Leadership Approaches Federal Government Civilian Employees Perceive Most Effective for Enhancing Employee Morale and Productivity

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Leadership Approaches Federal Government Civilian Employees Perceive Most Effective for Enhancing Employee Morale and Productivity

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

April 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my late parents Willie C. Powe Sr. and Ingrid D. Powe. Although you were not here to experience this extraordinary milestone in my life, your words of wisdom, love, and encouragement are forever with me. Thank you for reminding me that when life gets tough, just look up to the heavens and remember, “Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand”—Isaiah 41:10 (New Living Translation [NLT]).

To amazing wife, Ulrike. You witnessed firsthand the ups and downs this journey had inflicted on me emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Your unconditional love, relentless encouragement, and infectious smile motivated me daily to keep moving forward and never to quit. I am always reminded that “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord”—Prov. 18:22 (King James Version [KJV])

To my grandchildren: Dyniah, Myniah, Dracen, Darryl III, Damari, and Avery. You are the catalyst behind this consequential goal. You see, this goal was never about me; it was always about you. This goal is about inspiring future generations. When I was about 8 years old, I searched for scholarly role models in my family, and there were none. However, I have set the bar high. I challenge you to explore beyond the stars and find your destiny in life; and to inspire future generations to explore beyond even farther. I am reminded that “Grandchildren are the crown of aged men, and the glory of children is their fathers [who live godly lives]”—Prov. 17:5-7 (Amplified Bible [AMP])
To family and friends. Thank you for your continuous prayers and words of wisdom. I join you in singing, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together”—Psalm 34:3 (KJV).

To my chair Dr. Giokaris, and committee members Dr. Hadden and Dr. Larick. Thank you for investing in me. You sacrificed your time, energy, lives, and sanity. You always had my best interests in mind, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Finally, I end my acknowledgements with advice to future doctors that are frightened of the climb: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” Isaiah 40:31 (KJV).
ABSTRACT

Leadership Approaches Federal Government Civilian Employees Perceive Most Effective for Enhancing Employee Morale and Productivity

by Darryl E. Powe, Sr.

Purpose: The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity.

Methodology: Fifteen U.S. Army civilian employees from 5 paygrades were selected based on specific criteria and organized using the stratified random sampling method. The full-range leadership model provided the theoretical framework for the study and was used to design interview questions that focused on the aforementioned leadership approaches. Data were collected and coded from interviews and artifacts, and aided the identification of key themes and frequency.

Findings: Twelve key findings were identified. Among these findings the most significant were (a) leading by example was effective to enhance employee morale, (b) leaders who enforced organizational policies enhanced employee morale, (c) leaders who challenge employees to think creatively increase employee productivity, (d) leaders who gave employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method raised employee productivity, (e) leaders who micromanaged employees had a negative effect on employee morale, (f) leaders who provided very little guidance reduced employee morale, and (g) leaders who offer employees rewards in exchange for favors reduce employee productivity.
**Conclusions:** Transformational leadership was the most effective approach to enhance morale and increase productivity. Transactional leadership is the least effective approach to enhance morale and increase productivity. Laissez-faire leadership is somewhat effective approach to enhance morale and increase productivity.

**Recommendations:** Six recommendations were identified including conducting comparative studies between leaders and those they supervise, including participants from army garrisons in the United States and outside the United States, among participants from all 5 branches of military service, and between federal government civilian employees and employees in the private sector. In addition, conduct a quantitative study to reach more federal government civilian employees by using surveys that disaggregate data based on gender, age, and number of years working for the federal government.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Employee levels of morale and productivity reflect the various leadership practices espoused by an organization (Myeni, 2010). Employee morale is an effective barometer that measures the health of the entire organization (Harroll, 2009; Jeter, 2014). Employee morale is often viewed as a precursor of foreseeable, and sometimes unplanned, consequences for organizations (Hardy, 2009; Sirota, Mischkind, & Meltzer, 2005; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Comprehending the effects of employee morale is imperative for attracting and retaining qualified employees (Jeter, 2014; U.S. Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2018). Richards (2017) reported that researchers (Arunchand & Ramanathan, 2013; Tiwari, 2014) have found that a positive work environment heightens employee morale and is associated with productivity and organizational performance, whereas Jeter’s (2014) research revealed that there are several factors that affect employee morale: “Pay, reward, leadership, empowerment, the work itself, recognition, communication, and flexibility” (p. 18). Although researchers continue to debate which factors have the greatest impact on employee morale, employee morale has proven to be a critical factor for gauging organizational success.

There has been a decline in federal employee morale over the past 10 years. Losey (2012) reported a 10-year decline in federal employees’ morale, wherein the federal government experienced its worst decline in employees’ morale at a score of 60.8 out of 100 (on a 100-point scale) compared to the private sector which held steady at 70 for many years (Tuutti, 2012). Jeter (2014) claimed, “The decline in federal employee morale has an impact on the federal government’s ability to attract and attain highly skilled workers” (p. 15). Research on the root cause(s) of federal employees’ morale
dates back to the 1950s when Jahoda (1955) substantiated that one significant cause for federal employees’ poor morale was leadership. Although times have changed, the 21st century revealed that federal government employees’ morale continues to decline (Boyd, 2007; Cahlink, 2005; Carlstrom, 2009; Losey, 2009, 2012; Maze, 2003; Reilly, 2013; Stewart, 2015). Furthermore, employee morale affects more than federal government employees; state governments are also impacted by employee morale.

The primary factor impacting employee morale is poor leadership. Risher (2016) noted that the private sector, which consist of organizations not under government control, is not immune to the effects of employee morale; results revealed that leadership continues to be the dominating influence on employee morale. Ortiz (2016) reported in 2015 that California’s state government solicited 5,000 state employees to participate in an employee engagement survey, and the following year, 100 managers participated in a webinar on rewarding employees for their performance; the results from employees and managers were disappointing. The results indicated that leaders acknowledged there is a problem with employee morale, but they did not have a plan in place to fix it. Studies have shown that leadership is one of the biggest factors to effect employee morale. Also, employee morale has also been known to influence productivity.

