best did both concurrently. Therefore, the more traits one had, the more efficient a leader they became. (Stogdill, 1974). Similarly, the more factors one had, the higher the chances of being perceived as a leader (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935). Studies revealed the inherent traits effective leaders possessed, but more recent works showed the success of a leader was dependent on the situation (Stogdill, 1974). A successful leader demonstrated leadership features in several environments, whereas a successful individual demonstrated leadership qualities in limited settings (Stogdill, 1974). The only traits concluded essential in a successful leader were determination, self-confidence, persistence, and ego strength (Stogdill, 1974; Tead, 1935). Based on empirical studies, trait theories lost popularity and others surfaced.
Likert’s Leadership Styles

In 1961, Likert outlined four systems of management showing how managers and subordinates interacted. These styles centered around decision-making and the degree to which employees were involved in decision-making. In each style the input of leaders and employees varied, ranging from minimal leader-employee involvement to a high degree of leader-employee involvement. The four styles were exploitative-authoritarian, benevolent authoritarian, consultative, and participative (Likert, 1961). They focused on the adaptive nature of leadership rather than possession of a set of perceived leadership characteristics (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Johns & Moser, 1989; Likert, 1961).

Exploitive-authoritarian leadership. Exploitive-authoritarian leaders were less concerned about people and used threats and fear-based methods to get subordinates to conform (Gaines & Worrall 2012; Likert, 1961, 1967). Getting tasks accomplished took precedence over other aspects and communication was often downward with minimal employee input. Typically, exploitive systems had poor communication and lacked teamwork. Directions came from those in charge and upper management rarely knew what was occurring at lower organizational levels. Additionally, people were expected to work until tasks were completed without complaint. Upper management was often overloaded with more responsibilities than personnel in lower levels. This leadership style caused motivational issues as employees felt de-valued. Also, the sense of responsibility toward organizational goals was marginal and minimized, which led to productivity issues (Gaines & Worrall 2012; Likert, 1961, 1967).

Benevolent authoritarian leadership. Benevolent authoritarian leaders were less controlling than the exploitive leader, but most policies and decisions were made by
upper organizational levels and passed down via a hierarchical structure (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). On occasion leaders listened to concerns of employees in their chain of command; thus, subordinates had limited input into decisions and policies (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert 1967). Consequently, organizational communication moved downward, with minimal information flow back up the chain of command (Likert, 1967). This style of communication was prevalent in traditional organizations, especially law enforcement which was considered a quasi-military organization (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Employees completed tasks, but seldom went beyond basic responsibilities due to lack of appreciation and fear of punishment (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert 1967). The external motivation to succeed led to resentment and employees were less cohesive because of internal work competition (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Likert 1967).

**Consultative leadership.** Consultative leaders motivated employees through rewards and regular punishments, and sometimes engaged personnel in the decision-making process (Shead, 2017). More collaboration was evident, but limited to certain areas. Hierarchal communication flowed throughout levels of the organization, but subordinates were cautious about what information was disclosed (Shead, 2017). Subordinates were free to make decisions that impacted their output (Likert, 1967). However, top management maintained control over policies and overall decisions that affected the organization. Managers usually communicated with lower-level workers about problems and strategies before they developed organizational goals. Communication was thus downward and upward, even though the latter was limited. By eliciting more cooperation from subordinate, there was a positive impact on employee relationships. Subordinates were perceived as consultants to decisions, thus amplifying
their willingness to accept those decisions. Here, satisfaction and productivity were better than in organizations with a benevolent authoritarian system (Likert, 1967).

**Participative leadership.** Participative leadership focused on genuine engagement in the decision-making process and setting goals through open horizontal communication using the skills and creativity of employees (Likert, 1967). Leaders were knowledgeable about issues plaguing lower organizational levels and sought input when making most decisions. Group participation was stressed and the creation of organizational goals elicited widespread acceptance, along with more responsibility and accountability among employees. The motivation of employees was usually via a system that availed monetary awards in addition to participation in the setting of objectives (Likert, 1967). Morale was sustained, which strengthened employee productivity and created a high degree of employee satisfaction (Likert, 1967; Tead, 1935).

**Behavioral Theories**

In response to concerns about the trait approach, leadership theorists began to research leadership as a set of behaviors. These new theories evaluated what successful leaders did, developed a classification of actions, and identified broad patterns that indicated the presence of different leadership styles. These theories focused on specific leadership behaviors (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). One of the most studied behavioral theories was Blake Mouton’s (1964) managerial grid.

Blake and Mouton’s (1964) model highlighted behaviors displayed by leaders. The theory assumed a person’s behaviors acted as the best predictor of his or her leadership influences and were used to determine the likelihood of leadership success. Five leadership styles were identified on two axes, namely the concern for people (y-axis)
and the concern for production (x-axis). The scales on each axis were numbered from 1 to 9, with a higher number illustrating greater concern (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Those in the lower left quadrant were referred to as impoverished leaders (Blake & Mouton, 1964). This style expected minimal effort and had little concern for personnel satisfaction or organizational objectives. This leader was characterized as indifferent, resigned, non-committal, and apathetic. A manager’s primary concern was usually to avoid being liable for any mistakes that occurred, thus leading to few innovative decisions. In their minds, lack of errors equated to good leadership. Because of their indifference toward employees, they were viewed to possess little emotional intelligence. Employees supervised by these types of leaders dealt with them by avoiding interactions and always appearing being busy. The lack of productivity and fear of accountability was considered the least efficient style under the grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Those in the upper left quadrant were referred to as the country club leaders (Blake & Mouton, 1964). These leaders were concerned with people’s needs in addition to creating a satisfactory work culture and forming positive relationships. However, this style compromised worker productivity. Country club managers believed creating an affable workplace led to increased productivity. This leader was categorized as agreeable, non-confrontational, eager to assist, comforting, and uncontroversial. They were generally friendly people who showed concern for employees lives outside of work, but showed little concern about productive (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Those who fell in the center of the grid were referred to as middle of the road leaders (Blake & Mouton, 1964). These leaders were compromisers who desired maintaining the status quo and avoiding issues. They were usually competent and wanted
employees to be productive, but not at the expense of the team’s morale. This balanced style resulted in mediocre productivity, but satisfied employees. The ineffectiveness of this style stemmed from the lack of conviction on the leader’s part, which resulted in diminished work product (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Authoritarian leaders were plotted at the bottom right of the quadrant. These people were referred to as the produce or perish leaders, who were preoccupied with getting results and viewed employees as necessary to accomplishing tasks (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Employees were paid and their performance was the only expectation. They thought personnel should be grateful for working for their organization. Other forms of pressure included punishments and strict adherence to rules to facilitate goal achievement. Produce or perish leaders de-emphasized communication to suppress conflict. Uncooperative employees were quickly terminated and replacements were sought immediately. Employee needs were not important and leaders were considered controlling, over-powering, and demanding. This leadership style was not usually sustainable as it led to high employee turnover (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Lastly, the team leader style was represented in the upper right quadrant (Blake & Mouton, 1964). These leaders accomplished high work performance by motivating subordinates to remain dedicated to achieving organizational goals. They usually sought a high level of participation and teamwork, which benefited everyone involved. These leaders were characterized as flexible, open-minded, and inspirational. This type of leadership fostered mutual respect and better decision-making, especially when faced with a crisis. Trust and rapport with team members was built by seeking input from
employees, and workers felt valued. This style was only ineffective when employees were inexperienced and not familiar with organizational goals (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

**Contingency Leadership Theories**

Contingency leadership theories were based on the premise that the effectiveness of any organizational group depended on using the correct leadership style for the demands of a circumstance (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Glaser, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 2006). In assessing a leadership efficiency, situational factors guided which style a leader used. In the late 1950s, Fred Fielder developed a dynamic model that illustrated how personal features of a leader interacted with a group during various situations. Fiedler (1964) believed effective leadership was not dependent on the style of leading, but on control over a situation. Fiedler’s (1964) theory postulated the leader’s personality, or psychological temperament, was a main factor in his or her ability to lead. Additionally, how the group received the leader, the involved task, and the leader’s ability to control the group were primary factors in success. This was a departure from earlier theories that looked at the personalities of leaders (Fiedler, 1964, 1994; Stogdill, 1974). This model introduced a scale known as the least preferred co-worker (LPC), which helped assess a person’s leadership orientation. Fiedler (1964) created the LPC scale on which a leader rated co-worker attributed that were least liked. A high score indicated a person with a human relations orientation who got along well with people, whereas a low score meant a person was more task oriented.

This model assumed every leader had people with whom they preferred not to work (Fiedler, 1994). The downfall of this test was that it did not concern itself with the least preferred person, but focused on the motivation leaders wanted to see in work...
settings. People with higher scores received gratification from the interpersonal relationships, whereas those with lower scores derived satisfaction from successful task completion. Effective leaders were expected to control group situations so work could be delegated and completed by subordinates. Incapable managers lacked control of group situations and only certain employees carried out delegated tasks (Fiedler, 1994).

Fiedler’s (1994) theory divided group control into three components, leader-member relations, task structure, and leader position power. Leader-member relations was concerned with the level of mutual trust, respect, and confidence between a leader and his or her followers, and when they were categorized as poor, the leader needed to focus on regulating behavior before group tasks. Task structure referred to the degree of clarity and structure of the task; the leader needed to know if task clarity was low or high because it affected the approach used to accomplish an objective. Leader position power was concerned with the natural power accrued by the position. In the existence of an optimal leader-member association, a task that was highly structured, and great leader position power, then the setting was defined as favorable. In relation to the LPC, leaders with a low rating tended to be more efficient in extremely favorable or unfavorable settings, whereas those with a high score depicted high performance in the circumstances characterized by average favorability (Fiedler, 1994). Hence, this model found efficacy of leadership was situational.

**Transactional Leadership Theory**

Bernard Bass (1985) introduced transactional leadership. In this model, subordinates knew the nature of the work and ensuing rewards. Leaders focused on problems and employees rather than micromanaging all job aspects. As such, leaders
gained compliance through rewards and punishments (Bass, 1985, 1999). The intent was not to transform the future, but maintain the status quo. Supervision of worker’s output was meant to identify mistakes and deviations (Bass, 1985). Transactional leadership occurred when leaders broaden their outlook on organizational goals and mission (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). It was especially effective during crisis management and emergency situations, in addition to times when projects needed to follow particular procedures. Reflecting on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs framework, leaders that adopted this style were concerned with only fulfilling the lower levels of needs (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). An exchange model was thus created whereby rewards were made available for good work. However, poor performance was also punished until correction of the issue was completed. This style emphasized performance of tasks. Transactional leaders used forward-thinking concepts, but were relied upon rewards when objectives were achieved (Bass, 1999; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Contingent punishments were usually handed out when quality was below par or objectives were not met (Bass, 1999; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Transactional leadership was thus categorized as a passive leadership style because the demeanors depicted were meant to institute a culture of rewarding followers and to preserve the status quo (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

**Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leaders brought about a process to change direction or broaden the horizons of an organization (Bass, 1999; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Such leaders were known to change organizational cultures, were uplifting, and encouraged their followers. These leaders valued inclusion and team involvement, which concentrated on service, quality, cost-efficiency, and quantity of
output (Bass, 1999). The evolution of leadership styles in the current work environment favored this style. Following the culmination of the Cold War, a preference for flexibility at all levels began. Jobs meant for less-skilled labor became automated or shifted to other nations. The work environment was heavily predicated on a more educated worker and training. The flattening of organizations from a hierarchical structure reduced the need for traditional accountability. It became conventional to have educated teams of professionals collaborate on work ideas and projects, thus enhancing the team concept and lessening the typical superior-subordinate role (Bass, 1999).

The urge for transformational leadership grew from the need for ways to improve job satisfaction. Although salary was important, other factors such as inclusion in decision-making, enhanced communication, and recognition for contributions ranked higher in importance to employees (Crowley, 2011; Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015). Leadership styles that emphasized organizational goals over workers caused employees to become skeptical and question authority, which necessitated the development of new styles. Transformational leaders moved employees beyond satisfying self-interests to focus on collective organizational goals (Bass, 1999). Employee maturity and emotional intelligence were increased alongside their desire for realization, self-actualization, and the welfare of others (Glaser, 2014). Transformational leaders were viewed more positively by employees because of their focus on employee and conversational engagement (Weber, 2013).

**Theoretical Framework**

As time passed, researchers found that the control relationship of prior leadership theories was ineffective. Globalization, demographic shifts in communities, multiple
generations in the workforce, and changes communication with employees added to the need for burgeoning leadership styles (Crowley, 2011). Out of the need for better communication with employees, Boris Groysberg and Michael Slind (2012) developed a leadership model they termed *organizational conversation*.

This was quite the contrast from the 19th century theories that emphasized technology to increase worker productivity. Then, employee value was rooted in the technical aspects and rewards were used to increase productivity, such as giving financial incentives for greater production. Employees were not involved in planning but rather performing tasks (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Weber, 2013).

**Conversational Leadership**

Over a two-year period, Groysberg and Slind (2012) conducted extensive research interviewing top leaders and professional communicators in organizations. The glaring outcome of their interviews was that leaders wanted honest conversations with their employees about how to positively advance the organization. The prevailing trend was engagement with employee through personal forms of communication to foster a culture of closeness and intimacy (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Conversations are the way workers discover what they know, share it with their colleagues, and in the process, create new knowledge for the organization. In the new economy, conversations are the most important form of work...so much so that the conversation is the organization.

(Webber, 1993, par. 37)

Educator Carolyn Baldwin (as cited by Brown & Hurley, 2009) first defined conversational leadership in 1993 as “the leader’s intentional use of conversation as a
core process to cultivate the collective intelligence needed to create business and social value” (par. 7). Groysberg and Slind (2012) add that organizational conversation was the full range of ways information, images, and organization content were exchanged from leaders to employees. Leaders in all professions had to find other resources to leverage their strategic goals. In an age where organizations faced more complex problems, the need for deeper discussion was vital (Brown & Hurley, 2009; Glaser, 2014).

Conversational practices were key components of any transformational process as they activated change and reduced resistance and fear (Glaser, 2014).

Glaser (2014) mentioned trust was a catalyst for better communication. Among the imperatives for building trust were:

- Being transparent
- Focusing on building relationships, respect, and rapport
- Listening more deeply to understand others’ perspectives
- Focusing on shared success rather than self-interest
- Telling the truth and testing assumptions (Glaser, 2014)

When leaders used this list, they were open to innovation and better facilitated conversations where employees could mutually share ideas contributing to a company’s vision (Glaser, 2014). Glaser (2014) also discussed conversational intelligence as a means of working together to describe the present and shape the future by building bridges between levels of organizations. She created a conversational dashboard that explains where leaders are in terms of their level of communication and how to increase to shared levels of commination (Figure 1).
Other forms of conversational leadership strategies focused on employee engagement (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015; Weber, 2013). Groysberg and Slind (2012) expounded upon intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. With the global environments in which organizations exist, effective communication made people perform. Conversation provided the catalyst for change.

At the nearest water cooler or at the virtual rumor mill, employees chat about the state of the organization, and that has a bearing on the company’s operational performance. What people say when they talk about these issues and how they say it, will affect the capacity of leaders to drive their organization forward. (Groysberg & Slind, 2014, p. 9)

**Elements of Conversational Leadership**

The four elements of conversational leadership were applicable to all professions (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Organizational conversation entailed bringing individuals together for a shared purpose, thus enabling them to have open conversations. It started with developing new ways to bring employees from all parts of organizations together to
share ideas and information. The more voices that were part of conversations, the greater the chances for success. Figure 2 outlines the intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality components of conversational leadership.

![Elements of Organizational Conversation](image)

*Figure 2. Four I’s of leadership Source: Employee engagement, Groysberg & Slind, 2012, p. 9.*

**Intimacy.** Australian artist Ross Gibson (2008) participated in Australia’s Biennial of Sydney and took notes on personal conversations for a three-month period. He had casual conversations with at least five people daily in a small art gallery. His conversations became research. In the hundreds of exchanges that occurred, it became apparent that given a comfortable environment, people would share intimate details about themselves and their lives. Gibson (2008) highlighted how uncomfortable conversations
could change people’s perspectives on subjects and improve understanding of others’ opinions.

Although the exact nature of creating intimacy remains unclear, disclosure of personal information, feelings, and opinions was identified as key component in the expression of intimacy (Gibson, 2008). Effective leaders understood increasing conversational intimacy and shifting away from impersonal internal communication improved employee engagement. New opportunities were found when communication was increased and other perspectives were brought to the table (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013).