Experts reported a direct correlation between morale, whether high or low, and productivity (Arunchand & Ramanathan, 2013; Baehr & Renck, 1958; Hardy, 2009; Harroll, 2009; Kennedy, 1995; Richards, 2017; Tiwari, 2014; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006; Wofford, 1971; Worthy, 1950). When morale is high workforce productivity increases, and conversely when morale is low workforce productivity decreases (Blake & Mouton, 1985). Research findings have indicated that productivity is an important factor
for organizations because it reveals the economy of organizations (Richards, 2017). According to Hardy (2009), productivity is measured by comparing outputs to inputs, where outputs dominate inputs. Herb Kelleher, founder of Southwest Airlines, propagated that the “key to profitability and stability during either a boom or bust economy [is]: employee morale” (Sirota et al., 2005, p. 33). Harroll (2009) reported that leadership practices have a major impact on employee productivity. A review of research literature revealed that both morale and leadership influenced productivity. Similar to morale, productivity, whether precipitated by morale or leadership, has proven to be a crucial element for organizational success.

Effective leadership approaches yielded the most success for improving self and subordinates and affecting positive change in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Dansereau, Seitz, Chiu, Shaughnessy, & Yammarino, 2013; Epitropaki, Sy, Martin, Tram-Quon, & Topakas, 2013; Northouse, 2016; Watkins, Lyso, & deMarrais, 2011). Myriad leadership approaches and theories have proven effective in improving employee morale and increasing productivity.

**Background**

Leadership is important throughout all levels of organizations if employees are to be motivated, engaged and focused on achieving the organizations goals. Effective leadership is imperative for navigating the global complexities of change. If organizations foster teams to be motivated and engaged the potential of the organizations is limitless. Leadership continues to evolve with changes in technology, expectations of different generations of workers and the human need to be part of something significant. This section provides a foundation for understanding the leadership approaches that have
been influential over time and are impacting organizations today. The seven leadership approaches here include: autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, servant, situational, transactional, and transformational.

This section focuses on five distinct areas: theoretical foundations covering seven leadership approaches—autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, servant, situational, transactional and transformational; theoretical framework; federal government employee; employee morale; and employee productivity. Research of the literature produced by the most prominent theorists and seminal authors revealed that leadership has the most influence on employee morale, productivity, and organizational success (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Klann, 2004; Novotney, 2010; Tiwari, 2014; Trottier, 2005; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Following is a summary of the theoretical foundations covering the aforementioned seven leadership approaches presented by the seminal authors and most prominent theorists and researchers.

**Theoretical Foundations**

This section provides a summary of the key elements of the seven leadership approaches—autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, servant, situational, transactional, and transformational—including their strengths and weaknesses and impact on employee morale and productivity.

**Autocratic leadership.** The autocratic leadership approach affects employees’ response via positional power. Autocratic leadership encompasses the centralization of authority where leaders derive power from their position using force and rewards and imposing strict controls on decision-making (Daft, 2011; De Hoogh, Greer, & Den Hartog, 2015).
The strengths of autocratic leadership include quality performance from employees while under close supervision, positively affected employee morale and productivity in restricted environments, and expedited decision-making when time is critical (Chukwusa, 2018; Daft, 2011; De Hoogh et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2015). In contrast, autocratic leadership weaknesses include employees’ displeasure of being micromanaged, demoralization of team environment and performance, violence and outbursts among employees, repressed creativity, and eroded trust (Daft, 2011; De Hoogh et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2015). Autocratic leadership gives leaders positional power to maximize control over employees through the use of unilateral decision-making, rewards, and coercion in order to ensure task completion.

**Democratic leadership.** The democratic leadership approach gives employees the opportunity to demonstrate their skillsets. Democratic leadership involves a process by which leaders delegate authority to subordinates (Daft, 2011) and encourages employees to openly share their knowledge, skills, and talents for completing tasks (Khan et al., 2015).

The strengths of democratic leadership include encouraging employees’ participation in the decision-making process, keeping employees abreast of work-related issues, having leaders espouse the role of coach, motivating employees to produce quality work, building trust, and increasing employees’ morale and productivity (Choi, 2007; Khan et al., 2015). In contrast, the weaknesses of democratic leadership include requiring work on the part of both leaders and employees, slowing decision-making by giving everyone a voice, causing confusion among employees who are reluctant to assume leadership roles, and having leaders use the approach as a band-aid solution in
order to avoid making crucial decisions (Choi, 2007; Goleman, 2000). The democratic leadership approach gives leaders tools that solicit employees’ participation by encouraging them to openly share their knowledge, skills, and talents in a team environment.

**Laissez-faire leadership.** The laissez-faire leadership approach gives employees the freedom to operate in an autonomous working environment. Laissez-faire leadership is a hands-off approach in which leaders are less concerned about the development of subordinates (Khan et al., 2015). Leaders make a conscious decision to abdicate responsibility, provide no feedback to employees, and circumvent the needs of employees (Northouse, 2016).

The strengths of laissez-faire leadership include giving employees the freedom to work autonomously, allowing employees to establish goals, encouraging employees to become experts in problem-solving, satisfying employees’ needs, extending decision-making so that it is not rushed, abolishing fear of receiving negative feedback, and inspiring employees to take pride in their work (Khan et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016). In contrast, the weaknesses of laissez-faire include that employees may feel a lack of appreciation for their work, employees may abuse rules, and employees who lack confidence are left to fend for themselves (Khan et al., 2015). The impact of the laissez-faire leadership approach is contingent on the confidence level and experience of employees to work autonomously without receiving developmental feedback.

**Servant leadership.** The servant leadership approach elevates the needs of the followers above the needs of the leaders. Servant leadership can give the impression of being a paradox because leaders are subservient to followers through their acts of service
Servant leadership involves leaders serving employees in order to gain their trust (Daft, 2011; Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-bien, & Hunt, 2012). The strengths of servant leadership include leaders placing the needs of employees first, leaders building trust with employees through their actions, leaders inspiring followers to emulate their actions and serve others, leaders and followers demonstrating effective communication, and leaders fostering community within organizations (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016; Schermerhorn et al., 2012). In contrast, the weaknesses of servant leadership include the potential for employees to be less motivated, the need for leaders to abdicate their authority, the possibility of leaders being perceived as weak, and the time-consuming process of training leaders to become servants (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016; Schermerhorn et al., 2012). The impact of the servant leadership approach is contingent on leaders’ willingness to take on a subservient role and elevate the needs of employees in order to inspire followers to become servants as well.

**Situational leadership.** The situational leadership approach is centered on circumstances or surroundings. Situational leadership requires leaders to adapt to their surroundings and effect change (Graeff, 1983; Northouse, 2016; Trottier, 2005). Graeff (1983), Northouse (2016), and Trottier (2005) acknowledged that situational leadership encompasses two major components—leadership style and development level of followers. The U.S. Army has been using the situational leadership approach for some time now to operate in complex and stressful environments where the demands for success are high (U.S. Army, 2012).
The strengths of situational leadership include a practical approach that works well in a variety of organizational settings, is widely used for training the majority of managers throughout Fortune 500 companies, enables leaders to respond quickly in complex situations, and facilitates leaders to develop subordinates accordingly (Northouse, 2016). In contrast, the weaknesses of situational leadership include a dichotomy between commitment and competence and the four developmental levels—high competence/high commitment, high competence/variable commitment, some competence/low commitment and low competence/low commitment, and ambiguity to accurately match leader style with follower developmental needs (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The situational leadership approach challenges the abilities of leaders to adjust quickly to unexpected situations and affect change appropriately.

**Transactional leadership.** The transactional leadership approach relies on contingent rewards for positive and negative reinforcement. Transactional leadership is an exchange process between the leader and his or her followers where the transactional leader (a) identifies the needs and goals of followers, (b) uses rewards and punishment to accomplish tasks, and (c) focuses on the present to ensure tasks are accomplished (Daft, 2011; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

The strengths of transactional leadership include its effectiveness when responding to crises, stimulating employee motivation and performance through rewards and punishment, facilitating leaders to effectively manage and complete tasks individually, and operating as a process-driven system (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). In contrast, the weaknesses of transactional leadership include its passiveness where leaders rely on contingent rewards for positive and negative reinforcement, that it relies heavily

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on status quo, that it restricts leaders to operate inside the box for solutions, and it operates at the fundamental level of needs through managerial style versus higher needs in the organization (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The transactional leadership approach gives leaders leverage to manage employees’ performance with the aid of passive methods built around awards and punishments.

**Transformational leadership.** The transformational leadership approach produces change in organizations through the stimulation of internal resources. Transformational leadership is a process that brings about significant change in an organization from the inside (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016).

The strengths of transformational leadership include implementing leadership that is proactive, working to change the organizational culture by implementing new ideas, allowing employees to achieve objectives through higher ideas and moral values, motivating followers by encouraging them to place group needs first, and promoting creative and innovative ideas for solving problems (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Rawat, 2015). In contrast, the weaknesses of transformational leadership include unclear explanations of relational variables essential for stimulating employee productivity, too much focus at the leader-follower dyadic level, failure to reveal detrimental effects on both followers and the organization, and demonstration of favoritism toward upper management (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Rawat, 2015). The transformational leadership approach focuses on changing an organization’s culture through its employees, who pursue change through creative and innovative ideas.
Theoretical Framework

The full range of leadership model (FRLM) was used to provide the theoretical framework for this study. Theoretical frameworks enable researchers to conceptualize the study on a comprehensive scale. The FRLM was conceived through James McGregor Burns’s work (as cited in Stafford, n.d.). According to Stafford (n.d.), the FRLM is a leadership theory that facilitates leaders to lead based upon their subordinates behavioral patterns. Figure 1 illustrates the components of the FRLM. The effectiveness and ineffectiveness of these components are expanded upon in greater details in chapter 2.

Figure 1. Full range of leadership model. From “Experiencing Transformational Leadership” by C. Boyd, 2016, from (https://cassandraboyd.wordpress.com/2016/03/01/experiencing-transformational-leadership).

Burns argued that leadership is associated with one of two paths: transformational or transactional (Stafford, n.d.). The FRLM contained three leadership models: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership (Northouse, 2016; Salter, Harris, & McCormack, 2014; Stafford, n.d.). Burns differentiated the three leadership models based on the type of relationship a leader
chooses to develop with employees and the subsequent results of the relationship (as cited in Northouse, 2016). Teaching leaders to effectively collaborate, build trust, motivate, and nurture followers to feel good about themselves in times of change is an enormous benefit obtained from transformational leadership (Northouse, 2016; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The FRLM facilitates leaders with building and sustaining relationships with employees through disparate environments where employees are motivated and challenged to accomplish goals.

**Federal Government Employee**

Federal government employees are essential to this nation’s defense. The services performed by federal government employees generate wealth and establish safe environments for the American people (OPM, 2018). Federal government employees are U.S. citizens employed as civilian employees by a federal agency, whether in the continental United States or outside the continental United States (Alvey, 2018). In 2017, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM, 2018) identified over 2.2 million federal government employees on its payroll. Working for the federal government is similar to working in the private sector: employees work set hours, receive pay and benefits, and compete for advancements (Sherman, 2018). Federal government employees are critical to sustaining this nation’s defense and preserving the American way of life.

Vilorio (2014) reported that OPM assigns federal government employees in one of six occupational categories: administrative, professional, technical, blue collar, clerical, other, white collar, and unspecified. The education requirements for federal government employees include having no high school diploma as an adult, high school
diploma, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and doctoral or professional degree (OPM, n.d.). Not all federal government employees are required to have a security clearance. However, in order for someone to receive an appointment as a federal government employee, the individual must be subject to an investigation (OPM, n.d.). Federal government employees receive pay via appropriated funds (AF) or non-appropriated funds (NAF; OPM. n.d.). AF is authorized through Congress, whereas NAF is employee generated (Sims, n.d.). Federal government employees’ contributions to the nation are immeasurable. Therefore, it is imperative for the leaders of organizations to comprehend the importance of investing in enhancing employee morale.