However, intimate conversations encompassed more than sending and receiving messages (Zeldin, 2000). Organizational conversation required leaders to reduce institutional distance that separated key personnel from employees (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Cultivating listening skills and learning to have personal and authentic conversations were important factors to bridge organizational gaps. Conversational intimacy offered leaders a method to manage change and ensured personnel agreed with organizational changes (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). When trust was built through intimate and honest conversations, employees became engaged, which led to increased commitment (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013).

**Engagement.** Personal engagement occurred when people’s authentic selves were connected to organizational visions (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). When employees were emotionally conscious of what actions were desired, they delivered outcomes aligned to organizational goals. Leaders understanding what drives change and
articulating to everyone involved the big picture the less resistance and more commitment they get from employees (Ackerman-Anderson, & Anderson, 2010). People worked harder to contribute to organizational goals when they were engaged; Crowley (2011) noted companies with high employee engagement shared these leadership attributes:

- Highly selective in building cohesive teams
- Placed great focus on employees and cultivated personal relationships with them
- Development and mentoring of everyone
- Acknowledgement and celebration of all achievements

Earlier research studies examined the content of message strategies and conversations leaders used to engage employees. These studies focused on strategies used to influence others (Mowday, 1979) or conversational strategies that successfully increased productivity (Salanick & Meindl, 1984). However, these studies neglected the two-way nature of interactive conversations that made employees feel their actions led to the success of the organization (Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

In contrast, disengagement occurred when employees suppressed involvement in the cognitive aspects of work. Providing a comfortable work environment was a basis for engagement, which was psychologically beneficial (Truss, Shantz, Soane, Albes, & Delbridge, 2013). According to Maslow’s (1943) needs premise, people were motivated to seek certain needs and some needs took precedence over others. In the past, it was assumed money was a prime workplace motivator. Maslow (1943) pointed out other motivational factors. Leaders at all levels who understood the dynamic of personnel
needs and the freedom of inquiry and expression could better elicit thoughts and ideas from employees (Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

As part of mutually derived needs and expectations, a sense of security was develop based on the interactions (Maslow, 1943). People’s core needs were tied to their egos. When needs were met, people felt satisfied whereas unmet needs were perceived as a problem (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010). Maslow (1943) and Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2010) noted similar core needs:

- **Security** – feeling safe physically and emotionally
- **Inclusion** – being part of a group or involved with other people
- **Power** – having direct influence or control of a process or outcome
- **Order and Control** – knowing what was happening to minimize confusion
- **Competence** – feeling capable, effective, and skilled
- **Justice and Fairness** – seeking fairness and equality

**Interactivity.** Each component of conversational leadership compliments the others. Creating meaning in the workplace was derived from how people related to their job tasks, and how individuals interacted with each other. When people built a sense of dependence on each other, great things occurred (Mautz, 2015). Leaders should consider how language creates and fosters relationships because people connect to words that spark interactivity in relationships (Barge et al., 1989).

Interactivity was linked to authentic leadership principles describing how leaders interact with followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Braun & Nierbele, 2017). Authentic leadership was aimed at a leader’s ability to influence and develop followers. It built upon skills leaders possessed such as confidence, optimism, resilience, moral character
and passion, in addition to their technical skills (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Braun & Nierbele, 2017).

Organizational interactivity was a change from traditional hierarchical communication (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Effective leaders had interactive dialogue with employees. The process of interactive communication allowed employees to be a part of the organizational vision and purpose. When employees engaged in meaningful conversations, they were more comfortable with organizational messaging (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Leaders must be able to use appropriate communication mediums to support interactive conversations.

**Diversity.** Social psychologists Markus and Kityama (1991) believed greater interdependence meant more than individual accolades. Meaning was derived from how individuals interacted with each other (Mautz, 2015). Some people aligned with their independent selves, placing importance on individual authority, often acting alone, and valuing individual awards (Markus & Kityama, 1991). Others aligned themselves to the conversational techniques of interdependent self. These employees placed greater value on working in groups, enjoyed the recognition of group work, and had a strong sense of loyalty to the group setting (Markus & Kityama, 1991). Cultural aspects also drove people toward being more independent or interdependent. Culture, upbringing, and diversity were described as leadership challenges facing organizations; understanding the principles of diversity, inclusion, and connection were crucial to organizational success (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Markus & Kityama, 1991).

Thus, interactivity involved understanding differences and motivations for employee success. Western culture was predicated on a more aggressive approach to get
ahead versus Asian culture of working harmoniously in teams (Markus & Kityama, 1991). As people function in a cultural melting pot, conversational leadership proposed transforming followers to believe in collective goals over individual goals, thus promoting a higher level of collaboration (Cavazotte, Moreno, & Bernardo, 2013). Creating an interactive work culture that encompasses commonality must be part of organizational culture (Necsulescu & Mironov, 2011).

**Varied forms of communication.** As types of conversation became more complex, the need for effective communication methods increased. Effectively connecting and relaying clear messages to employees became more difficult as leaders were expected to communicate dynamic, authentic messages through a variety of communication modes to work collaboratively (Crowley, 2011; Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2012; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Knowledge of communication channels such as blogs, wikis, online communities, instant messaging, social media, video chat rooms, and video sharing became standard procedures for organizations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Through technology, people connect in many ways.

**Impact of social media.** World changes dictated changes in interactions between employee and employer. Over the past decade, social media became a widespread presence touching the lives of countless people in all professions.

Every year social media sites expand and change exponentially. Twitter grew to 175 million users in 2011 from 75 million in 2010 (Stuart, 2013). Facebook, another popular site, boasted more than 640 million users (Stuart, 2013). Additionally, the rate at which people accessed these sites was alarming. The video-sharing site YouTube received more than 24 hours of video every minute (Stuart, 2013). These sites provide
interactive, personal, and meaningful opportunities for interactivity and engagement. Alternative interactive communications progressed from employee suggestion boxes to social media.

Social media changed the standard mode of pushing out information with a two-way variation of communication. The benefits included lower organizational costs and increased time management (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Leaders must use the technological tools available to them to support interactive conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Even law enforcement agencies turned to using social media. The Institute for Criminal Justice Education (ICJE) reported that in 2011, 78% of law enforcement agencies had social media accounts. This afforded them the ability to interact with a larger segment of society and provided new ideas that leaders at all levels could discuss (Stuart, 2013).

**Inclusion.** For this study, the thematic researchers defined inclusion as a process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2009). Leader inclusiveness was defined as “words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others’ contributions” (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006, p. 947). Inclusion captured leaders attempts to included others in discussions and decisions where their voices and insights might not otherwise be heard (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Randel, 2017). This was characteristic of a company that respected employee contributions, leveraged talents, and connected to organizational visions and goals. In an inclusive environment, diversity was considered. Irrespective of gender, race, creed, sex, and physical capability, opportunities must exist for all personnel. A diverse workforce
prevented employees from losing touch with the communities they serve (Groysberg & Connolly, 2013; Randel, 2017).

Creating shared ideas using a collective approach, leadership developed personal commitment to the group’s mission. This helped establish a connection between values and principles necessary to change behaviors and was a departure from traditional command and control relationships (Cavazotte et al., 2013; Herrington & Andrew, 2015). Organizational conversation required employees to help create the content an organization used internally and externally. Once commitment was established using inclusion, it eliminated work groups from relying on one authority to be the voice. Empowered employees were more engaged and creative, which led to improved organizational branding (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Raelin, 2016). When employees interacted, they shared an array of ideas, strengths, weakness, emotions, and biases. Simply put, they brought their authentic selves to conversations. The more they were included, the deeper the conversations became, building mutual trust built on both sides. Leadership rarely came from one person, so the goal of inclusion was to have multiple people provide leadership (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Randel, 2017; Weber, 2013).

**Connectivity.** In *Start With Why; How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action*, Simon Sinek (2009) stated, “It’s not just what or how you do things that matters; what matters more is that what and how you do things is consistent with your why” (p. 166). Every time a company spoke was a chance for it to articulate its beliefs and connect internally and externally (Sinek, 2009). Despite hierarchical structures that inhibited communication, inclusive leadership created diverse teams focused on accepting all genders, ethnicities, and perspectives brought to organizations. Belonging
and being valued were fundamental human needs (Gaines & Worrall, 2010; Maslow, 1943).

Inclusive leadership benefited diverse work groups and provided opportunities for employees to thrive (Randel, 2017). To achieve connections to diverse groups, leaders must incorporate inclusive practices to retain, recruit, and interact with employees. Establishing connections fostered teamwork, which produced meaning and meaningful results. Ultimately, these meaningful results helped foster the sense of culture, community, and connectivity that organizational conversations sought. An energized work culture was essential for developing meaning, fulfillment, and sustained work performance (Randel, 2017). Leaders must capitalize on the knowledge of employees to create connections and meaningful messages (Ferdig & Ludema, 2005; Mautz, 2015).

**Traits of inclusive leaders.** A component of inclusiveness was appreciating other’s contributions (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Invitation and appreciation were needed to convey the type of inclusiveness employees needed to feel their input was valued (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Dillon and Bourke (2016) contended there are six traits of inclusive leadership: commitment, courage, cognizance of bias, curiosity, cultural intelligence, and collaboration. These traits created an environment in which employees felt comfortable enough to speak (Dillon & Bourke, 2016).

Highly inclusive leaders were committed to diverse thoughts and ideas because they aligned to their personal values (Dillon & Bourke, 2016; Gladwell, 2008; Kouzes & Poszner, 2006). At a personal level, inclusive leaders believed they were obligated to make change and create fair environments. Like other organizational priorities,
Inclusiveness needed to be part of organizational culture, from informal discussions to training, and at all levels. When leaders devoted time and energy to inclusion, the message resonated with employees (Dillon & Bourke, 2016; Gladwell, 2008; Kouzes & Pouxner, 2006).

Inclusiveness included courage to humbly challenge old methods and advocate for two-way conversations (Gladwell, 2008, Glaser, 2014; Kouzes & Pouxner, 2006). Regular discussions and feedback allowed for sharing of thoughts on internal and external matters. This also included knowing employee strengths and weaknesses, and how to use them for organizational efficiency. Effective leaders recognized the culture had unintended blind spots that could inhibit diversity and fairness. Inclusive leaders were culturally intelligent and put programs and policies in place that addressed unconscious bias (Gladwell, 2008, Glaser, 2014; Kouzes & Pouxner, 2006).

Inclusive leaders understood their limitations and learned from dissenting ideas (Dillon & Bourke, 2016; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Increased knowledge was gained from inclusive approaches. Listening was a key aspect, as well as open mindedness and empathy (Dillon & Bourke, 2016; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

The last trait of inclusion was collaboration. Collaboration was about people working together, sharing ideas, and solving problems collectively (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). In a homogenous environment, the sharing of ideas was easy. However, lack of perspective limited the potential ideas (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Dillon & Bourke, 2016). In a law enforcement setting, community policing required law enforcement to collaborate with diverse communities where the sharing of ideas could
change perspectives and allow people to arrive at mutually beneficial solutions (Adler, Mueller & Laufer, 2009; Brandl, 2018; Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

**Intentionality.** The previous elements of organizational communication were based on conversation whereas intentionality was meant to follow an agenda to align organizational goals (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Previous elements were intended to use conversation to strengthen relationships, provide methods for employees to use their collective voices, and share ideas to influence company goals and strategies. Intentionality provided a path for the other three elements and allowed leaders to close and implement procedures (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Employees received an overabundance of messaging, which they narrowed to a simple understanding of an organization’s vision; ensuring clarity and a sense of direction was part of creating meaning in conversations (Barge et al., 1989; Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Employees in organizations performed a variety of work and social functions, and ambiguous roles sometimes occurred as staff sorted through messaging to determine how to perform their jobs (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Sometimes inconsistencies created confusion; therefore, leaders must ensure personnel understand messaging (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Executing a cohesive plan was essential to the success of intentionality (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Intentionality involved leaders creating an environment where employees could see the entire organization, what the company was committed to, and its culture. The intent of conversations was to create better products or services. A cohesive plan to get members to fully engage served as a guide to involve employees in vital conversations. Conversational intent gave direction to what was often disorganized forms of communication (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).
When organizational goals were aligned and employees saw interconnections between people, ideas, processes, and departments, they became committed; in contrast, a lack of focus or inattention to aligning goals with people demoralized the workforce and reduced the positive energy needed to sustain commitment (Raelin, 2016). High functioning organizations develop strategy and integrated the strategy into the organizational culture (Sinek, 2009). Getting everyone to hear the messages of why and how were important messages. If employees understood what an organization believed in without knowing why, then the ability to motivate and inspire people diminished (Sinek, 2009). Leaders must use resources available to them to channel the flow of organizational content.

Intentionality got personnel to focus on conversations that were informed and mattered (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). Intentional conversations were built on processes that allowed for informed decisions. When leaders were dedicated to informed possible choices, personnel were drawn into the problem-solving process. This provided robust thought necessary for better decisions, and people felt more connected to the outcomes (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). Intentionality was aimed at providing a sense of clarity and direction in organizational conversation. Notwithstanding, intentionality must be used in concert with the other three elements to harness the power of conversation and produce real change (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

**Law Enforcement Leadership**

Police chiefs and sheriffs represent the highest level of leadership in their organizations. Their complex roles changed dramatically over time. Law enforcement organizations do not exist in a vacuum and rely upon relationships with other local, state,
and federal institutions to be effective (Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Pressures produced by
the environment, whether social, political, or economical, affected the nature of policing
and often dictated activities of agencies. Nevertheless, change and adaptation was
important in these organizations.

To be effective, law enforcement must alter its practices to suit the needs of
varying communities. The police chief or sheriff must serve as the change agent and
facilitate culture shifts (Adler et. al, 2009; Brandl, 2018; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). In the
book *The Change Leaders Roadmap* (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010), wake up
calls were described bringing awareness of opportunities or threats to an organization.
Such wake-up calls were ever-present in law enforcement in terms of civil unrest,
questionable shootings, and internal police conduct. Law enforcement leaders must
understand how these incidents shape future law enforcement decisions and cause
longstanding damage (Batts et al., 2014).

Effective communication is critical in this ever-changing society. Much was
written about external problems, but internal problems caused by shifts in the workforce
were causing future problems and exasperating external issues (Tyler, 2016).

**Effect of World Events on Policing**

Since the earliest recorded history in 1340 B.C., policing existed in various forms
(Adler et al., 2009). Currently, increasing responsibilities make law enforcement
leadership even more challenging despite going through several policing eras (Brandl,
2018; Cappitelli, 2016; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). Each era was identifiable by policing
changes based on the political and socio-economic conditions (Adler et al., 2009; Brandl,
2018; Gaines & Worrall, 2010). The Community Policing Era started in the 1970s when
law enforcement realized community support was vital to problem solving (Brandl, 2018; Cappitelli, 2016; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). During this era, the amount of female and minority officers dramatically increased. Increased funding from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and the 1994 Violent Crime and Control Act allowed policing agencies to hire over 100,000 local law enforcement personnel over six years (Brandl, 2018; Cappitelli, 2016; Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

Policing agencies and communities across the nation were the recipients of more than $11.3 billion in grants for community policing programs (Brandl, 2018; Cappitelli, 2016; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). An increase in training and new technologies was seen. New technologies to aided in combating crime and complimentary community policing philosophies were funded, such as automated fingerprint identification systems, license plate readers, and less lethal weapons (e.g., tasers, bean bag shotguns). During the terrorist attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Center in 2001, a new policing era was born. That single horrific incident impacted politics and the need to ensure the safety of United States citizens. Police agencies throughout the country made numerous changes in their departments. Many developed Homeland Security Divisions or Units responsible for providing similar Homeland Security programs such as liaisons with federal agencies, critical infrastructure protection, and critical event large scale planning. Law enforcement switched from community policing back toward traditional policing (Brandl, 2018; Cappitelli, 2016; Gaines & Worrall, 2012). New controversial technologies developed and emphasized under this era include unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs, commonly known as drones), camera surveillance systems, and body cameras (Brandl, 2018; Cappitelli, 2016; Gaines & Worrall, 2012).
Current Challenges

Highly publicized events including civil unrest, internal corruption, and perceived issues with police use of force challenged police leaders across the nation. The continual need for creative solutions, recruiting shortfalls, and budgetary issues added to the already growing list of police leadership concerns. Volatile incidents occurring with minorities, people suffering from mental illness, and the homeless population seemed to occur more frequently than in past policing eras, causing shifts to reputation management among the law enforcement community (Batts et al., 2014; Task Force, 2015).