**Employee Morale**

Morale affects an individual’s state of mind and behavior and defining its very nature has proven to be challenging. The definition of morale has remained elusive among researchers (Baehr & Renck, 1958). According to Arunchand and Ramanathan (2013), morale is a relationship that an employee creates with other employees and leaders in his or her organization (Jeter, 2014). Although the definition of morale remains subjective among researchers, it is associated with producing a positive result or state.

Employee morale has proven to be an essential component necessary for building and sustaining organizational efficiency, productivity, and stability. Giese and Ruter (1949) concluded that certain factors—production efficiency, error efficiency, labor turnover, tardiness, and absenteeism—are strong indicators for assessing employee morale. Conversely, Myeni (2010) contended that dignity and compassion through quality leadership are key factors for improving employee morale. Research of the
literature produced myriad articles, books, and studies on morale; however, there were only nine peer-reviewed articles relating to U.S. federal government, employee, and morale. The importance of employee morale reveals that failure to comprehend and address the aforementioned factors can create long-term and costly negativism in the workplace.

**Employee Productivity**

Productivity is precipitated by morale. Research revealed that there is a strong correlation between employee morale and productivity (Kathirvel, 2010; Tiwari, 2014). Tiwari (2014), Weakliem and Frenkel (2006), and Wofford (1971) revealed that job satisfaction increases productivity. In order to achieve high levels of productivity, organizations must create an environment that is inclusive and caters to the needs of employees (Tiwari, 2014). Research of the literature revealed that measuring productivity is complex, and a dichotomy often exists between the individual management perspective and the organizational perspective (Fuller, 2016). Research of the literature produced ample articles, books, and studies on productivity; however, there were only 322 returns on literature about productivity, employees, and the federal government. Literature confirmed that productivity is driven by morale. Productivity operates on a cause-and-effect continuum. If productivity is low, studies have shown that morale is the primary cause (Kathirvel, 2010; Tiwari, 2014).

**Summary**

Myriad studies confirmed that leadership has an enormous impact on employee morale and productivity. Leadership is only as effective as the leadership approach used. Literature has shown that there are copious leadership approaches that have been used
thousands of years. Determining which approach is most effective is a challenging task for organizations, leaders, and employees.

The key variables of the study—leadership approaches, federal government employee, morale, and productivity—produced insufficient literature about leadership approaches that federal government civilian employees perceived as most and least effective for enhancing employee morale and productivity.

**Research Problem**

The problem is ineffective leadership has, at least in part, created low morale that could negatively impact the productivity of the federal government civilian workforce. The compelling results of the Federal Election Commission Office of the Inspector General (2016) report, Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS; OPM, 2012) results, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2012) revealed that morale has declined throughout the federal government civilian workforce significantly over the past 10 years due in part to ineffective leadership (Federal Election Commission Office of the Inspector General, 2016; GAO, 2012; Jeter, 2014; Maurer, 2013; OPM, 2012). The federal government solicited its civilian workforce of 1.6 million employees to participate in the FEVS in order to provide their perspectives on how well the federal government (by proxy of their organizations) is providing effective leadership. Over 687,000 employees participated in the survey, nearly doubling the number of past participants (OPM, 2012). The results revealed that the federal government was lacking effective leadership among its vast ranks of civilian employees with supervisory responsibilities. Employees complained that their supervisors did not provide effective leadership. According to Leigh (n.d.), “Low morale can be destructive in any organizational setting
and can lead to dissatisfaction, poor productivity, absenteeism and even turnover. Low morale causes disconnect between employees, peers, jobs, managers and the organization” (para. 1). Furthermore, Ngambi (2011) declared, “Morale can be the fuel that drives an organization forward or the fuel that feeds the fires of employee discontent, poor performance, and absenteeism” (p. 764).

Research of the literature confirmed that there are a number of leadership approaches; some have proven effective and some ineffective for enhancing employees’ morale and productivity for the betterment of the organization (Daft, 2011; Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider, 2015; Northouse, 2015). Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each leadership approach is one of the most challenging tasks for organizations, leaders, and employees because choosing the wrong leadership approach has led to the demise of many organizations (Iqbal et al., 2015). An effective leadership approach is one that allows organizations to achieve their vision and mission by way of maximizing resources efficiently (Wren, 2018). Literature has shown that substantial studies have been conducted on the efficacy of leadership approaches in the private sector of the United States. However, there is a dearth of studies concerning the most effective leadership approaches when it comes to the federal government.

Researchers have acknowledged that the greatest contributing factor to employee morale, productivity, and organizational success is leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Klann, 2004; Novotney, 2010; Salter et al., 2014; Tiwari, 2014; Trottier, 2005; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). It is vital for the federal government to recognize that there is a strong correlation between employee morale and productivity; one is always dependent upon the other (Kathirvel, 2010). Studies have confirmed that employees respond well to leaders
who have their best interests in mind. When employees perceive that the work environment is conducive to meeting their needs, morale increases significantly. In contrast, when employees perceive the work environment to be detrimental to meet their needs, morale declines quickly (Arunchand & Ramanathan, 2013). Failure by the federal government to explore alternative leadership approaches to enhance employee morale and productivity will only exacerbate the current problem.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity.

**Research Questions**

1. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee morale?

2. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to increase employee productivity?

3. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to employee morale?

4. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to employee productivity?
Significance of the Problem

Ineffective leadership negatively affects federal government employees’ morale and productivity, which creates an inefficient workforce (Maurer, 2013). This problem is significant because of its impact on national defense, the economy, and federal government employees (Nichols, 2013; GAO, 2012; OPM, 2012). According to Nichols (2013), the impact can be devastating because low morale among federal employees impacts productivity, which can create potential economic and security uncertainties for federal workers, the American economy and national defense. Additionally, taxpayers spent $106.46 billion on federal government employees’ salaries and benefits in 2012, and that number is projected to climb higher over the coming years (U.S. Federal Pay, 2012). Federal government employees are indispensable to the American economy; these employees manage national parks, improve highways, process claims for pensions, run job training programs, enforce and protect the environment, and fill many other positions that are crucial for aiding the economy (Nichols, 2013).