Twelve Oakland police officers were disciplined in September 2016 for unprofessional conduct resulting from a sex scandal involving an underage teen, Jasmine Abuslin; this case made national headlines and was a huge setback in their quest to regain public trust (Swanson & Barron, 2017). More troubling was the court system had to intervene and found the initial investigation was poorly conducted and not prioritized by the police chief, who later resigned. Since 2003, the Oakland Police Department was subjected to federal supervision via a consent decree resulting from police misconduct claims in the Allen et al. v. City of Oakland et al. lawsuit (Swanson & Barron, 2017). During the height of the sex scandal in 2016, the Oakland Police Department went through three police chiefs in eight days; reasons for leaving ranged from getting fired, an extramarital affair, and personal reasons (Wolf, 2016).

In June 2013, the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) Civil Rights Division and Los Angeles County announced agreements to make broad changes to policing in the Los Angeles County Lancaster and Palmdale station areas regarding the sheriff department’s enforcement of laws on Section 8 housing properties. An
investigation amid citizen complaints concluded there was reasonable cause to believe deputies engaged in a pattern of misconduct in violation of the Constitution and federal law. The violations included substantiated findings of unreasonable force, illegal pedestrian and vehicle stops that were racially motivated, and a history of harassment of African Americans who held Section 8 vouchers. According to the USDOJ, the goal of deputies was to get African Americans residing in Section 8 properties to move out of the Palmdale and Lancaster areas (USDOJ, 2013).

Despite controversial events, law enforcement in the United States maintained an overall favorable rating among citizens (Brandl, 2018). In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, views of police were significantly different across racial lines. African Americans and Hispanics had lower opinions of police Caucasians. The need to change police perceptions among these groups was important (Brandl, 2018). With the visibility of law enforcement today, law enforcement leaders must use new conversational techniques to motivate and instill a sense of pride between communities and law enforcement personnel.

**Changes in workforce.** The technological changes in society affected law enforcement. New technologies aimed at reducing problematic concerns coupled with workforce dynamics created another often overlooked problem. In 2015, the Millennial workforce of 75.4 million surpassed that of the 73 million Generation X workers (Fry, 2015). As Millennials in the workforce increases, they will eventually replace personnel leading current organizations. Because of the large number of Millennials in the workforce, they were the topic of much discussion in identifying how to best utilize their skillsets (Gilburg, 2007).
The mindset of Millennials and their inquisitive nature contrasted with police quasi-military hierarchical organizations. The California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) sets minimum law enforcement standards in California. Currently, the minimum age and educational standard for hiring is 19 and a high school diploma or its (POST, n.d.). However, Millennials were entering the professional workforce more educated than past generations. The PEW Research Center (2017) reported 40% of Millennial workers aged 25 to 29 obtained at least a bachelor’s degree in 2016 compared to 32% for Generation X workers and 26% for Baby Boomers when they were the same age.

In addition to educational differences across the Generations, cultural issues also exist. Traditional unwritten law enforcement police culture guided the thinking of experienced officers that was passed down to younger generations. Variation occurred, but older generations expected younger generations to adhere this culture, which did not fit the Millennial thought process (Brecher, 2008). Traditional cultural nuisances passed on from prior generations included:

- Do not trust the new guy until he is known
- Do not do too much or too little
- Do not take on supervisors by yourself
- Do not create waves for supervisors
- Do not leave work for the next shift
- Do not look for favors just for yourself
- Be aggressive when needed, but do not be too eager (Brecher, 2008)
This mindset was extremely difficult for Millennials who wanted to have an immediate impact and positively contribute to law enforcement (Fields, Wilder, Bunch, & Newbold, 2008; Gilburg, 2007). Leadership needed to identify strategies to close the divide between generations and build relationships so the generations could learn from one another. Millennial technology and educational skills could be nurtured by law enforcement leaders and appropriate succession plans discussed for long standing success (Fields, Wilder, Bunch, & Newbold, 2008; Gilburg, 2007).

### Shift in training modalities
Training for law enforcement officers was also shifting. The prior warrior mentality was being phased out and a new guardian mindset was entering the field. During the development of the Task Force on 21st Century Policing, adoption of the guardian mindset was urged to build trust and legitimacy within communities (Brocklin, 2015; Task Force, 2015). Proponents of the traditional warrior mindset believed law enforcement should prevail against all odds and must always be ready to handle dangerous situations (Brocklin, 2015). The counterargument from guardian mindset proponents believed the warrior mindset pitted officers against citizens and communities they protect; they thought the warrior mentality should be reserved for the military because of its mission, whereas the guardian mentality helped law enforcement build trust with citizens. The change of mentality brought changes in tactics that emphasized de-escalation training versus aggressive tactics (Brocklin, 2015).

Along the same lines, agencies were exploring the use of virtual training similar to educational institutions (Murray & Joyce, 2017). The traditional academy could be replaced or modified with virtual training. This was well suited for Millennials who grew up using technology. Virtual reality training and hybrid training could replace hours
spent in classroom lectures. Virtual reality training was considered the perfect complement as agencies continually struggled with meeting training demands where personnel had to physically attend classes (Murray, A., Joyce, N, 2017).

**Future leadership skills.** With the emphasis placed on police leadership in the changing political, technological, and generational environment, the need for leadership was even more crucial. The negative sentiment in many communities caused police to perform less proactive policing, which adds another dilemma (Blum, 2002; Cappetelli, 2016; Masterson et al., 2015; Nix & Wolfe, 2016). To overcome challenges, leaders must be flexible enough to react to dynamic changes. Developing an organizational culture utilizing traditional hierarchy and collaborative leadership approaches use suggested (Herrington & Andrew, 2015). In addition to increased conversational intelligence, other important requisite skills for future leaders included:

- **Global perspective.** Leaders need to develop a broader perspective of world issues because the proliferation of technology crime knows no borders (Batts et al., 2014).

- **Creativity.** Leaders need to be big picture thinkers as crime issues become more complex and requiring new problem-solving methods (Batts et al., 2014).

- **Master technological changes.** Leaders need to anticipate how new law equipment affects constitutional rights (Batts et al., 2014; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Murray & Joyce, 2017; Task Force 2015; Tyler, 2016).

- **Understand research methods.** Leaders need to make better connections with academia to validate best practices, use empirical police research, and
understand data (Batts et al., 2014; Murray & Joyce, 2017; Task Force 2015; Tyler, 2016).

- **Balance strategy, culture, and political influence.** Leaders need to recognize and use conversational strategies to implement their strategic initiatives internally and in the existing political environment (Batts et al., 2014; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Murray & Joyce, 2017; Task Force 2015; Tyler, 2016).

**Summary**

Undoubtedly, police chiefs and sheriffs face unprecedented challenges ranging from questionable uses of force, corruption, implicit bias, training, internal issues, community perceptions, and overall public safety. Much work must be done in law enforcement within the broader criminal justice system (Task Force, 2015). Regardless of issues, law enforcement must continue to find creative ways to uphold the police office oath, which in part states:

> On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the Constitution, my community, and the agency I serve. (International Association Chief of Police, n.d., p. 1)

Now is the time for law enforcement leadership to facilitate change for future generations. The Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) wrote suggestions to reinforce community policing and build trust among law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. This propelled more of a collaborative approach within
organizations to develop shared solutions to internal and community programs (Task Force, 2015).

The literature review showed that law enforcement organizations are amidst troubled times, and organizations could benefit from organizational conversation. Just as community policing required building positive community relationships, organizational conversation built relationships within organizations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Task Force, 2015). The old command and control corporate communication model depicted in prior leadership theories was still relevant in most organizations. However, the extent to which the four elements of organizational conversation served to create organizational effectiveness was unknown. Conversations hold people together. When organizations fail to see the importance of conversational interactions, the staff suffered, but when they did, the dynamics changed the course of the future (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). Groysberg and Slind (2012) provided a framework about conversational leadership, which should be explored by police chiefs and sheriffs as they guide their organizations forward. Conversations in this new age of policing must do a better job of incorporating the pillars of intimacy, multiple two-way conversational methods, cultural respect, inclusion, and strategic alignment (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012, Sinek 2016).

Chapter II provided a review of the literature relevant to leadership, conversational leadership, and leadership in law enforcement. Chapter III explains the research design and methodology of this study, including the study population and procedures for sampling, data gathering and analysis.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative phenomenological study described the behaviors exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. The current undertakings of these police and sheriff executives were explored to discover how important the elements of conversational leadership were in their respective organizations. The rationale for the research design, population, sample size, instrumentation, and collection of data are explained in this chapter. Lastly, the limitations of this study are also discussed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors that exemplary municipal police chiefs/sheriffs practice to lead their organization through conversations using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

One primary research question and four sub-questions guided this study. The primary research question was: What behaviors do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practice to lead their organization through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality? The four sub-questions were:

1. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?
2. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

**Research Design**

A qualitative research design studies how people or groups construct meaning. Qualitative methods were frequently used to capture themes by detailing the thoughts of participants (Patton, 2015). Additionally, they allowed the researcher to gather data and attach social meaning to them. In an investigatory sense, a researcher conducted one or more observations and looked for patterns, which led to a tentative hypothesis, and then a theory (Patton, 2002). Maximum use of interviews, observations, and artifacts were used to form opinions about behaviors (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

According to the textbook *Qualitative Research & Evaluations Methods* (Patton, 2015), “What makes us different from other animals is our capacity to assign meanings to things” (p. 3). Qualitative research sought to make meaning through narrative and descriptions. Quantitative research sought to make meaning through numbers. Mixed-methods studies combined both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Patton, 2015). Typically, mixed-methods studies were used when examining a complex problem with a large amount of data (Wyse, 2011).

The quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study. Quantitative approaches do not seek the meaning or understanding driving behaviors (Patton, 2015),
and this study intended to explore the how and why of conversational leadership practices. The qualitative approach emerged as most applicable to this study as the peer researchers wanted to explore and describe behaviors exemplary leaders used in their respective professions to lead through conversation. The goal was to identify the specific ways they achieved results so findings could be applied to a larger group in the same professions.

**Method**

Many research design methods were considered, but the qualitative approach was determined to be the most appropriate for this study. The thematic researchers ultimately decided on a phenomenological approach. This qualitative phenomenological approach allowed the team to explore the deeper understanding and meaning of everyday experiences.

**Rationale**

Phenomenology is used when a researcher is interested in the lived experiences of people experiencing the same phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Based on numerous discussions with the thematic team and faculty input, the opportunity to research a common thematic concept presented itself. Twelve doctoral students and four faculty advisors elected to research the behaviors exemplary leaders practiced to lead through conversation using the four elements of conversational leadership. The thematic approach was used to study various exemplary leaders in professions such as law enforcement, healthcare, non-profits, and education. Across the 12 researchers, using the same methodology allowed further research to be conducted about the results and data obtained from the studies. The peer researchers agreed to use interviews, observations,
and artifacts within the selected samples of subjects from different populations. The 12 peer researchers addressed the same four components of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and interactivity.

During group meetings, the most appropriate methodology for this research study was discussed. After much group consideration, social constructivism, ethnography, and phenomenology emerged as the top methods and were presented to the faculty researchers for consideration. Social constructivism was rooted in the sociology discipline, but was deemed inappropriate because the focal point of the theory was on perceptions rather than behaviors. Ethnography took root in anthropology and was designed to explain how culture through people’s perspectives and behaviors. This approach tries to elicit how culture can change organizational behavior (Patton, 2015). Although closely related to the research study, the focus of this study was on specific behaviors rather than culture.

Phenomenology was ultimately deemed as most suited for the goals of this study. Phenomenology took root in philosophy and captures lived experiences of people or groups of people (Patton, 2015). This approach could show how conversations shaped and influenced life experience, which best captured the intent of the thematic study.

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined population as “a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to which we intend to generalize the results of the research” (p. 169). The latest figures showed over 500 law enforcement agencies operated in California, which included federal, state, county, college and university, school, special district, and municipal law enforcement agencies.
(Reaves, 2011). Each agency typically had similar hierarchal structures and an equivalent to a police chief or sheriff in terms of duties and responsibilities.

For this study, police chiefs and sheriffs included the top official in the chain of command of a municipal or county law enforcement agency. Municipal police chiefs were typically appointed by a city governmental structure whereas the sheriff was often an elected official (Brandl, 2018). Each was responsible to lead their organizations, overseeing similar rank structures and hierarchies. Their important duties included planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting law enforcement activities within their respective agencies (Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

**Target Population**

The target population was defined as the group for which the findings of the study were meant to generalize (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the target population was the 87 municipal police chiefs and county sheriffs working in law enforcement organizations with at least 50 sworn peace officers in southern California who fit the criteria of exemplary leaders. Each agency had to be within 150 miles of Los Angeles, which included agencies in the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego.

This study focused on exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs set apart from peers by exhibiting at least four of the listed characteristics:

1. Evidence of successful relationships with followers
2. Evidence of leading a successful organization
3. A minimum of five years in the profession
4. Articles, paper, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings

5. Recognition by peers

6. Memberships in professional associations in their field

The sample personnel for this study were part of the selected target population. During this study, the researcher used subjects presumed to fit the delineated attributes of the target population.

**Sample**

Qualitative research typically focused on the depth of interviews with smaller sample sizes obtained through purposeful sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A sample was defined as the study participants from whom data were collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A sample was taken from the larger population with the intent to generalize findings to the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The peer researchers explored and used multiple sampling methods, including non-probability, purposive (purposeful), and convenience. Non-probability sampling referred to sampling procedures that did not rely on probabilities or selecting participants in a specific manner such as randomly or stratified (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Instead, participants were chosen because of their accessibility. In this research study, six counties were part of the sample population, making it difficult to contact each exemplary leader, so non-probability sampling was used.

Based on the unique criteria for selecting participants, purposeful sampling was used. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who possess particular elements
characteristic of the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Participants were chosen because they were knowledgeable about the topic of research and were more likely to provide meaningful information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, participants had to meet the criteria of an exemplary leader in their profession.

Convenience sampling was also used due to limitations of time, distance, cost, and availability. This technique relies on samples where research participants are chosen based on their ease of availability (Samure & Given, 2008). It was appropriate because of the accessibility and ease of scheduling interviews for the researcher. Expert sampling was used in conjunction with convenience sampling. Expert nomination sampling was defined as a method used when studying experts in a field and the researcher needed the opinions and assessment of subjects with a high level of knowledge in the area of study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Expert sampling was another type of purposive sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this study, police chiefs and sheriffs served as the heads of their respective organizations and were extremely versed in law enforcement matters. The respondents were selected from the 87 municipal police and sheriff agencies in the counties identified as the target population.

The California Police Officers Standards and Training (POST) sets standards and governs law enforcement training. They provided the researcher with a list of police agencies and website links. Once identified and found to fit the definition of county or municipal police agency, the data were checked to determine if the agency had a minimum of 50 peace officers. The researcher created a spreadsheet of the agency head, number of sworn personnel, website, and phone number to narrow the target population and aid in contacting participants to set up interviews.
Six counties were represented in this study. Seventeen municipal police agencies in the six counties were eliminated because they had fewer than 50 peace officers. The remaining 87 municipal police and sheriff agencies were put on an eligibility list for interview consideration. Each agency was identified on the spreadsheet with an identifying code to be contacted during the sample selection process.

The peer researchers chose the sample size of 10-12 participants for the study. This was sufficient to explore the behaviors of municipal police chiefs and sheriffs. The sample size was considered critical in interpreting the meaning of results and generalizing conclusions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Purposeful random sampling, even using small samples substantially increased the validity of the gathered information and added depth about the different disciplines researched by the peer researchers. Results of this study were intended to be cross referenced with the findings of the peer researchers.

**Sample Selection Process**

The California Police Chief’s Association (CPCA) and POST were contacted to identify a sufficient number of police chiefs and sheriffs from the list of 87 prospective participants who met the exemplar criteria. CPCA is a professional organization whose membership is comprised of municipal police chiefs, their command staff, retired police chiefs, and sheriffs. POST is the California regulatory agency that sets standards for training for peace officers in California. The Executive Director of CPCA and a POST representative confirmed all 87 police chiefs and sheriffs on the list fit the research guidelines for having met at least 4 of the 6 criteria for exemplary leaders. Expert nominations from both agencies were provided as suggested participants, including names from Ventura, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange, and San Diego.
This list was inclusive of different genders and ethnicities. The recommended names from both agencies were compiled and the list was vetted against agency or city websites for consistency in information received from both organizations.

These perspective participants were contacted via the telephone at their office. This initial phone call was directed at their scheduling secretary, which included information about the purpose of the study and how the chief was nominated to participate based on his or her exemplary status. The scheduling secretary was asked to pass the information on to the chief or sheriff so an interview could be scheduled.

If a prospective participant chose to participate, an appointment time was tentatively scheduled for 45 minutes. Additionally, they were notified they would receive an informed consent form (Appendix B) and the research participant’s bill of rights (Appendix C) to reviewed and sign at the time of the interview. Of those who responded indicating they were interested in participating, the research selected the 10 closest in proximity for convenience.

**Instrumentation**

In a qualitative study, the researcher becomes an instrument of the study. During fieldwork, the researcher makes firsthand observations of activities and interactions, and can be an active participant by doing formalized interviews (Patton, 2015). In this study, the researcher conducted all the interviews and observations, and reviewed all the artifacts. The researcher worked in law enforcement for over 25 years, 15 in a supervisory capacity. Additionally, he conducted hundreds criminal and civil interviews as part of his law enforcement duties.
A scripted interview protocol and questions (Appendix A) were developed by the peer researchers to closely align with the information in the literature review. The research sought to explore how exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs used the four behaviors of conversational leadership to lead their organizations. The literature review revealed the topic of leadership styles was researched extensively; however, no information was found on how conversational leadership could aid law enforcement executives and leadership development programs in changing how leaders execute transformational change using conversation within their organizations.

**Validity**

Validity referred to the extent to which an instrument or study measured what it intended to measure. Failure to do so can lead to the contamination of a study (Patton, 2015). To reduce contamination and bias, the following procedures were used: (1) questions were developed by a team of 12 peer researchers and 4 faculty members, (2) a qualified observer monitored a field test for signs of bias in the way the questions were asked, and (3) a peer double coded 10% of the data to assess for intercoder reliability.

In a qualitative study, the interviewer is part of the process (Seidman, 2006). They ask questions, respond to participants, and engage in two-way conversations. Additionally, they select, analyze, and interpret data collected from the process. No matter how disciplined or competent the interviewer is, they are a key factor in the meaning-making process” (Seidman, 2006).

**Content Validity**

The peer researchers scripted the questions to fit a variety of career fields. Content validity was established using four faculty members who provided expert
validation to the instrumentation and interview process. Additionally, validity was established using the judgment of field experts, as these experts reviewed the content and the construct of the instrument during the field test.

Field Test

A field test was conducted on a test participant who met the sample criteria, but was excluded from the study. A neutral expert in conducting qualitative research observed and provided feedback to the researcher after the interview. Field tests were necessary to check for bias in the procedures, interviewer technique, and questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The expert used for the field test was a career law enforcement official, versed in interview techniques, who conducted many criminal investigations. This expert held a doctorate in education and utilized interviews to obtain data for a dissertation.

Reliability

Reliability referred to the level of agreement between two or more independent researchers (Patton, 2015). The thematic team of 12 peer researchers studied the topic of conversational leadership, all using the same purpose statement, research questions, and design. Therefore, ample opportunities existed for sharing ideas and information regarding the coding process and emergence of themes. Procedures were established for identification of themes, choosing categories, and data coding. A peer researcher reviewed 10% of the coded data with an 80% agreement needed to be considered reliable. This procedure of using a peer researcher to confirm the coding process increased the reliability of the findings, which was critical in qualitative design.
Internal Reliability of Data

Ferrarotti (1981) stated “the most profound knowledge can be gained only by the deepest intersubjectivity among researchers and that which they are researching” (p. 24). Triangulation across multiple data sources helps reduce biases and strengthen research. Triangulation checks for consistency across different data sources to look for similar results (Patton, 2015). This study used interviews, observations, and a review of artifacts to check for consistency and improve the internal reliability of the data. Further, reliability was increased by providing participants with their interview transcripts to review the data for accuracy.

Interrater Reliability

Interrater reliability referred to having multiple researchers evaluate a characteristic and form the same conclusion (Lombard, Synder-Duch, & Bracken, 2004). The researcher was an instrument of the study, possibly causing bias; therefore, a peer researcher was used to check the initial coding efforts and interpretation to ensure accuracy of themes. Patton noted that “interrater reliability allows multiple researchers analyzing the same data to deliberate on data trends, share perceptions, and consider what emerges from their different perspectives” (Patton, 2015, p. 667).

Data Collection

A description of the study, along with an interview protocol (Appendix A), informed consent form (Appendix B), and the research participant’s bill of rights (Appendix C) were submitted to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for approval. The application and attachments were reviewed and approved prior to any data collection.
Upon approval from the BUIRB, potential participants were contacted via the agency administrative staff where the intent, purpose, benefits, and risks were revealed. A cover letter was sent to potential participants explaining the purpose of the study and requesting participation. The consent form explained the extent to which the information gathered from the interviews would be used for research while maintaining the confidentiality of the participants. Data were collected through recorded interviews, in which participants were emailed the questions prior to the interview. Participants were sent email reminders prior to the agreed upon interview date.

In most cases, this information was discussed with the scheduling secretary. Initial questions about the study were answered and each agency representative was asked the feasibility of participating. If an agency chose to participate, a tentative appointment was scheduled with the police chief or sheriff. Each participant was asked to reserve approximately 45-60 minutes for the interview. Safety of gathered information was guided by procedures set forth by the BUIRB. All audio recordings and notes were filed in a locked cabinet, and a passcode protected computer was used to store and analyze the data. Following the review of transcripts, data were coded for themes using coding software. After the study, all data were destroyed per the requirements of the informed consent form (Appendix B).

**Types of Data**

The primary form of data collection for this study was interview questions, which all the peer researchers used. Observations and review of artifacts were also used to gain additional insight about the leaders’ behavior in using the conversational elements.
**Interviews.** The intent of the interview questions was to allow the leaders to offer their opinions relating to each research sub-question. To ensure consistency in the thematic research process, the same set of interview questions were asked of participants (Appendix A). “At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals’ stories because they are of worth” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Respondents were asked a series of semi-structured questions that guided the conversation through the different elements. Interviews were conducted in a conversational style where both the interviewer and respondent were involved in the conversation (Harrell & Bradley (2009); Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to collect in-depth information about the topics to be analyzed.

Qualitative studies allowed researchers to gauge participant perceptions (Seidman, 2006). The researcher was also able to ask the set of pre-scripted probing questions to clarify and add depth to statements in previous questions. Sometimes unclear answers made an interviewer unsure of participant meanings, leaving voids in collected data (Seidman, 2006). The researcher focused on the scripted questions, probing as needed for clarity or additional detail. Prior to the formal questions, each participant was asked basic questions about his or her work history including: current position, years in position, age, and total number of years in the profession. The formal interview portion consisted of a primary open-ended question, followed by an open-ended probing question. Each question centered around a specific behavior of conversational leadership (Appendix A).

**Observations.** Observing what people did and how they did it were important in conducting comprehensive studies (Patton, 2015). Equally important was what
researchers did not observe, which could add valuable insight (Patton, 2015). Observations were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the participants and potentially provide additional information to compliment coded data. Twenty observations were gathered to include interviews, attendance at community events, swearing in ceremony and press conferences.

**Artifacts.** In qualitative studies, fieldwork documented deep understandings about organizational practices (Patton, 2015). Artifacts could be incorporated into fieldwork to strengthen the study. The law enforcement organizations provided many documents, such as strategic plans, mission and vision statements, organizational pamphlets, archived meeting minutes, newsletters, and press releases, in addition to their websites and social media sites.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Different types of data collection methods were used each with a different set of collection procedures. The same procedures for interviews, observations, and artifact review were used for each municipal police chief and sheriff who participated in the study.

**Interview data collection.** Face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant. Each potential participant was emailed a packet of information pertaining to the study and the researcher followed up with a telephone call to further explain the purpose of the study and answer general questions. Those who agreed to participate in the study were scheduled for an interview.

The scheduled interviews were based on availability of the participants in a setting agreeable to them. All the interviews were held at a facility affiliated with the law
enforcement agency, so artifacts could be obtained and observations made. Each interview was scheduled for 45-60 minutes and were based on participant availability. Scheduling flexibility was a key factor because each participant was the head of his or her respective law enforcement agency and the likeliness of pressing emergencies could impact scheduled interviews. Prior to the interview, each participant read and signed the informed consent form (Appendix B). All interviews were recorded and assigned a unique identifier to protect the participant’s confidentiality.

Each participant responded to the same questions developed by the thematic team (Appendix A). The questions focused on the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Probing questions were asked to add more depth to the discussion about behaviors. The conversations were recorded and notes were taken by the researcher. Audio recordings were later transcribed to be used during the coding phase for analyzing emerging themes.

**Observation data collection.** Patton (2015) explains how unobtrusive measures and observations are those made without the knowledge of people being observed and without affecting what is observed. Participants were observed during the interviews and in work settings where conversational leadership behaviors could be practiced. This ranged from public meetings, staff meetings, public events, media press conferences, and personal conversations. The observation notes were combined with recorded interviews to be coded and analyzed for themes.

**Artifact data collection.** The information gleaned from artifacts coupled with stories from the interviews created a rich narrative of the data and increased the reliability of the data (Patton, 2015). Artifacts supporting the interviews and observations were
collected either from the participant, their agency, internet searches, or Public Records Act searches. Examples included articles, bulletins, brochures, community meeting agendas, and mission and vision statements. The artifacts were linked to the agencies unique identifier and included in the coding process.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved organizing each interview for in-depth study and comparison, much like case study analysis (Patton, 2015). As a phenomenological study, each interview was like a case that needed to be analyzed. This was the most appropriate analysis method for this phenomenological study because it focused on the individual leadership behaviors of municipal police chiefs and sheriffs.

Data Coding Process

Qualitative researchers organize data to recognize themes. Because of the emphasis on finding shared meaning, researchers must be careful in creating codes that form the basis for descriptions and meaning (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher analyzed the collected data, which included interviews, field notes, and artifacts. After the interviews were recorded, they were transcribed and formatted for coding. Transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo qualitative data coding software to organize, code, analyze, and identify common themes. The researcher evaluated the number of responses and frequency of responses for the identified themes.

Analysis

Data coding for this study involved two primary steps. First, codes were scanned for themes, which emphasized the four conversational leadership behaviors and the frequencies associated with them. Second, codes were scanned for frequency of codes.
NVivo helped identify the frequency of the codes, which was indicative of emerging themes. Codes, themes, and frequencies were used to further explain how municipal police chiefs and sheriffs used conversational leadership behaviors to lead and inspire personnel in their respective agencies. One the researcher coded the data, a peer researcher coded 10% of the data with an 80%, which showed a high level of intercoder reliability.

**Limitations**

Researchers must be transparent about limitations so readers can make opinions about the degree to which studies may be compromised or biased (Roberts, 2010). Based on the thematic nature this study, and other peer researchers using the same methodology, the validity of the findings were strongly supported. This study was limited by the sample size, information discrepancy, time, geography, and the instrument used by the researcher.

This study was limited to municipal police chiefs and sheriffs to the six southern California counties within a 150-mile radius of Los Angeles. Ten participants were chosen from a larger list of agencies. The wide array of issues facing law enforcement, many of which vary depending on geographical area, may drastically vary from the larger group. Thus, the findings may not be representative of the larger population. Additionally, many aspects of law enforcement remain partially confidential. Based on this, participants may have been skeptical about being forthright with information, especially when it required telling a story about an incident. As such, the study was limited to the information willing to be shared by the participants.
Time

In an ideal situation with an unlimited time schedule and unlimited resources, researchers would be more comfortable with research outcomes (Patton, 2015). However, this was not the case with this study. The compressed research study timeframe was a limitation. Data collection could not begin until BUIRB approval. This meant data collected could not start until January, limiting the time available for data collection. Having more time to conduct interviews and gather artifacts would have allowed the researcher to obtain more data. More participants would have produced a broader view and allow for stronger themes to emerge.

Researcher as Instrument of the Study

In a phenomenological study, the researcher becomes an instrument of the study (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). “The researcher led the inquiry and thought behind the study. It would be ill-conceived to think the researchers’ experiences, professional knowledge, and intellect did not contribute to the quality of the study” (Piantanida & Garman, 1999, p. 24). However, this also introduced bias. The researcher of this study was a career law enforcement officer with supervisory experience, having worked on a multitude of executive level projects where duties included collaborating with senior law enforcement officials.

Researcher bias was mitigated by recording and transcribing the interviews, and giving the transcribed copies to the participants for accuracy and to ensure interviews captured what the participant wanted to convey. When observing participants at community meetings or public engagements, the researcher acted as a non-participant
observer to collect data on conversational leadership behaviors. This mitigated the potential of the researcher influencing participant actions.

**Sample Size**

A combination of 10 exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs were interviewed for this study. The team of 12 peer researchers selected the sample size. Emails and discussions regarding participant schedules and availability, and the need to obtain enough data were factors in determining the selected sample size. The small sample size limited the generalizability of the findings.

**Geography**

California has over 500 law enforcement, including state, county, and municipal police agencies; college and university police; special district agencies; and school district police departments (Reaves, 2011). The geographical location extended to six southern California counties within a 150-mile radius of Los Angeles. The vast jurisdictional areas and associated transportation requirements caused scheduling concerns. This limited the researcher to scheduling meetings, observations, and artifact collection to areas feasible for the researcher, which limited the potential scope of the study.

**Summary**

Chapter III explained the qualitative study approach used in this phenomenological study. The data collected were used to describe the behaviors exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversation. This chapter identified the purpose statement, research questions, data collection methods, and data analysis. The twelve peer researchers could provide
credible information how exemplary leaders used intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality to create change in their organizations. Chapter IV reviews the findings of the collected data and discuss outcomes in more depth.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study allowed the lives of the participants to be explored to describe behaviors that exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversations using the four elements of conversational leadership as depicted by Groysberg and Slind (2012): intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. In this chapter, the purpose and research questions for this study are restated, along with a summary of the research methods and data collection procedures. This chapter also describes the population, sample, target sample, and demographic data. Next, an analysis of the data is presented, followed by a summary of the chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the behaviors exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practice to lead their organizations through conversations using the Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality?
Sub Questions

1. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organization through the conversation element of intimacy?
2. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organization through the conversation element of interactivity?
3. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organization through the conversation element of inclusion?
4. How do exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organization through the conversation element of intentionality?

Population

This study’s population was the equivalent to a police chief or sheriff in the over 500 police agencies in southern California. This number includes federal, state, county, college and university, school, special district, and municipal law enforcement agencies (Reaves, 2011). The population was narrowed to focus on the 87 municipal police chiefs and county sheriffs working in law enforcement organizations with at least 50 sworn peace officers in southern California who fit the criteria of exemplary leaders. Each agency had to be within 150 miles of Los Angeles, which included agencies in the counties of Los Angeles, Ventura, San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and San Diego.

Sample

The target population of 87 needed to be narrowed to a sample of 10. To identify exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs, the California Police Chief’s Association (CPCA) and California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) were contacted to identify police chiefs and sheriffs from the list of 87 prospective
participants who met the exemplar criteria. Staff from both CPCA and POST confirmed all 87 police chiefs and sheriffs on the list fit the research guidelines and met at least 4 of the 6 criteria for exemplary leaders. Both agencies provided personnel who would be ideal for this study. Based on conversations with their representatives, a list of 20 prospective subjects was developed and subsequently contacted. The first 10 participants who agreed to participate in the study were selected and interviews were scheduled.

**Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

A phenomenological research design was used in this study. Interviews were conducted with 10 southern California municipal police chiefs and sheriffs to gain insight on their lived experiences related to the four elements of conversational leadership. The primary data collection was anecdotal responses to scripted interview questions. Interview responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Nine separate interviews were conducted with participants who were active police chiefs and sheriffs. One interview was conducted with an assistant police chief who previously served as a police chief at another southern California municipal police department. Eight of the 10 interviews were face-to-face and two were conducted via phone. The interviews lasted between 20 and 84 minutes with an average interview time of 40 minutes.

In-depth interviews were the main source of data, but a multifaceted approach allowed the researcher to triangulate the interview data with artifacts and observations. A total of 11 observations were conducted in both private and public settings, which involved interactions of the participants between leadership and agency executive staff, leadership and community groups, leadership and employees, media interviews, and personal interview comments.
Fifteen artifacts were collected from either the study participants or gathered from various sources. Artifacts included information provided by the participant or available of websites, such as articles, videos, bulletins, brochures, community meeting agendas, core values, mission and vision statements, and strategic plans. Artifacts were coded and frequencies were tallied.