The federal government employs approximately 2 million civilian workers in hundreds of agencies at offices across the nation. America’s taxpayers make a significant annual investment to pay for the total compensation for the federal government civilian workforce. In 2019 executive branch civilian workers’ wages and benefits exceeded $290 billion. Such a large annual financial investment presents a significant issue to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently and effectively to provide the expected level of service and support (Edwards, 2019).

Leadership efficacy has an enormous impact on employee morale and productivity (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Jeter, 2014; Klann, 2004; Novotney, 2010; Salter et
Research indicates that implementing an effective leadership approach is imperative for improving employee morale and productivity (Jeter, 2014; Wren, 2018). Studies revealed that the federal government was lacking effective leadership among its vast ranks of civilian employees with supervisory responsibilities (Jeter, 2014; Mattero, 2018; OPM, 2012). Army leadership research reports revealed a gap in leaders’ ability to develop subordinates where 67% of subordinate leaders failed to meet standards (Mattero, 2018). Studies affirmed that when organizations select leadership approaches that focus on employees’ needs, morale and performance increase significantly (Iqbal et al., 2015; Jeter, 2014). The decline in federal government employees’ morale demands the immediate attention of policy makers, military leadership, and the OPM (Federal Election Commission Office of the Inspector General, 2016; GAO, 2012; OPM, 2012).

This study will add to the insufficient body of knowledge pertaining to leadership approaches’ efficacy for improving federal government employee morale and productivity. As a result, this study also explores leadership approaches that have a positive effect on federal government employees’ morale and productivity from the perspective of federal government civilian employees with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The scarcity of studies on effective leadership approaches at the federal government level reveal a gap in the literature. Research of the literature on federal government employees and morale produced a meager return of nine studies, and a mediocre return of 322 studies on productivity, employees, and the federal government.

This study aims to close the gap in research concerning leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive as being most effective to enhance
morale and productivity. The results of this study will provide the federal government with new perspectives to explore and potentially espouse more effective leadership approaches that have proven to be the most successful in increasing employee morale and productivity in the private sector. Additionally, the results will inform the federal government that refining approaches is not an admission of failure but rather a positive change in trajectory to improve leadership development throughout the enterprise by informing the development of new policies and procedures. This study will also encourage military organizations—army, navy, and air force—with civilian employees at the Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California, to embrace the results and actively pursue leadership approaches most supported by employees for enhancing morale and productivity.

Definitions of Terms

Operational Definitions

Federal government. The governing body that is comprised of leaders, managers, and employees who provide a variety of services that go beyond prosperity and safety. It has been said that the federal government’s most important responsibilities are to provide national defense and insurance—welfare, social security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc. (OPM, 2018).

Federal government civilian employee. A U.S. citizen employed as a federal government civilian employee by a federal agency (Alvey, 2018), and slotted in one of the following six occupational categories: (a) administrative, (b) professional, (c) technical, (d) blue collar, (e) clerical, and (f) other white collar and unspecified (Vilorio, 2014).
**General schedule.** General schedule (GS) is the pay scale for the majority of federal employees. There are 15 grades, ranging from GS-1 (entry level for new employees) to GS-15 (executive level employees). Additionally, there are 10 steps within each GS grade, for example, GS-7, Step 5 (OPM, n.d.). The different levels of GS pay grades represent varying degrees of experience, skills and responsibilities of U.S. Army civilian employees are required to possess and perform. The higher the pay grade, the greater scope of duties and responsibilities. GS pay grades, and associated occupational categories, for the study include: GS-5, administrative and security force; GS-6, law enforcement; GS-7, administrative; GS-9, administrative and clerical; and GS-11, administrative.

**Leadership approach.** A practice, a mindset, and a set of skills and knowledge that affects a change, which is not always a positive change (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Dansereau et al., 2013; Epitropaki et al., 2013; Northouse, 2016; Watkins et al., 2011).

**Morale.** “The mental and emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand” (“Morale,” n.d.). This mental emotional condition impacts the relationship that an employee has with other employees and leaders in his or her organization (Arunchand & Ramanathan, 2013), and the kind of attitude an employee displays towards his or her occupation, colleagues and leaders within the organization (Tiwari, 2014).

**Productivity.** The effectiveness of effort measured by outputs compared to inputs where results are obtained in direct relationship to an employee’s morale (Tiwari, 2014). Additionally, productivity is an assessment of the quality of work produced by workers (Rouse, 2014). Furthermore, productivity involves a relationship between the
output amount and the amount of inputs (Krugman, 1994), where the total value of output is divided by the initial amount of input (Fuller, 2016).

**Theoretical Definitions**

**Full range of leadership model.** A leadership framework containing three leadership approaches—transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership.

**Delimitations**

The study is delimited to the Department of the Army Civilian employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11 with nonsupervisory responsibilities, and having a minimum of three years of employment with the US Army Garrison, Presidio of Monterey at the Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California.

**Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into five distinct chapters. Chapter I presents an introduction, definitions, and research. Chapter II presents a review of relevant literature covering leadership approaches, federal government employees, employee morale, and productivity. Chapter III differentiates the research design and methodology used in the study. Chapter IV focuses on the study’s findings—with the aid of interview questions and interview. Chapter V contains the summary, findings, conclusions, discussions, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II is a review of the literature, which illustrates comprehensive details on leadership approaches for the purpose of determining what leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive as being most and least effective for enhancing employee morale and productivity. The chapter is grounded in seminal literature that centers on the variables of the study—leadership approaches, federal government employees, morale and productivity—as they relate to the purpose statement and research questions of the study. The seminal literature includes books, dissertations, journal articles, reports, and other documents covering information both past and present (Roberts, 2010). Though extensive literature exists on leadership approaches’ effect on employee morale and productivity in the private sector, scarce literature exists covering the federal government (Risher, 2018; Sherman, 2018; Tuutti, 2012). Research of the literature continues to show that leadership approaches offer effective methods for improving employee morale and productivity.

The chapter is organized by sections that are in alignment with the study variables. A synthesis matrix was used to organize the variables (see Appendix A). The first section covers the historical and modern review of seven leadership approaches. The second section reports on federal government employees’ purpose and importance to the nation. The third and fourth sections describe the importance of employee morale and productivity respectively in the workplace. The fifth section emphasizes gaps in the literature regarding leadership approaches at the federal government level. The sixth section illustrates Bass and Avolio’s (1994) full range of leadership model (FRLM)
theoretical framework. The final section concludes with a summary on the literature presented in this chapter.

**Historical and Modern Review of Leadership Approaches**

Leadership approaches have existed in organizations for ages, and their effectiveness as well as ineffectiveness have proven both beneficial and detrimental to organizations, leaders, and employees. Scholars over time have identified several leadership approaches, which include the seven leadership approaches recognized in the study—laissez-faire, servant, situational approach, transactional, transformational (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016), autocratic, and democratic (Khan et al., 2015). The aforementioned leadership approaches are significant, and comprehending their strengths and weaknesses can be challenging. The remainder of this section examined the seven leadership approaches’ schisms—seminal research, definitions, strengths and weaknesses, and associated case studies.

**Autocratic Leadership**

The autocratic leadership approach affects employees’ response via positional power. Autocratic leadership encompasses the centralization of authority where leaders derive power from their position using force and rewards and imposing strict controls on decision-making (Daft, 2011; De Hoogh et al., 2015). Autocratic leadership involves unilateral power afforded to leaders via their hierarchal position in the organization, enabling leaders to compel subordinates to accomplish tasks by way of force and rewards.

**Seminal research.** Autocratic leadership gained recognition in 1939 via the social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Research of the literature revealed Lewin as the creator
of the classical leadership model, which included three leadership approaches: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire (Flynn, 2019). The *American Journal of Sociology* was the first journal that acknowledged Kurt Lewin with conducting the first formal study using autocratic leadership (Shaeffer, 2018). Lewin’s research enabled scholars to expand upon and share consistent definitions for autocratic leadership.

**Definition.** Bass (2008), Daft (2011), Khan et al. (2015), and Flynn (2019) acknowledged that autocratic leadership is an approach in which leaders who use it are domineering and aloof. Daft (2011) defined autocratic leadership as the centralization of authority where leaders derive power from their position, “control of rewards, and coercion” (p. 44). De Hoogh et al. (2015) defined autocratic leadership as a unilateral decision-making and concentration of power approach that a leader secures based on his or her hierarchical position within the organization. Later on, Chukwusa (2018) defined autocratic leadership as leadership forced on an organization where a leader imposes authoritarian control over subordinates for the purpose of retaining complete decision-making authority. The aforementioned definitions are in agreement that autocratic leadership involves domineering, unilateral decision-making and centralization of power that leaders obtain based on their position within the organization. The advantages and disadvantages of autocratic leadership are disclosed in its strengths and weaknesses.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of autocratic leadership include quantity of performance from employees while under close supervision, positively affected employee morale and productivity in restricted environments, and expedited decision-making when time is critical (Chukwusa, 2018; Daft, 2011; De Hoogh et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2015). In contrast, autocratic leadership weaknesses include
employees’ displeasure at being micromanaged, demoralization of a cohesive team environment and performance, violence and outbursts among employees, repressed creativity, and eroded trust (Daft, 2011; De Hoogh et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2015).

Autocratic leadership gives leaders positional power to maximize control over employees through the use of unilateral decision-making, rewards, and coercion in order to ensure task completion. The subsequent case study illustrates the consequences of applying the autocratic leadership approach.

**Case study.** Kurt Lewin conducted an empirical study at the University of Iowa with two groups of participants using the autocratic leadership approach (Daft, 2011). Lewin elucidated that one group was formed to be supervised by a leader using the autocratic leadership approach, whereas the other group was formed with no designated leader, but its members were instructed to collaborate and work as a team. According to Lewin, results from the group supervised by the leader using the autocratic leadership approach revealed that the group (a) performed extremely well due in part to micromanagement, (b) its members were displeased with micromanaging their performance, (c) they became hostile as a result of being micromanaged, and (d) morale was perceived as poor. In comparison, the results of the second group without an autocratic leader revealed that members (a) performed well, (b) experienced less stress, and (c) morale was perceived as high (Daft, 2011).

The literature shows that autocratic leadership works best when increasing productivity is the primary goal and the state of employee morale is not important. The case study conducted by Kurt Lewin inferred that the autocratic leadership approach increased productivity; however, it proved counterproductive for enhancing employee
morale. Based on the information presented autocratic leadership is predominantly unilateral, whereas the following democratic leadership approach enables bilateral participation between leaders and subordinates.

**Democratic Leadership**

The democratic leadership approach gives employees the opportunity to demonstrate their skill sets. Democratic leadership involves a process by which leaders delegate authority to subordinates (Daft, 2011) and encourages employees to openly share their knowledge, skills, and talents for completing tasks (Khan et al., 2015). The democratic leadership approach is a management tool used by leaders to build dyadic relationships with employees. Democratic leadership centers on the relationship between leaders and subordinates.

**Seminal research.** The democratic leadership approach received recognition in several empirical studies conducted by Kurt Lewin (Daft, 2011; Flynn, 2019). Relatedly, St. Thomas University also acknowledged Kurt Lewin, a behavioral researcher, with conducting the first empirical studies on the democratic leadership approach during the 1930s and 1940s (St. Thomas University Online, 2018a). The results of Lewin’s research facilitated organizations to comprehend the value of implementing the democratic leadership approach (St. Thomas University Online, 2018a).