**Study Participant Demographic Data**

No person was mentioned by name or agency, but rather assigned a number to identify the agency discussed. Every study participant exceeded the peer researcher team’s definition of an exemplary leader as depicted in Table 1. All participants had either written articles or presented at conferences, and were recognized by their peers as exemplary. Each were members of law enforcement professional organizations.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Participant</th>
<th>Successful Relationship with Followers</th>
<th>Lead a Successful Organization</th>
<th>Minimum 5 Years in the Profession</th>
<th>Articles, Papers, or Presentations</th>
<th>Recognition by Peers</th>
<th>Membership in a Professional Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants were a diverse group. The age range of participants was 45-65. Two females were represented as well as a myriad of nationalities. Participants averaged 35.2 years of experience and 7.3 years as police chief or sheriff. As shown in Table 2,
the highest education level was a doctorate degree, with seven having Master’s degrees, one of whom was pursuing s doctorate, and two holding bachelor degrees.

Table 2

*Study Participant Demographic Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Participant</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years in Profession</th>
<th>Years as agency head</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>45-65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

Findings in Chapter IV were obtained from content provided by each exemplary police chief and sheriff. The research findings captured their lived experiences as depicted during interviews related to the four elements of conversational leadership. The findings are reported based on the relationship to both the central research question and sub-questions.

**Research Question and Sub Question Results**

The coding process identified 20 themes that were references 574 times across the data sources. Figure 3 illustrates how many themes emerged in each of the four conversational leadership elements. Intimacy and intentionality had four themes each and interactivity and inclusion had six theme each.
Figure 3. Frequency of themes in each element.

The number of frequencies per theme were calculated in addition to the 20 themes. Using NVivo, frequencies were calculated using the transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts. The frequencies and percentages were fairly equal across the four elements. Intimacy only had four themes, but the highest number of references with 160, which represented 28% of the data. Interactivity had six themes and 159 references, accounting for 27% of the data. Inclusion had six themes with 136 references, which was 24% of the data. Lastly, intentionality had four themes and the fewest references with 119, representing 21% of the data. Intimacy and interactivity accounted for 55% of the data (Figure 4).
Research Sub-Question 1 – Intimacy

The thematic research team defined intimacy as the closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Schwarz, 2011). The intimacy element showed four themes and was referenced 160 times by study participants. Table 3 shows the four intimacy themes.

Table 3

Intimacy Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview Sources</th>
<th>Observation Sources</th>
<th>Artifact Sources</th>
<th>Total Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forming comfortable conversation environments</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in authentic and honest conversations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using stories to build trust and vulnerability</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to build intimate conversations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.
**Forming comfortable conversation environments.** This theme was referenced 72 times across 12 sources, which represented 45% of coded content from the element of intimacy. Gibson (2008) highlighted how uncomfortable conversations changed people’s perspectives on subjects and improved understanding of others’ opinions. Leaders must understand that given a comfortable environment, people share intimate details about themselves and their lives. Intimacy was created in many ways; however, disclosure of personal information, feelings, and opinions were key components in the expression of intimacy (Gibson, 2008). Creating conversational space allowed people to share candid caring opinions for organizational betterment (Crowley, 2011; Glaser, 2014). Effective leaders understood increasing conversational intimacy and shifting away from impersonal internal communication improved employee engagement (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Intimate conversations encompassed more than sending and receiving messages and required a change in leader perspective (Zeldin, 2000).

All 10 police chiefs and sheriffs commented on this theme. Common messaging under this theme related to creating informal and casual conversations, choosing words to dictate conversations, being authentic, practicing humbleness and humility, and linking mutual values when conversing with internal stakeholders. One participant noted:

I do my best to learn all my employees by first name and am fortunate enough to work for an agency small enough where that is possible.

Connectivity, trust, and comfort come from developing relationships about their families and personal lives.

Another comment that illustrated developing comfortable environments and instilling trust among staff was:
You are not going to know everybody or remember their names. However, you can always be pleasant and show that you care about them. In addition to your personal interactions, you can communicate this through written documents. Obviously face-to-face is more effective, but we have to think broader. It is also important your staff does this because they represent you.

Another participant talked about letting people get to know him as a person, not a rank. He added that, “I was not always the person in charge and remembering that shows concern and humility for people working in law enforcement.” One respondent commented on linking personal values to informal conversations as a means of mutual understanding, sharing:

   Essentially, by creating these informal methods of communication I have started to build a relationship individually with the people that work with me. In turn, this allows them to understand me, my value systems, my understanding of what is important, and how it is similar to theirs.

Lastly participants commented about the value of creating comfortable conversational environments when working in tense situations and how unexpected environments created comfort. One interviewee stated:

   I learned the value of my ability to create a less tense environment by just walking around and having non-work-related conversation about family, and topics of mutual interest. I would walk around for hours getting to know as many people as I could by name. That paid huge dividends in trust and ultimately, I think in reducing some of our high-risk incidents.
Another participant commented, “conversation works really well when people are
more relaxed. It’s amazing what you accomplish with the classic watercooler
conversation.” Many of the other comments were directed at the familiarity gained with
one-on-one or small group conversations. Another participated reflected:

I find that the most effective conversations are ones where you have the
intimacy because you’re talking one on one. You are talking to a small
group and also speaking to people as you would when you’re not working.
And one of the fundamental concepts in this intimacy concept is
connectivity to people. Essentially, people want to be led by people they
feel connected to and trust.

In an observation at a community meeting attended by various law enforcement
agencies, one leader explained that developing a comfortable relationship built on trust
and transparency equated to effectiveness. To provide excellent service to the
community, law enforcement must build a safe space for communities and develop
relationships that create comfort. During another coded observation, a police chief
walked around to each section of his building talking to virtually everyone he passed.
Most of the conversations did not relate to work situations, but rather mutual subjects of
interest such as family, fitness, and the holiday season. A core value statement was
collected from an agency that discussed the openness the agency strived to achieve. This
artifact aligned with creating a comfortable environment.

Engaging in authentic and honest conversation. This theme was referenced 34
times in 9 different sources, representing 21.2% of coded content related to the intimacy
element. Conversational intimacy provided leaders requisite skills to foster change and
stakeholder agreement within organizational changes (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). When trust was built through intimate and honest conversations, employees became engaged, which led to increased commitment (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013).

Nine participants discussed how authentic and honest conversations build trust. Major themes discussed in the comments were speaking to people as a friend; meeting in small, informal groups; opening-up to others; staying honest; being sincere; and taking the time to listen. One respondent mentioned “I think people appreciate the realness of a person to include supervisors, and respect them more for that.” Aligning with this comment, another added:

Authentic conversations and honest listening are what we should be doing daily in every conversation, with people at all levels. We engage with people whether it is work, or our private lives. People want somebody that is real does not come across to polished or is scripted. They want somebody that will tell you what they think or will support you. If they do not, they can tell you why even if it is not what you want to hear.

Another similar comment about trust and authenticity included:
With communication, you need to invest to make sure that what you wanted to communicate is delivered and received in the way you intended. As it relates to being authentic, the conversation must be respectful and meaningful to the person you are trying to communicate with.

Authentic and honest conversations built trust among the staff. In turn, this resulted in a more positive culture and working environment for all the staff.
Using stories to build trust and vulnerability. This theme was referenced 30 times from 11 different sources, which equated to 18.7% of the coded content under the element of intimacy. Under the new model of organizational conversation, leaders valued the personal stories and connections made with employees. This enabled a bottom up conversational culture where employees were heard and employers listened (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Conversational leaders understood the connection between words and the stories they told, and how they could aid in building relationships (Glaser, 2014). Each participant shared stories they used as teachable moments for personnel in their organizations, and realize personal stories were impactful toward creating connections with employees.

One participant shared a story about always being willing to learn. The participant assumed command of an agency after an almost 30-year career in another larger agency. When driving home the first day, the participant was listening to the agency’s police radio. As the participant listened to the radio traffic, calls being broadcasted, and talk amongst personnel, the realization set in that this agency used different codes than he was accustomed to hearing. This was a humbling experience, and despite being the chief, made him realize it was back to being a “rookie cop” again with much to learn. The participant stated “it illustrates that we all have a lot to learn, and every day is an opportunity to learn more. You never get to a point where you know everything, particularly in today’s complex, ever-changing environment.” Another participant explained how his passion equated to effective storytelling, saying:

I wear my emotions on my sleeve, so it’s not unusual for me to talk about personal or emotional impacts either from the job or my personal life and
how they affect me. I am trying to draw a correlation about being conscientious of what is going on around us and the impact it may have in our organization and the community we serve. My vulnerability shows my compassion and makes me more human.

Lastly a participant spoke about use of failures and accepting responsibility, which showed vulnerability to form connections with employees. This person said:

I think some leaders believe that you have to be perfect. However, you have to be seen as vulnerable and that you have made mistakes. I think when you show that you are vulnerable, people are more comfortable with you. They see you as a real person. I like to share this story at times about my career journey. The first time I took a lieutenant’s exam, I didn’t pass because of lack of preparation. After the results were published, I remember my Captain expressing his disappointment in me. I felt bad for a few days, but took responsibility for what I did not do, which was to prepare. So, I like to share stories where I have failed at something, but in the frame of accepting responsibility and learning from it. Everyone has failures, but how you respond to those failures is key to being successful. If you are not failing you are not trying.

In an observation, one participant was speaking to a group of supervisors about his humble upbringings and how his family scarified so he could enjoy a better life. During this conversation, he stressed that his values were based on his moral code and upbringing, and leaders should never forget that or the nobility in policing. This story showed his vulnerability, which was connected to teachable moments for a key group of
personnel. Storytelling made personal connections, which aligned with the intimacy element of conversational leadership.

**Listening to build intimate conversations.** This theme was referenced 24 times across 9 sources and represented 15% of content coded under the element of intimacy. This theme produced the fewest frequencies under the intimacy element. Organizational conversation required leaders to reduce institutional distance that separated key personnel from employees. Cultivating listening skills and learning to personal and authentic conversations were important factors to bridge organizational gaps (Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Five (50%) participants mentioned there was more value to intently listening to what others said, which was often overlooked because it was difficult as the head of an organization not to interject. It was considered a skill that took time to perfect. Four participants mentioned listening was a key component to gaining information to make key decisions, especially when needing to rely on personnel who performed tasks daily. On the topic of intently listening to gain trust, one participant stated:

Once you speak, it sounds like your mind is made up and this is your preference. My job is to listen attentively to people gathering information, take notes, and ask probing questions. After I have an appropriate amount of information, I can suggest ideas and make decisions with my command staff. When I was contemplating changing patrol schedules, I took everyone’s input to heart. I met with as many internal stakeholders and listened to their concerns. It took me almost two and a half years to make
the change, but I had built up momentum during that time as someone they could trust.

**Research Sub-Question 2 – Interactivity**

The thematic research team defined interactivity as the bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas; a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind; Hurley, Brown, 2009). This element produced six themes and was referenced 159 times by the 10 study participants. Table 4 shows the six interactivity themes.

Table 4

*Interactivity Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview Sources</th>
<th>Observation Sources</th>
<th>Artifact Sources</th>
<th>Total Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>46</td>
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<td>Engaging members in two-way dialogue</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>Encouraging creative and non-judgmental conversations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accepting risk-taking in difficult situations</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional tools used for conversation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Document successes of using institutional conversational tools</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

**Creating environments for open dialogue.** This theme was referenced 46 times from 10 sources representing 28.9% of the coded content under the element of interactivity. This was the most referenced theme among the four conversational leadership elements, noted by nine participants (90%) and one observation. More meaningful exchanges were obtained when stakeholders connected to the conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Creating suitable work environments resulted from how
people viewed their job tasks and the comfort levels among each other (Mautz, 2015). Meaningful conversations were attained when involved personnel had equal input into the messaging (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

Common topics related to creating an environment for open dialogue included using sincerity and mindfulness, choosing words carefully, sharing common interests, acting with warmthness, having a reputation of valuing input, and being transparent. One participant spoke about how a reputation of valuing input at all levels made it easier for employees to discuss the harder issues. This agency regularly solicited input from employees on a variety of subjects such as health and safety, discipline, and even the promotional process. This participant said some of the organization’s best ideas came forward because they created a culture of openness. Additionally, they published notes from their weekly command staff meeting and encouraged supervisors to openly discuss the subject matter.

A second respondent alluded to the humanistic nature of people. People wanted to be recognized and praised for a job well done. This leader regularly walked around in casual clothes just telling employees he valued what they did and how proud he was of the organization. The different floors in the building regularly had theme days to lighten the work environment. Other supervisors were encouraged to use creative ideas to motivate staff and lessen the stressful environment. This in turn created a more mindful, close knit organization.

Another participant spoke about the “inverted tray” theory and felt the role of the agency head was to serve the people who performed the work. In that, accepting people made mistakes, as long as they were made with good intentions was part of the maturing
process of a police chief or sheriff. Constantly, relaying that to personnel in the organization through various means helped establish a comfortable environment where difficult topics could be discussed. During an artifact observation of a participant making a video statement, it was mentioned the stage must be set early by reaffirming the leader’s role was not to dictate, but to show through actions the employee’s best interests were taken to heart. The tone of the comments aligned with creating an atmosphere of open dialogue.

**Engaging members in two-way dialogue.** This theme was referenced 31 times in 11 sources, which represents 19.4% of the coded content under interactivity. Effective leaders had interactive dialogue with employees. The process of interactive communication allowed employees to be a part of the organizational vision and purpose. Engaged and meaningful conversations using appropriate communication mediums equated to employee comfort with organizational messaging and support of interactive conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Each of the 10 participants commented on the significance of engaging members in two-way dialogue, and it was also noted in one artifact. The police chiefs and sheriffs expressed similar themes relating to engagement, such as using commonality to illicit conversation, engaging in meaningful personal interactions, leading open and non-biased discussions, using different conversational mediums, increasing levels of comfort, and valuing understood. In an observation of a conversation with an employee about creating a positive experience for community members, one respondent explained his perception of being understood versus having an understanding. Having an understanding in a policing sense alluded to the why engaging employees was critical and went with being
mindful and conscious in the workplace. This comment aligned with the interactivity theme. One participant shared a comment about using common themes to stimulate conversation:

One thing that is very important to me is family and I know this resonates in a lot of employees. I will often initiate a conversation with people, not necessarily about work issues but something I might know about them or their family, such as how is your daughter doing in college or if they had a sick spouse or parent. It is very useful to start conversations and an easy way to lead to difficult topics. However, you have to come from a place of sincerity.

Another respondent explained how in a large organization, engagement presented challenges that had to be worked through:

I try to do the best I can to make site visits to the various commands throughout my jurisdiction. Honestly, it is very tough and I get spread thin. I don’t get out as much as I would like to, but when I do, I talk to people who are doing the job. People who are not on the schedule, people who I can catch in the hallway, shake their hand and ask how their lives or the job is going. My standard is to ask, “what can we do to make your job better, to get you to be successful in this at times hectic environment.” I get better information from these unrehearsed or unscheduled conversations that the planned, rehearsed ones. The people that I have encountered during these sometimes-awkward conversations really want to be heard and their opinions voiced to key stakeholders.
Managing critical incidents was a reality in policing, requiring interactive dialogue to solve problems. Comments from a respondent about a critical incident included using dialogue to address the issue:

*We went through a crisis where we had to recapture a criminal, which caused an extended amount of negative media attention. After that, we had to have serious two-way dialogue about some problematic areas. We had a lot of critical discussions where input was solicited from a lot of people. Not just leaders, but custody personnel, investigators, and maintenance staff who knew some of the issues regarding the condition of our aging jails. It was truly a time to set our egos aside to find answers and prevent further occurrences from happening.*

Lastly, another participant talked about the benefit of engaging members in conversation by stating, “you know it’s an exchange of information, kind of a conversation. It’s not me dictating because you never win and you do not want that. Once you dictate, then you have lost because employees feel they have no input.”

**Encouraging creative and non-judgmental conversations.** This theme was referenced 28 times in 12 sources representing 17.6% of coded content under the element of interactivity. All participants commented on this theme and it was evident in one observation and one artifact. Creative and meaningful conversations were attained when internal stakeholders felt they had a voice in influencing organizational decisions (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Effective conversational leaders built comfort levels with employees to make them feel they had a voice and were heard (Brown & Hurley, 2009; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).
All participants discussed how important open discussions were to encouraging creativity and how they should be done at all organizational levels. One respondent commented on how creative thinking could raise a person’s sense of organizational commitment. “I like to let employees be heard and encourage this at all organizational levels. Non-judgmental feedback challenges me. It gives me an opportunity to share a deeper understanding of what I am trying to accomplish.” Another commented on how dissension could be a positive attribute to develop creativity, noting:

Despite the politics and personalities, dissension, and challenging concepts in a healthy way where people don’t feel like they are attacked is healthy for my organization. I do not want people to tell me what they think I want to hear. It is a good way for us to objectively look at topics and openly discuss them. At all meetings, and at all levels, interactive dialogue should be the norm.

Another participant said:

I want to hear what you have to say because it helps me make better decisions. We try to set an atmosphere where it is okay to talk about things even if we happen to disagree. My command staff meetings are very open and we even share the highlights of these meeting with the rest of the organization.

During a media interview observation, the participant mentioned believing all employees were decisionmakers. Organizational success was partly attributed to trusting employees, which gave them confidence to develop new programs and ideas without fear. A mission statement collected stated, “we also endeavor to develop and maintain
relationships through open and candid dialogue with a variety of community leaders and organizations.” This statement aligned with the theme of encouraging creativity and non-judgmental conversations.

**Accepting risk-taking in difficult situations.** This theme was referenced 23 times in 8 sources, which represented 14.4% of coded content under the element of interactivity. Behavior was often associated with the actions of other people and employees could often kept their thoughts to themselves when they felt ill-informed, even when they had good ideas (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). Risk taking in law enforcement is an inevitable based on the nature of police work. While risk can involve the potential for huge benefits, loss, or injury the management of risk is vital. It is important that the mitigation of risk requires collective buy-in and active participation from all involved employees (Gaines & Worrall, 2012).

General comments under this theme discussed the repercussions of activities in law enforcement that had huge liability effects causing public law enforcement sentiment to drop. It was agreed law enforcement was a high-risk environment, one where mistakes were inevitable. A trend in the comments was not to overreact when mistakes were made.

Comments included being candid about perceived mistakes, trusting in employees when outside entities felt mistakes were made, and engaging in difficult conversations because of mistakes. One participant said “I believe in any healthy meeting, but it has to be done in an environment of mutual trust. We are going to make mistakes, but how we deal with mistakes is the test of how we are as leaders.” Another comment that exemplified this line of reasoning was:
As long as the failure was surrounded by good intentions, and it was to better our level of service or to help our employees, it is okay. Once people realize that I think they are more apt to be open to talk about things, and move forward with new ideas.

In an artifact observation of a videotaped departmental message, one participant talked about the unpredictability of significant events and how these challenged law enforcement and leaders within the organization. Also discussed was the importance of being steadfast in one’s convictions and maintaining a culture of transparency.

**Using institutional conversation tools/Documenting the success of using institutional conversational tools.** The institutional tools for conversation theme was referenced 19 times in 13 sources and represented 11.9 % of coded content in the element of interactivity. Similarly, documenting the success of using institutional conversational tools was referenced 12 times from 6 total sources representing 7.5% of coded content in the element of intimacy. These themes had the lowest frequencies, representing only 16% of themes under the conversational element of interactivity, but were still important to note. Technological advances changed how employees interacted with each other.

Emails, virtual meetings, and various forms of social media connected employees (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In today’s working environment, leaders need to take advantage of technological tools to support interactive, meaningful conversations (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Common topics discussed under the institutional tools for conversation were use of social media, internal intranet sites, department newsletters, white boards, and surveys of leadership assessments. One participant said Facebook and Twitter were used
extensively for external messaging. For internal online messaging, they used an
electronic crime blotter. Employees deemed to need extra assistance with
communication or job-related issues were offered the services of a life coach. Another
respondent said he attended unit level briefings, held internal public forums annually, and
administered departmental surveys to assess officer satisfaction. A third respondent said
the agency had an internal weekly newsletter distributed electronically. Significant
events occurring within the department as well as highlighting the commendable actions
by employees were published.

Five observations of artifacts were made showing alignment with the use of
institutional tools for conversation. Five of the agencies’ social media sites were viewed
to ascertain the frequency and use of their various sites. Each agency used these sites for
internal and external communication. An agency’s strategic communications plan was
also reviewed, which explained how to incorporate the agency vision as part of the
messaging strategy.

Regarding documenting success using institutional tools, the common themes that
emerged were using available tools to document successes, developing personnel to use
social media for messaging, increasing collaboration among internal stakeholders, and
taking responsibility to use available resources to help employees better communicate.
One respondent commented:

Simply understanding that employees are wired differently and
communicate differently is a huge part of understanding how you utilize
resources to help them. Leaders need to exercise a degree of emotional
intelligence in dealing with employees to find appropriate resources. Just the collaboration alone trying to help employees is a success.

Coincidentally, some participants had less favorable comments about the use of social media and nontraditional communication tools. One commented about the ability to relay information quickly to a broader audience, but some of the conversation mediums limited the amount of characters to relay messages. Another talked about not expanding his personal communication channels beyond phone calls, emails, meetings, site visits, or face-to-face conversations out of habit. However one observation of a conversation regarding an agency reaching a record number of social media followers was noted.

**Research sub-Question 3 – Inclusion**

The thematic research team defined inclusion as the commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2009). During the coding process, the conversational leadership element of inclusion produced 6 themes and was referenced 136 times by 10 study participants. Table 5 shows the six inclusion themes.
Table 5

Inclusion Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview Sources</th>
<th>Observation Sources</th>
<th>Artifact Sources</th>
<th>Total Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>Development of collaborative shared strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Important organizational messages</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Methods to measure stakeholder contributions</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Effective strategies for idea sharing. This theme was referenced 30 times in 10 sources and represented 22% of coded content in the element of inclusion. This theme tied for the highest frequency with empowered stakeholders. Combined, they represented 44% of the references under this theme. Unlike the traditional top-down, command-and-control model, to foster a culture of sharing ideas as the norm, employees must be invited to share and shape the organization’s goals and vision (Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Herrington & Andrew, 2015). Nine participants shared content for this theme. Common topics included engaging small groups versus larger groups; using commonality to create personal connections; using resources such as blogs, newsletters, committees, departmental calendars, and anonymous mailboxes; holding meetings at various levels; and being visible and approachable. One respondent stated:

From our perspective, it is always driven by constant communication and engaging internal stakeholders at all levels. In this organization, we have particularly paid interest to our professional staff because much of law
enforcement is geared toward the sworn side law enforcement. Our professional staff add a value and dimension that we do not always take fully take advantage of.

Another participant made similar comments about being mindful of the different generations of employees. The participant stated:

We use a blog for our crime suppression efforts, but are mindful of employee input, particularly the next generation who enjoy collaboration and being part of problem-solving. We like to form committees to help discuss concerns and encourage employees to take on ancillary duty assignments in different positions. Included in our various committees are employees that make up our professional staff. On a training aspect, part of our various committees is our training committee, which publishes a training calendar forecasting our 18-month to 2-year training plan.

Lastly, another participant talked about cross-sectional meetings to share ideas and report back to command staff as an effective idea-sharing strategy. In this example, the organization had an annual all-hands meeting where strategic goals were discussed. The participant stated:

We have an all-hands meeting where different employee groups engage as peers and then relay their messages to organizational leaders. After talking points are developed within groups, a spokesperson is chosen who relays their groups outcomes. This approach allows them to really communicate their ideas and feel like active contributors.
During a staff meeting observation, one participant discussed soliciting input from union groups. In large organizations, it was difficult to get the pulse of the organization. “However, establishing open dialogue with union groups and regularly meeting with them gives you an idea about organizational culture.” The participant also noted that regular lunches were calendared with union groups to solicit input. “The relationship has progressed so much because of continual dialogue that sometimes we do not even discuss work related concerns.”

**Empowered stakeholders.** This theme was referenced 30 times in 10 sources and represented 22% of coded content in the element of inclusion. All 10 study participants discussed empowering employees. Establishing meaningful connections with employees fostered teamwork, which was a catalyst for empowering stakeholders, and increased engagement and innovation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). An energized work culture was essential for developing meaning, fulfillment, and sustained work performance (Randel, 2017). Each participant commented on their ideas to empower employees. Common themes discussed were use of policies and procedures to create guidelines for empowerment, constant messaging and defining employee roles, celebration of successes and recognition, assignment of meaningful work, and regularly challenging employees. One participant said:

I challenge people about our reputation and the role we play in people’s lives…When you go to training and are around other police officers, or with your families, what stories are you telling? Are you telling your circle the great things you have accomplished or negative stories? We work in a unique environment and have the opportunity to set the stage for
world visitors to form an opinion about Los Angeles. It is all about pride
and nobility that should empower people to do more.

Another participant commented on empowerment by creating a culture where
everyone was considered a leader; thus, they were empowered to make critical decisions.
The participant stated they relayed this message in many settings at different levels:

Everybody in this organization contributes to the public safety mission in
one way or another. I emphasize how important their job is to getting that
mission done and how buy-in, fresh ideas, and your empowered to make
decisions for the good of our mission. It is critical you do that because I
cannot possibly make all the decisions. This has led to a multitude of
successful programs or projects being started.

Lastly, another participant discussed how empowerment started once leadership
roles were assumed. In this case, the participant was recently selected to serve as this
agency’s lead and noted:

I had to develop a team of employees who understood my vision,
understood my communication style and the messages. I wanted to
convey trust and confidence in their abilities to serve the public. Once this
message was part of the culture of our organization, it became easier to
empower personnel of all ranks to be creative. Our social media strategies
are a prime reflection of that. Select personnel are empowered and
expected to convey the messages I want. I personally do not post, but we
went from the worse agency in my surrounding area to one of the best.
Inclusion to develop committed employees. This theme was referenced 27 times by 8 sources and represented 19.8% of coded content under the element of inclusion. Including employees allowed them to share ideas, strengths, weaknesses, emotions, and biases. The more they were included, the deeper the conversations got, building continual trust and commitment (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Randel, 2017; Weber, 2013). Inclusive work environments developed employees to add more value to organizational goals (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Participants explained how establishing guidelines or a roadmap to success allowed employees to voice constructive criticism and focus the comments on meaningful information. Comments ranged from recognizing employees, looking for different areas where employees can contribute, and letting internal stakeholders know the long-, intermediate-, and short-range goals of the organization. One interviewee stated:

When I created my strategic plan, I wanted it to be simple. I want employees to arrive at the destination before I get there and collectively know we have a road map to success in this agency. Employees can take positions of increased responsibility, get promoted, voice concerns, but there is a process that we share and want employees to commit to. I keep it succinct and update it when necessary. It is published, parts of it made visible and often talked about at every level to include performance rating.

A second respondent discussed how attentive listening and transparency from command staff created commitment. The participant shared:

We explain what the department is focused on. This way they can see what the command staff is doing and really get a peak under the tent. This
allows employees to decide if this is what they want to commit to. You have to let people talk, but most importantly listen, and listen critically.

Yet another participant talked about everyone’s ability to make small contributions and not everyone was going to make a huge impact or show the utmost dedication. There was room for all contributions. “We just want people to contribute. Everyone has an area in which they have an interest in and a desire to contribute.”

Development of collaborative shared strategies. This theme was referenced 24 times by 9 sources and represented 17.6% of coded content under the element of inclusion. Collaboration occurred when people worked together, shared ideas, and problem-solved together (Dillon & Bourke, 2016). It was proven that companies where employees were fully supported and engaged enjoyed phenomenal benefits, including lower turnover and higher individual productivity (Crowley, 2011b).

Seven participants commented on topics such as letting those closest to the problem initiate the discussion, instilling a collaborative mindset in staff, and creating collaborative strategies to mirror departmental missions. Each of the participants expressed their experiences on allowing employees the freedom to collaborate and share ideas. However, they also emphasized the need to align with the organizational culture and departmental missions. One shared:

You have to let people who are closer to the problems and issues develop content for the conversations. Not just the formal, but informal conversations as well. It is not uncommon for a program by a line level person to get started. Great ideas come from all entities and are welcome. It is impossible for myself or my executive staff to know everything that
occurs of importance. General Colin Powell said the guy in the field is always right. We as leaders need to understand that, provide them guidance, support, and let them in as much as possible on crucial conversations. I have constant discussions with my top staff about employee messaging and are we reaching to all levels for input. It is a struggle, but necessary to win hearts and minds. Another participant discussed how departmental meetings were structured to allow for collaborative input. The participant added:

Our regularly held interdepartmental meetings are designed so internal stakeholders have an opportunity to discuss issues with higher-level command. I am lucky because my agency is small enough, so employees get to know each other and it is easier to facilitate these meetings. The meetings are purposely setup that higher-level staff have to do more listening and other staff facilitate the meeting. After the meeting, my executive staff meet to discuss possible outcomes. This setup allows employees to share ideas and makes them feel like decisionmakers.

Regarding allowing collaboration, comments surfaced about the need to provide guidance to employees about the type of input warranted and certain guidelines. One police chief discussed how executive staff needed to instill the culture of collaboration to their respective commands. Additionally, collaboration was needed, but “the conversations we have with employees should shape their collaborative input. Everything we do should be in alignment with our mission, vision, and values.”
When listening to a recorded radio artifact interview of a participant, the question was asked about the formulation of the participant’s command staff and the type of people chosen. The participant talked about members being chosen because of their proven successes collaborating with stakeholders, including community partners and personnel within the organization. The participant went on to discuss how collectively, they may have differences on important topics, but healthy debate sparked the discussion of alternatives. Based on discussions, the best decisions are made for the good of the department and community partners. This comment aligned with the theme of how to collaboratively share ideas. Additionally, another artifact was collected from an agency mentioning how shared input is vital for the organization

**Important organizational messages.** This theme was referenced 16 times by 11 sources and represented 11.7% of coded content under the element of inclusion. Creating shared ideas helped establish a connection between values necessary to change behaviors and contrasted with traditional command-and-control relationships (Cavazotte et al., 2013; Herrington & Andrew, 2015). Organizational conversation required employees to help create messaging content in lieu of top-down leadership approaches (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Raelin, 2016).

Each study participant commented on the importance of giving employees a chance to create organizational messaging, and personnel should be empowered to do so. The police chiefs and sheriffs discussed letting the experts create messages for topics that involved their areas of responsibility, including speaking at press conferences and important internal events, and sharing on social media.
In a radio interview artifact observation, a participant described solutions to an issue they had with another public safety organization over helicopter flight space. The situation created misgivings between agencies and garnered media attention. Rather than intervene, the participant tasked internal unit supervisors with researching the problem, and coming up with solutions, and eventually the issue was resolved. This interview aligned to the theme of employees creating important messages.

During an observation of a participant presenting to various law enforcement agencies at an in-service training event on social media, the participant commented on the rise of social media as a messaging tool. When the participant started working in law enforcement, social media was nonexistent. As its popularity increased, the participant still did not use it, but realized the importance of it. The participant mentioned it was a generational tool and he was personally not comfortable using it, but deferred to people who were accustomed to using it in their personal lives and for work purposes. “In this age of being transparent, I give them guidance as to what I would like to see and let them run with it.” So many of important messages were posted via the websites and social media. Along the same lines, another respondent stated, “Trust me, you will never catch me tweeting, but I have others that do it for me because these messages are important to connecting with the community. Our social media reach has gone up tremendously because of their efforts.”

Methods to ensure stakeholders contributions. This theme was referenced 9 times by 8 sources and represented 6.6% of coded content under the element of inclusion. This theme represented the lowest frequency for the inclusion theme. Inclusive environments were characterized by a diverse workforce, recognition of contributions
made by all, leveraged talents, and connections to the organizational visions and goals (Groysberg & Connolly, 2013; Randel, 2017).

Six study participants commented on how they measured stakeholder contributions. Under this theme, participants discussed measuring contributions during employee evaluations, various award ceremonies, the promotional process, and through citizen input. One said:

Contributions are linked to the four pillars of our vision statement, and during their performance evaluation. My command and I discuss the vision statement throughout the year. We discuss it during our annual planning session, and a second time during the year. We want to ensure we are making strides toward reaching our goals and are appropriately measuring and recognizing employee performance.

In terms of formerly recognizing employees, one respondent mentioned:

We have a quarterly Gold Star awards banquet recognizing outstanding employees at all levels. People receiving awards are nominated by their peers or supervisors and voted upon by an all-inclusive panel. We try our best to include all levels of the agency. There is a ceremony where city officials, families, and coworkers are invited and to hear about the outstanding work that is being done. It is a nice way to recognize employee productivity.