**Definition.** In 1994, Gastil reported that scholars from 1938 through 1985 failed to agree on an equivalent definition for democratic leadership, and in 1990, Bass reported that between 1938 and 1985, democratic leadership encompassed 29 different definitions (Choi, 2007). Daft (2011) stated that democratic leadership involves a process in which a leader delegates authority to subordinates and solicits their participation in completing
tasks and sharing knowledge. Khan et al. (2015) contended that when it comes to soliciting employees’ participation, democratic leadership “capitalizes on their skills and talents by letting them share their views, rather than simply expecting them to conform” (p. 90). Furthermore, democratic leadership has been defined as a leadership approach that parallels participative leadership and shared leadership (St. Thomas University Online, 2018a). The various definitions for democratic leadership revealed that scholars do not agree on a single definition for the leadership approach. Democratic leadership’s strengths and weaknesses enable leaders to assess the pros and cons of implementing the approach.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of democratic leadership include encouraging employees’ participation in the decision-making process, keeping employees abreast of work-related issues, having leaders espouse the role of coach, motivating employees to produce quality work, building trust, and increasing employees’ morale and productivity (Choi, 2007; Khan et al., 2015). In contrast, the weaknesses of democratic leadership include requiring work on the part of both leaders and employees, slowing decision-making by giving everyone a voice, causing confusion among employees who are reluctant to assume leadership roles, and having leaders use the approach as a short-term solution in order to avoid making crucial decisions (Choi, 2007; Goleman, 2000). The democratic leadership approach gives leaders tools that solicit employees’ participation by encouraging them to openly share their knowledge, skills, and talents in a team environment. Employing the democratic leadership approach involves consequences that leaders need to assess. The ensuing case study discloses consequences associated with the democratic leadership approach.
Case study. Munir and Iqbal (2018) conducted an empirical study in 2010 that investigated which leadership style of principals created job satisfaction for over 1,005 teachers from 100 colleges in the province of Punjab, India. The 100 colleges are for women only. Munir and Iqbal’s study revealed that principals using the democratic leadership style stimulated job satisfaction for teachers who participated in the study. Furthermore, Munir and Iqbal concluded that the most practiced leadership style for producing positive job satisfaction for women in colleges is democratic leadership.

Munir and Iqbal’s (2018) case study confirmed that the democratic leadership approach proved effective for principals’ and teachers’ relationships in colleges. The literature disclosed that the democratic leadership approach is one of the most preferred leadership approaches for generating job satisfaction among women in colleges throughout the Punjab province. The results of the case study substantiated what scholars reported on the democratic leadership approach: It builds positive relationship between principals and teachers, increases teachers’ confidence and job satisfaction (Munir & Iqbal, 2018).

The literature on democratic leadership illustrates that the leadership approach is effective in an environment where time is not a factor when it comes to decision-making and delegation of tasks. Based on the results from the case study, the democratic leadership approach has the potential to impact employee morale and employee productivity in a positive manner. The democratic leadership approach promotes relationship building between leaders and subordinates where employees play an active role in the decision-making and problem-solving process, whereas the following laissez-faire leadership approach demands that leaders take a hands-off approach.
Laissez-Faire Leadership

The laissez-faire leadership approach gives employees the freedom to operate in an autonomous working environment. Laissez-faire leadership is a hands-off approach where leaders are less concerned about the development of subordinates (Khan et al., 2015). Leaders make a conscious decision to abdicate responsibility, provide no feedback to employees, and circumvent the needs of employees (Northouse, 2016). Laissez-faire leadership is an approach where leadership presence for employee development is inconsequential.

Seminal research. Scholars ascribed Kurt Lewin as the author of the term *laissez faire leadership*. Lewin determined that laissez-faire leadership is the opposite of autocratic leadership (St. Thomas University Online, 2018b). However, according to Northouse (2016) and Salter et al. (2014), Bass and Avolio were the first to identify laissez faire in their full range of leadership model.

Definition. According to scholars, the laissez-faire leadership approach has been defined as a hands-off approach where a leader has little concern about the development of subordinates (Khan et al., 2015). Northouse (2016) expanded on the laissez-faire definition stating that the leader who chooses this approach “abdicates responsibility, delays decisions, gives no feedback, and makes little effort to help followers satisfy their needs” (p. 172). Chaudhry and Javed (2012) declared that laissez-faire leadership approach works well in environments where skilled professionals are motivated and require no supervision for obtaining goals. Dansereau et al. (2013) defined laissez-faire leadership as a leadership approach that is absent of leadership, allowing followers to
take risks within their scope of responsibilities. The consequences of using the laissez-faire leadership approach can be ascertained in its strengths and weaknesses.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of laissez-faire leadership include giving employees the freedom to work autonomously, allowing employees to establish goals, encouraging employees to become experts in problem-solving, satisfying employees’ needs, extending decision-making so that it is not rushed, abolishing fear of receiving negative feedback, and inspiring employees to take pride in their work (Khan et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016). In contrast, the weaknesses of laissez-faire include that employees may feel a lack of appreciation for their work, employees may abuse rules, and employees who lack confidence are left to fend for themselves (Khan et al., 2015). The impact of the laissez-faire leadership approach is contingent on the confidence level and experience of employees to work autonomously without receiving developmental feedback. The subsequent case study illustrates why it is important for leaders to familiarize themselves with the embedded consequences of the laissez-faire leadership approach.

**Case study.** In the 1960s, the laissez-faire leadership approach was revealed in one of the most notable case studies involving Intel. Intel is an American company that manufactures semiconductor computer circuits. The company was founded in 1968 by American engineers Robert Noyce and Gordon Moore, and its headquarters is located in Santa Clara, California (Hall, 2010). Robert Noyce helped launch Intel in corporate America. In the interim stages, Noyce had chosen the laissez-faire leadership style. The leadership approach first proved effective in getting the company up and running. Noyce’s hands-off approach inspired brilliant engineers, Andrew Grove and Gordon
Moore, to work on ways to help expand the company. However, as the company matured along the stages of growth, Noyce’s decision to stay aloof was soon viewed as being insufficient for continued growth; it no longer was ideal for helping the company perfect quality assurance processes and reducing costs. Intel cut ties with Noyce and chose a leader whose leadership approach was viewed as being more favorable for Intel’s vision, long-term growth, and goals (St. Thomas University Online, 2018b).

Scholars agreed that laissez-faire leadership is best suited for professionals such as doctors, engineers, scientists, merchandising managers, retail buyers, and other professions where individuals require insufficient supervision and possess the capacity to work in a team having autonomy (St. Thomas University Online, 2018b). Laissez-faire leadership has been labeled a hands-off approach in which a leader’s presence is totally absent. Whereas, servant leadership is seen as an approach in which a leader takes on the role of servant.