Recognition can come from other sources as well. One participant talked about the promotional process. They invited other agency personnel to be part of promotional oral boards. The participant received feedback from other law enforcement agency
personnel about the high-quality personnel employed by the participant’s agency. Lastly, another participant mentioned citizen feedback as a measuring tool for stakeholder contributions. The person added, “Good deeds are done daily, and public feedback is another way to gauge how well you are doing. We get periodic calls from the public thanking us and encourage citizens to tell us how we are doing.” Two artifacts were collected from agency award ceremonies that reflected adherence to this theme.

**Research Sub-Question 4 – Intentionality**

The thematic research team defined intentionality as ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Men, 2012). During the coding process, the conversational leadership element of intentionality produced five themes and was referenced 119 times by 10 study participants. Table 6 shows the four intentionality themes.

Table 6

*Intentionality Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview Sources</th>
<th>Observation Sources</th>
<th>Artifact Sources</th>
<th>Total Sources</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating clarity, purpose in the organization</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating organizational messaging</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging feedback on organizational direction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplifying organizational messages</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sources came from transcribed interviews, observations, and artifacts.

**Creating clarity, purpose in the organization.** This theme was referenced 78 times in 12 sources and represented 65.5% of coded content in the element of intentionality. Executing the right plan was essential to success and an important aspect of intentionality (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Intentionality provided a path for the other
three conversational leadership elements. In this current age of continual messaging, organizations must create a simple understanding of what the organization is trying to achieve and a sense of direction (Barge et al., 1989; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). “People who come to work with a clear sense of why are less prone to giving up after a few failures because they understand the higher cause” (Sinek, 2009 p. 101). Conversational leaders set up work environments for employees to commit to organizational goals. Intentionality was aimed at providing a sense of clarity and direction in organizational conversation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

All participants provided information for this theme, and it appears during the collection of three artifacts. Topics coded under this theme included storytelling for clarity, repeating constant themes, appealing to employee integrity, eliciting feedback about organizational goals, building community partnerships, valuing loyalty, and recognizing employees as part of society. Participants mentioned intentionality as being part of the culture of the organization.

One respondent talked about the continual challenge with providing clarity. In the daily interactions, the participant had the opportunity to share the organizational vision in formal and informal settings. The person added:

It is no secret that I repeatedly stress three concepts: providing public safety and crime suppression, our adoption of smart technologies as force multipliers, and our responsibility to be guardians and ambassadors of our communities. These three are vital to our mission as law enforcement professionals. I think it is at the point now that employees know somehow
some or all these topics will come up when I talk to them. I want everyone to walk the walk and be able to talk the talk.

Another participant talked about simplifying organizational messaging. The participant said:

Organizational clarity has to be done by creating a vision that is attainable. I created a committee to come up with our core values, which was comprised of people of various ranks and job duties. After the creation of that committee, we discussed our mission statement. I turned some potential naysayers into employees who understood where we are headed. They in turn could be positive spokespeople for the organization.

Regarding appealing to employees’ sense of morality to create clarity, one participant said:

Part of my roadmap is being straightforward and being consistent with how I approach things. Bottom line at the end of the day our job is very simple. Everybody knows who we are and our job is to provide public safety. Despite community concerns and at times being under appreciated, we do a job that society desperately needs, but must be done with care and compassion. It is written in our core values and mission statement. We do not do this for the accolades but because it is the right thing to do.

Another participant shared a story that exemplified the need for care and concern when dealing with incarcerated people, which was a large function of that organization. The respondent visited a jail and spoke with incarcerated members about jail conditions among the lesbian, gay, transsexual, bisexual (LGBT) community. As a result,
community partners were used to do training with the organization to better deal and accommodate this population of incarcerated inmates. This dramatically improved the conditions for that population of inmates and changed some policies for that organization. This respondent stated:

We are all people and part of the human race. We make mistakes just like the rest of society and move on from that. Just like in our profession when we make mistakes we have policies, procedures, and programs in place to discipline or prevent the same behavior from occurring. The same is true for the rest of mankind. We can never forget who we are as people, our role, and apply that to our understanding of the people we see on a daily basis at work. No doubt we are special because we do this job, but we are everyday people doing an everyday job. This concept is talked about at all levels of my organization. I am trying to embed this culture of caring and higher purpose in my organization to gain better buy-in.

In an artifact observation of a videotaped swearing in ceremony, one leader reminded the audience about law enforcements’ responsibility to the community. The participant discussed how honor, ethics, professionalism, and integrity were the main platforms he built his career on and what he expected from his new agency. Another artifact observation was of a holiday message video a participant recorded. This holiday message was about showing extra care and concern for the less fortunate during the holidays. In the video, the participant mentioned things the agency had done in years past that went over and beyond during this crucial time in hopes the agency would emulate the same. This exemplified a community-caring culture that adds clarity.
The last artifact collected was a brochure listing the core values and mission statement. It was being used during a patrol briefing. This document provided further evidence of creating clarity.

**Repeating organizational messaging.** This theme was referenced 18 times in 9 sources and represented 15.1% of coded content for the element of intentionality. Connecting the why to how jobs were performed was important. Knowing what was important to an organization built connections and increased the leader’s ability to motivate personnel (Sinek, 2009).

Eight of the study participants referenced this theme, and it was seen in one observation of a participant at a city council meeting. The participants shared how they consistently stuck to repeated messages. One participant mentioned some messaging had to be repeated almost to the point of annoyance for it to resonate throughout the organization. The constant repetition of an important topic allowed that subject to be integrated into people’s thought process. Similar comments created clarity. Another interviewee talked about the use of a made-up acronym so employees better understood and remember his messaging. He added:

I have an acronym that I use when conveying my priorities to departmental members. I call it the three P’s, planning, partnerships, and people. If you ask any member of my department they will be able to tell explain it to you. The fact that it is a catchy acronym makes it easier to remember. This message is continually talked about in all realms of my organization to include my role as the acting city manager.
Lastly, another participant mentioned along with departmental vision and mission statement messaging, leaders should never forget the foundation of law enforcement is the quality of the employees. He added:

I never forget to structure my messaging around our great deeds. I continually tell everyone at every meeting, every event, how important and critical our role is in society is and we are doing an outstanding job. I emphasize that we are in this together, and I need your help. Everyone is a decision maker, and every voice matters. On a daily basis you have to express gratitude to your employees.

An observation was made at a city council meeting where the leader talked to the community at the meeting about their continual efforts to explain to sworn employees about their roles as public servants. Sharing with the community built clarity both within and outside the agency.

**Encouraging feedback on organizational direction.** This theme was referenced 13 times in 8 sources and represented 10.9% of coded content in the element of intentionality. Having a plan to engage members was vital to giving and getting feedback on vital conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

Seven of study participants referenced this theme in the element of intentionality, and this theme was also seen in one artifact viewing of a departmental website encouraging organizational direction. The participants commented on the difficulty in sometimes getting feedback. As one participant commented, “I have a large organization and sometimes it is difficult to know if the feedback you receive represents the majority of the agency.” Participants commented on the measures they took to encourage
feedback, including various types of meetings, publishing survey results, and mandatory reporting from supervisors. One respondent commented on the ability to meet with employees annually because of the relatively small size of the agency. The participant said:

Annually, I schedule a meeting with every employee. One question I like to ask is if you could change one thing about the agency what it would it be? Employees know the nature of the meeting and what is surprising, is I get a big percentage of personnel that do not have much to say. I am reassessing the value of doing this and looking for other personal options to get feedback.

Regarding the use of surveys to gather feedback, one person stated:

We publish strategic surveys to employees to obtain feedback.

Additionally, during the promotional process we use surveys to assess employee’s suitability to lead others. We want to make sure that our employees understand feedback is valued and will be taken into consideration.

**Simplifying organizational messages.** This theme was referenced 10 times in 7 sources and represented 8.4 % of coded content in the element of intentionality. This theme yielded the lowest amount of frequencies. In today’s fast-paced environment, employees received an overabundance of messages. Understandable messages created clarity and ensured a better sense of direction for employees (Barge et al., 1989; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).
Six study participants provided content for this theme. The participants discussed the importance of prioritizing messaging and simplifying it so internal stakeholders understood what the organization was trying to accomplish. Messaging was tailored around the core values and mission statements of law enforcement agencies. One respondent stated, “We stress the concepts of integrity, trust, and pride and spirit de corps to our academy recruits. These are written all over our mission...It is really simple, this is the messaging we should adhere to until we retire.” Another shared:

I often tell my folks about the purpose of what, why, and how we do our jobs. I want it to become part of our organizational fabric. We limit our goals and objectives to 2 to 4 items and widely publicize them. The following year we revisit the objectives and assess how well we met them. Based on that, we report back to the rest of the organization about our strengths and weaknesses. I want employees to know how we are doing. It is a simple method and keeps us vested in the organization.

One collected artifact was a document illustrating communication strategies used by an organization. This document was periodically mentioned during executive meetings to remind top staff of the importance of organizational messaging. In the subsequent discussion, simplifying and being conscious of messaging were discussion topics.

**Key Findings**

After the interviews were transcribed and all data were coded for themes, eight key findings became evident regarding how exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs lead their organizations using the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy,
interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. The key findings were determined by evaluating themes referenced by at least 6 of the 10 participants and had at least 19% of all references within the four conversational leadership elements.

**Key Findings: Intimacy**

1. Forming comfortable conversation environments resulted in 45% of all intimacy references and was cited by all 10 study participants.

2. Authentic and honest conversations for trust resulted in 21.2% of all intimacy references and was cited by nine study participants.

**Key Findings: Interactivity**

3. Creating an environment for open dialogue represented 28.9% of all interactivity coded data and was referenced by nine participants.

4. Engaging members in two-way dialogue represented 19.4% of interactivity coded data and was referenced by 10 participants.

**Key Findings: Inclusion**

5. Effective conversation strategies for idea sharing represented 22% of inclusion references and was cited by nine study participants.

6. Creating empowered stakeholders also represented 22% of inclusion references and was cited by 10 study participants.

7. Inclusion to develop committed employees represented 19.8% of references and was cited by eight study participants.

**Key Findings: Intentionality**

8. Creating clarity and purpose in the organization represented 65.5% of interactivity coded data and was cited by 10 study participants.
Summary

Chapter IV presented the study purpose, methods, and qualitative data collected via interviews, observations, and artifacts. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the behaviors exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversations. The summary of the data included the identification of 20 themes and their alignment with the research question and sub-questions. Eight key findings describing the behaviors of exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs were identified from the themes. Chapter V summarizes the study’s findings; explores unexpected findings; sets forth conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research; and provides final remarks and reflections by the researcher.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this phenomenological study, the researcher described the lived experiences of exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who led their organizations using the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. A comprehensive analysis of data from participant interviews, observations, and artifacts, resulted in 8 major findings and 20 conversational leadership themes. As a result, conclusions about these findings were formed and recommendations for future research were identified.

Chapter V provides a final summary of the study, including the study’s purpose, research questions, and key findings. Also included in this chapter are the unexpected research findings, conclusions, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks and reflections from the researcher.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012b) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

This study included one central question and four sub questions, one for each of the four elements of conversational leadership. The central research study question was: What are the behaviors exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s four elements of
conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality? The research study’s sub questions were:

1. How do exemplary police chiefs or sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?
2. How do exemplary police chiefs or sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?
3. How do exemplary police chiefs or sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?
4. How do exemplary police chiefs or sheriffs lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

Research Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological research study consisted of personal, comprehensive interviews of 10 exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs in six counties in southern California. The goal was to gain a better perspective on their lived experiences as they related to each of the four elements of conversational leadership. Data generated from the interviews and observations were coded and analyzed for themes using NVivo software. Additionally, 11 observations were conducted and 15 artifacts were reviewed to address the research questions. Although this study’s main data collection method was in-depth interviews, multiple data collection methods allowed the researcher to triangulate the data between the in-depth interviews, observations, and artifacts. The study’s target population was the 87 police chiefs and sheriffs with agency sizes of at least 50 sworn employees in the six southern California counties.
From the target population, a study sample of 10 leaders within their respective organizations were selected for interviews. All potential study participants needed to exhibit at least four of the following six characteristics identified by the peer research team as criteria for determining an exemplary leader:

1. Evidence of successful relationships with followers
2. Evidence of leading a successful organization
3. A minimum of five years of experience in the profession
4. Articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings
5. Recognition from peers
6. Membership in professional associations in their field

**Major Findings**

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs practiced to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012b) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. The study’s central question was answered by the analysis of the study’s sub-questions. The major findings were determined by evaluating which themes were referenced by at least 6 of the 10 study participants and represented at least 19% of all references within each of the four conversational leadership elements.

**Key Findings: Intimacy**

1. Forming comfortable conversation environments resulted in 45% of all intimacy references and was cited by all 10 study participants.
2. Authentic and honest conversations for trust resulted in 21.2% of all intimacy references and was cited by nine study participants

**Key Findings: Interactivity**

3. Creating an environment for open dialogue represented 28.9% of all interactivity coded data and was referenced by nine participants

4. Engaging members in two-way dialogue represented 19.4% of interactivity coded data and was referenced by 10 participants.

**Key Findings: Inclusion**

5. Effective conversation strategies for idea sharing represented 22% of inclusion references and was cited by nine study participants

6. Creating empowered stakeholders also represented 22% of inclusion references and was cited by 10 study participants

7. Inclusion to develop committed employees represented 19.8% of references and was cited by eight study participants

**Key Findings: Intentionality**

8. Creating clarity and purpose in the organization represented 65.5% of interactivity coded data and was cited by 10 study participants

**Unexpected Findings**

This study resulted in three unexpected findings. The first was in the conversational element of interactivity, the effects of using institutional conversational tools. The second was in the element of inclusion, methods to measure stakeholder contributions. The third was in the element of intentionality, simplifying organizational messages for commitment. Each of the three themes resulted in low frequencies even

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though the literature suggested their importance to the elements. The literature supported and recognized using institutional conversational tools, measuring stakeholder contributions, and simplifying organizational messages as important components of conversational leadership (Crowley, 2011; Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

The low frequency of using institutional conversational tools was an unexpected finding in the element of interactivity and was referenced the least in this theme, which conflicted with the literature. Changes in technology affected how employees interacted with each other (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Technological tools should be used as a multiplier to enhance interactivity and promote shared dialogue (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). The Institute for Criminal Justice Education (ICJE; 2011) reported an increase in social media usage, and approximately 78% of law enforcement agencies used social media.

Methods to ensure stakeholder contributions was an unexpected finding in the element of inclusion because it was the least referenced theme in the entire study, despite literature indicating its importance to engaging stakeholders to share ideas. The promotion of an inclusive, diverse workforce, where talents and ideas could be leveraged, created stakeholders connected to the organizational visions and goals (Groysberg & Connolly, 2013; Randel, 2017). Moving toward conversational inclusion entailed risks, but had huge potential rewards. Two-way conversational practices increased the likeliness of top leaders staying informed of issues or employee contributions they would not ordinarily receive (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Simplifying organizational messages for commitment, the last unexpected finding, was least referenced under the element of intentionality. Literature again
supported this theme as important to intentionality and helpful to ensure clarity of purpose and direction to create meaning in organizations. The complex world is ever changing and employees receive an overabundance of messaging in many forms, often making organizational messages unclear (Barge et al., 1989; Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). To increase understanding, leaders must simplify messaging and align goals so employees see connections between themselves, processes, and other departments (Raelin, 2016).

**Conclusions**

As a result of the study’s key findings, the following conclusions describe the lived experiences of exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who practiced leading their organizations using four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

**Conclusion 1.** *Municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who want to provide an intimate, trusting environment must engage in informal, authentic, and honest conversations to build trust.*

Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs in this study formed comfortable conversational environments to include employees and many stakeholders with whom they collaborated with in their communities. Although the exact nature of creating intimacy varied, sharing feelings, personal information, and opinions were important facets in establishing intimacy and forming comfortable conversational environments (Gibson, 2008). Establishing the space for informal conversations allowed people to share candid, caring opinions for organizational betterment (Crowley, 2011; Glaser, 2014).
When trust developed through intimate and honest conversations, employees become engaged, leading to increased commitment (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). Leaders must set aside their level in the hierarchy for the interest of forming open and intimate dialogue (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). “They must let down their guard, set aside the roles they otherwise play in life, and talk straight with each other” (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b, p. 33). Interviews, observations, and artifacts that supported this conclusion included:

1. Exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study stressed the importance of forming comfortable conversational environments with internal stakeholders as part of their communication behaviors under the conversational element of intimacy. Forming comfortable conversational environments was the most important element under intimacy. Participants commented about engaging employees in casual conversations, never forgetting their roots as a leader, and showing humbleness and humility when speaking to employees and internal stakeholders.

2. Exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study constantly used honest and authentic communication to create trust among employees and other internal stakeholders. Police chiefs and sheriffs commented on speaking to people as friends, using small informal groups, disclosing personal information, modeling good behavior, being sincere, and being available for conversations.

3. Exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study strived to create informal conversations for trust with internal stakeholders as part of
their communication behavior under the conversational leadership element of intimacy. Participants understood engaging in informal conversations was better for building intimacy than other modes of communication. Participants talked about linking personal values, using mutually important subjects, creating low-stress environments, and engaging employees in their work spaces. This theme was also evident during observations and in artifacts.

**Conclusion 2.** It is imperative municipal police chiefs and sheriffs commit to stakeholder interactivity and exchange ideas to create an environment for open dialogue and two-way dialogue.

Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs in this study created an environment of open dialogue by connecting with employees to create meaningful conversations. More meaningful exchanges occurred when stakeholders were connected to the conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Creating suitable work environments linked to how employees viewed their job tasks and the comfort level they had with each other (Mautz, 2015). Culture, upbringing, and diversity were described as leadership challenges facing organizations. Therefore, being cognizant of diversity and connecting with a multitude of employees were critical to leaders facilitating an exchange of ideas for organizational success (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Markus & Kityama, 1991).

Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs in this study recognized the value of engaging members in two-way dialogue. Leaders using interactive dialogue techniques proved to be successful. Interactive communication allowed internal stakeholders to be part of meaningful tasks and better align to organizational goals.
According to Groysberg and Slind (2012b), leaders who valued the importance of two-way conversation were open to receiving information from a variety of sources and provided interactive conversations. Establishing this type of culture encouraged an easier flow of communication between stakeholder groups. Using appropriate communication mediums helped support messaging and interactive conversations (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Interviews, observations, and artifacts that supported this conclusion included:

1. Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study created an open environment for conversation. The participants understood how language created and fostered interactivity in relationships. Common themes discussed were being mindful and sincere when speaking to internal stakeholders, building a reputation of valuing input from all levels, soliciting input on a variety of concerns, being transparent with internal stakeholders, and sharing important departmental information. In addition to the interviews, evidence of these themes were seen in website information, videotaped departmental messages, employee conversations, and media interviews.

2. Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study engaged members in two-way dialogue. The participants allowed internal stakeholders to be have an active voice in organizational issues through a variety of means. Similar themes were discussed relating to engagement, such as using common issues to start conversations, engaging in unannounced personal interactions, and using nontraditional resources for interactive conversations.
**Conclusion 3.** It is vital for municipal police chiefs and sheriffs committed to inclusion and participation in the development of the organization utilize effective conversational strategies for sharing and create empowered stakeholders.

Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study utilized effective conversational strategies to share ideas. To foster a culture of idea sharing as the norm, leadership must favor employee idea sharing (Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Herrington & Andrew, 2015). Highly inclusive leaders favored diversity in thoughts and ideas because of alignment to their personal values (Dillon & Bourke, 2016; Gladwell, 2008; Kouzes & Pouzner, 2006). Like other organizational priorities, inclusion should be part of all aspects of organizational culture, including formal and informal conversations (Dillon & Bourke, 2016; Gladwell, 2008; Kouzes & Pouzner, 2006).

Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study also create empowered stakeholders. Leaders who established meaningful employee connections fostered teamwork, which was a catalyst for empowerment and increased innovation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). An empowered work culture was vital to instilling meaning and a sense of fulfillment, ensuring lasting work performance (Randel, 2017). Interviews, observations, and artifacts that supported this conclusion included:

1. Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study utilized effective conversational strategies for idea sharing. Common ways participants shared ideas were through engaging small groups to facilitate easier processing of information, using commonality to create personal connections, using resources such as blogs and newsletters, setting up working
committees, publishing departmental calendars, maintaining anonymous suggestion boxes, holding meetings at various organizational levels, and being visible and approachable.

2. Exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study valued the obligation to create empowered stakeholders. In the words of one respondent, “I cannot do everything alone, we are all leaders.” Common ideas shared by participants were using policies and procedures to set guidelines for empowerment, constant defining and redefining employee roles, recognizing and celebrating employee successes, assigning meaningful work, and challenging employees about their role in the public safety mission.

**Conclusion 4.** *Police chiefs and sheriffs who want to ensure clarity of purpose, goals, and direction should focus on methods that create clarity and focus.*

Exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study developed messages to create clarity and purpose in their organizations. The participants used a variety of methods to create forums that promoted clarity and purpose. Participants continually shared their agencies’ purpose and vision in a multitude of ways. Executing the right plan to include consistent messaging was essential to success and an important component of intentionality (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b).

Intentionality was the culmination of the other three conversational leadership elements. An overabundance of messaging formats can confuse employees. Organizations must create a simple understanding of what they are trying to achieve, which creates a better sense of direction (Barge et al., 1989; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). The simpler the message, the easier it was understood. People wanted a clear sense of
why they were doing their jobs because it ensured people understood the intentions of the organization (Gaines & Worrall, 2012; Sinek, 2009).

Police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study also showed evidence of factors that created clarity and focus in their organizations. Intentionality involved leaders creating an environment where employees could see the entire organization, what the company was committed to, and its culture (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Fostering an environment where employees could fully engage in vital conversations was important to interactivity. Conversational intent gave direction to what could be disorganized forms of communication (Groysberg & Slind, 2012b). Interviews, observations, and artifacts that supported this conclusion included:

1. Exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study took many opportunities to develop messages to create clarity and purpose in their organizations. The participants discussed how they used storytelling to drive messages about departmental goals, repeated constant themes, and appealed to employees’ moral sense. One participant talked about the use of the rule of threes to focus on three key concepts aligned with the organization’s strategic goals. Another stressed attainable goals and the use of committees to develop vision and goals statements.

2. Exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs who participated in this study also showed evidence of factors that created clarity and focus in their organizations. The participants discussed how they embed a culture of higher purpose in their organization. Common themes discussed were eliciting feedback about organizational goals, engaging with the community partners,
and realizing employees are a part of society. Additionally, observed video
taped messages about police officer integrity, holiday messaging, and core
values and mission statement artifacts added to this theme.

**Implications for Action**

Conversational leadership is an evolving topic of study with many future
possibilities for extended or continual training. Part of the significance of this study was
the depth of research conducted by 11 other peer researchers and the vast amount of
interview, artifact, and observational data collected about professional career fields. The
overall study could have a huge impact on the validity of a burgeoning leadership
concept, conversational leadership. This study provided additional content in the
conversational leadership field for individual and organizational use. The specific
implications for action stemming from the findings of this study include:

1. The need for further leadership development at all levels is crucial. The
   myriad of current law enforcement issues requires a change in how problems
   should be handled. Conversations develop solutions. Law enforcement
   agencies devote much time to supervisory and in-service leadership training
   on a variety of topics. The California Commission on Peace Officers
   Standards and Training (POST), who sets the standards of training, should
   include conversational leadership curricula in various courses, such as the
   Supervisory Leadership Institute (SLI) that Sergeants attend, the Middle
   Management course that Lieutenants attend, and the Executive Development
   course for executives. Currently, the curriculum of these courses does not
   include the components of conversational leadership. In addition to trainings
at these courses, law enforcement professional organizations that conduct training should seek subject matter experts to develop seminars on this topic. Law enforcement should look for funding from viable sources in the development of these courses. The focus of the training should be on the key findings of this study. Minimally the training should include:

- How to form comfortable conversations, build authenticity, and engage in honest conversations to build trust internally and externally
- How to create an environment for open dialogue and engage members in multilateral conversations
- How to use best practice conversational strategies to create empowered stakeholders committed and included in the organizations vision
- How to create clarity and purpose in the organization

2. POST researched and endorsed affiliate grade level law enforcement programs around California. They determined a possible solution for recruiting shortfalls was the development of more law enforcement affiliate programs and adopted a youth leadership curriculum stressing interpersonal skills (Bowen, 2012). The elements of conversational leadership could easily be woven into the existing curriculum. All states have a similar regulatory agency that could mirror this type of program. High schools should incorporate the four elements of conversational leadership into student leadership courses, as well as including content in college and career technical classes. Minimally, these youth leadership program curricula should be
structured around the significant findings of this study and tailored to a youth focus. This is especially important to continue the development of suitable law enforcement candidates.

3. College and universities teaching organizational leadership classes should incorporate conversational leadership as a component. In looking at programs offered by one state university, it offers a leadership certificate for attendance at various seminars. Seminars geared toward conversational leadership topics could aid in the development of conversational intelligence prior to graduates entering their career fields. A litany of subjects could be incorporated in these seminars, including elements of conversational leadership, conversational intelligence, and transformational leadership.

4. The thematic team should write various journal or magazine articles detailing the lived experiences of their respective participants. Based on the research conducted by the team, many specific examples and stories could be highlighted. Additionally, specific participants could be highlighted as part of career case studies for leadership trainings.

5. The thematic team should contribute the lived experiences of their respective study participants to the David Gurteen Knowledge website. This site provides articles, resources, and personal development with over 5,000 pages. Subscribers are emailed the online newsletter or can subscribe to the LinkedIn community group. Each of the four conversational leadership elements should be included in their many resources. Combining the results of each of thematic team members’ findings could be the inaugural article submitted.
Recommendations for Further Research

Based on this study’s findings, additional research on the four elements of conversational leadership defined in this study was recommended in the five following areas:

1. Limited research exists in the area of intimacy in law enforcement and how to build trust by having informal conversations, storytelling, listening, and having authentic and intimate conversations. Law enforcement is still heavily rooted in traditional top-down, para-military views, and creating intimacy needs to be further explored. Study participants generated more references in this element than any of the other four, which could be a strong indication of interest in this topic and continued study and new trainings should be developed.

2. A study on conversational leadership that compares female responses to male responses and explores other factors such as agency size (small, medium, large) and ethnicities should be explored.

3. The thematic dissertation team conducted research in a variety of fields. However, many other professions are affected by conversational intelligence. Therefore, future studies should be conducted examining other professions.

4. A meta-analysis looking across the 12 thematic dissertations should be conducted. Generalizations could be determined across similar career fields researched by the team.

5. This study was conducted in six southern California counties. Future studies should examine leaders in other regions across the United States.
6. This study was limited to a qualitative, phenomenological study examining
the lived experiences of 10 exemplary municipal police chiefs and sheriffs.

An experimental or non-experimental quantitative study could be conducted
targeting a larger sample size of police chiefs and sheriffs. Questionnaires
could be developed targeting leadership beliefs, opinions, and values in
relationship with each conversational leadership element to examine findings
across a broader range of participants.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not
fear; I will help you. Isaiah 41:13

Writing this dissertation was a life changing journey, one that I will be able to
reflect on for the rest of my life and hope it makes my family proud. I never imagined
myself pursuing a doctorate degree, but through the urging and support of my wife and
family, it is now a reality. I am now at the pinnacle of the education circle and
particularly proud to be among the small percentage of people in the United States having
terminal degrees and the even smaller percentage of African Americans to achieve this
honor. The many valuable lessons from interviewing the esteemed group of municipal
police chiefs and sheriffs was priceless. My understanding and admiration for the job
they do in these turbulent times of law enforcement has grown tremendously.

This doctoral program taught me so much about myself and my role as a leader.
To truly understand the how and why, and my significance as a leader in law
enforcement, is a challenge taken on with renewed enthusiasm. During this journey, the
opportunity to learn and impart pearls of wisdom regarding conversational leadership in
my professional setting presented itself constantly. As my formal law enforcement career
nears the end and I hopefully make the transition to my other passion, teaching, it is my hope future leaders in the profession expand on this research. So many opportunities for increased trainings could result from a deeper exploration of conversational leadership.

Lastly, I am grateful for my many teachers, mentors, friends, and family who provided me with a foundation to keep striving to be a better person. In closing, a debt of gratitude goes out to the United States Marine Corps for instilling in me the basic leadership principle of knowing yourself and seeking self-improvement. This simple principle guided me throughout my professional life. Semper Fidelis!
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

“My name is _________________ and I (brief description of what you do). I’m a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in Organizational Leadership. I’m a part of a team conducting research to determine what strategies are used by exemplary leaders to lead their organization through conversation. The four elements of conversation used in this study are depicted by Groysberg and Slind’s framework of conversational leadership, intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Conversation as used in this research applies to the full range of patterns and processes by which information circulates through an organization. It is all the ideas, images, and other forms of organizational content that passes between leaders and all members of the organization including personal, interpersonal, group and organization. This study is about what behaviors you use to lead the organization through conversation.

Our team is conducting approximately 120 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of the thoughts and behaviors that exemplary leaders use conversation to create quality in their organizations and will add to the body of research currently available. Incidentally, even though it appears a bit awkward, I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating exemplary leaders will be conducted pretty much in the same manner.

Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email?

Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent. Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let’s get started, and thanks so much for your time.

Interview Questions

Intimacy. The closeness, trust and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Glaser, 2014).
1. How do you create conversations that promote trust between you and the members of your organization?
   Optional probe: What would you identify as the most important factor in establishing trust with your team members?

2. Research indicates that a leader can use personal stories that show vulnerability to build trust and authenticity with members of their organization. Please share with me an example of a time when you disclosed a personal story that showed your vulnerability to build trust and authenticity with members of your organization.
   Optional probe: Tell me about the outcome from that disclosure.

3. Tell me about a time when you listened attentively to members of your organization to engage them in honest and authentic conversations.
   Optional probe: Tell me about the impact of that conversation on the members of your organization.

**Interactivity.** Bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas; a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

1. How do you engage members of your organization in conversations that are two-way exchanges of ideas and information about your organization?
   Optional probe: What tools and institutional supports do you utilize to encourage the process of this back-and-forth conversation?

2. How would you describe the strategies you use to cultivate a culture of open dialogue?
   Optional probe: What role does social technology (such as blogs, wikis, online communities, twitter, social networks, web-enabled video chat, video sharing etc.) play in supporting this culture of dialogue?
   Optional probe: How do you deal with the unpredictable nature of conversation within your organization?

3. Tell me about a time in which you effectively promoted conversation with members of your organization that incorporated an exchange of ideas around a difficult issue or topic.
   Optional probe: How do you provide the risk-free space that encourages people to participate in the exchange of ideas?

**Inclusion.** The commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley, T. & Brown, J. 2009).

1. What conversational strategies do you find effective to ensure members of the organization remain committed to and included in the organization's goals and or mission?
   Optional probe: Why do you feel that these strategies encourage more commitment to organizational goals?
2. What strategies do you use to encourage all members to become active contributors and spokespersons for the organization?
   Optional probe: What are the ways that you gauge the impact of members’ contributions?

3. Please share a story about a time when you allowed the members of your organization to generate the content for an important message.
   Optional probe: How did that work out for you and what was the impact?

**Intentionality.** Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge et al., 1989; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012).

1. Can you share some examples of when you used conversation to create clarity around your organization’s purpose?
   Optional probe: What do you think you did that created that clarity?

2. How do you use conversation to elicit feedback on the goals and direction of your organization?
   Optional probe: How have others responded to that?

3. What strategies do you use to give focus and direction to the organizations’ communication activities?
   Optional probe: Why do you think that the strategies you use help to provide focus?

“Thank you very much for your time. If you like, when the results of our research are known, we will send you a copy of our findings.”

**General Probes**

May be used during the interview when you want to get more info and/or expand the conversation with them. “What did you mean by ……”

1. “Do you have more to add?”
2. “Would you expand upon that a bit?”
3. “Why do think that was the case?”
4. “Could you please tell me more about….”
5. “Can you give me an example of …..”
6. “How did you feel about that?”
INFORMATION ABOUT: The behaviors that exemplary leaders practice to lead their organizations through conversation using the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Vincent E. Plair, M.B.A

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Vincent E. Plair, MBA, a doctoral student from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors that exemplary police chiefs and sheriffs practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind’s (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will include an interview with the identified student investigator. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will be scheduled at a time and location of your convenience. The interview questions will pertain to your perceptions and your responses will be confidential. Each participant will have an identifying code and names will not be used in data analysis. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide not to participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

c) If I have any questions or concerns about the research, I am free to contact Vincent E. Plair, MBA at vplair@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at 323-983-3068; or Dr. Douglas DeVore, Dissertation Chair, at ddevore@brandman.edu.

d) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.

e) If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

Signature of Principal Investigator
Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.