**Servant Leadership**

The servant leadership approach elevates the needs of the followers above the needs of the leaders. Servant leadership can give the impression of being a paradox because leaders are subservient to followers through their acts of service (Northouse, 2016). Servant leadership involves leaders serving employees in order to gain their trust (Daft, 2011; Schermerhorn et al., 2012). Servant leadership facilitates leaders to meet the needs of subordinates through their acts of service for the purpose of stimulating those same subordinates to become future servants.

**Seminal research.** Daft (2011) reported that Robert Greenleaf was the first to define servant leadership in his book that was inspired after reading *Journey to the East,* a
book written by Hermann Hesse. Northouse (2016) also credited Robert Greenleaf with creating the term servant leadership as well as conducting several well-known seminal works. From Greenleaf’s viewpoint, servant leadership was about being selfless (Northouse, 2016).

**Definition.** Daft (2011) and Schermerhorn et al. (2012) acknowledged that servant leadership is about serving others as well as helping others to discover their calling of service through the transcending of self-interest to passionately serve others. Patrnchak (2015) credited Robert Greenleaf with defining servant leadership as an altruistic approach in which leaders unselfishly elevate the needs of others above their own. Additionally, Dansereau et al. (2013) defined servant leadership as a paradigm shift from other leadership approaches in which leaders espouse a proactive leadership style of sacrificing their needs and placing the needs, goals, and interests of others in the organization first in order to stimulate future servant leaders. The aforementioned definitions for servant leadership centered on placing the needs of others first. The benefits of employing the servant leadership approach are revealed in its strengths and weaknesses.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of servant leadership include leaders placing the needs of employees first, leaders building trust with employees through their actions, leaders inspiring followers to emulate their actions and serve others, leaders and followers demonstrating effective communication, and leaders fostering community within organizations (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016; Schermerhorn et al., 2012). In contrast, the weaknesses of servant leadership include the potential for employees to be less motivated, the need for leaders to abdicate their authority, the possibility of leaders...
being perceived as weak, and the time-consuming process of training leaders to become servants (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016; Schermerhorn et al., 2012). The impact of the servant leadership approach is contingent on leaders’ willingness to take on a subservient role and elevate the needs of employees in order to inspire followers to become servants as well. There are no guarantees that servant leadership will work in all organizational environments; however, the following case study demonstrates one environment where servant leadership was effective.

**Case study.** Patrnchak (2015) affirmed in a 2008 case study that servant leadership proved effective for regaining patients’ and employees’ trust at the Cleveland Clinic, a primary healthcare institution. In 2008, the clinic employed over 44,000 workers in places such as Florida, Nevada, Canada, and Abu Dhabi. The clinic was known for providing exceptional care to its patients, and employees had trust in the leadership. However, in 2008, things quickly changed. Patients and employees had lost trust in the leadership, which led to the clinic receiving its worst rating conducted through Gallop (Patrnchak, 2015). To regain the trust and confidence of patients and employees, the clinic reached out to Ken Jennings, a consultant and the founder of Third Rivers. Jennings proposed an immediate shake-up of the organization’s culture and implemented a five-step training plan that required employees and the leadership to espouse and demonstrate the qualities of a servant leader. At the end of 5 years, results revealed that the Cleveland Clinic was ranked fourth of all U.S. hospitals. The hospital regained the trust of patients and employees, thanks to Ken Jennings’s recommendation to espouse and live out the qualities of an authentic servant leader (Patrnchak, 2015).
Servant leadership is a leadership approach that relies on a leader’s willingness to take on a subservient role and elevate the needs of others above his or her own needs. The Cleveland Clinic’s decision to have its employees espouse and model the qualities of a servant leader proved successful for regaining the trust of its patients and employees. The environment was conducive to change, and the servant leadership approach, at the time, proved effective for bringing employees together to accomplish an important goal. Servant leadership operates in an environment of selfless service, whereas the subsequent situational leadership involves adapting to disparate situations.

**Situational Leadership**

The situational leadership approach is centered on circumstances or surroundings. Situational leadership requires leaders to adapt to their surroundings and effect change (Graeff, 1983; Northouse, 2016; Trottier, 2005). The situational leadership approach is centered on the operative word in its title, “situational”; leaders adjust their approaches to all stakeholders, all those they develop and supervise, all environmental factors, and the goals and vision and values of the organization (Graeff, 1983; Northouse, 2016; Trottier, 2005). The U.S. Army (2012) has been using the situational leadership approach for some time now to operate in complex and stressful environments where the demands for success are high. Yeakey (2002) reported that the U.S. Army’s first experience with situational leadership dates back to the creation of the Continental Army, where General George Washington reached out to a Prussian officer to train a large army of men who were lacking discipline, teamwork, control, and organization.

**Seminal research.** Situational leadership was first illustrated by Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1979) in their life cycle theory of leadership (see also Mosley, Mosley,
& Pietri, 2015), which was inspired by “Reddin’s (1967) 3-D management style theory” (Northouse, 2016, p. 93). The model was conceived through a research study conducted at Ohio State University, where researchers inferred that there are numerous leadership behaviors. These behaviors can be assigned into one of two distinct areas: (a) high-task/high-relationships behavior, or (b) low-task/low-relationships behavior. High-task/high-relationships behavior is appropriate for subordinates who lack confidence, whereas low-task/low-relationships is appropriate for mature subordinates (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Mosley et al., 2015).

**Definition.** Situational leadership is defined as a contingent theory that facilitates leaders to view followers as the central focus of the situation and consequently apply the appropriate leadership behavior to achieve the right level of development (Daft, 2011). From a different point of view, Northouse (2016) defined situational leadership as a leadership approach that focuses on leadership in disparate situations not controlled by the leader. Furthermore, Dansereau et al. (2013) described situational leadership as a leadership approach that is situationally driven and containing four distinct leadership styles—directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating—that facilitate leaders to determine the most effective way to meet the needs of employees for the purpose of growth and development. The previously mentioned definitions reveal that scholars are in agreement that the fundamental definition for situational leadership centers on the situation, environment, and interaction with people at the time and place. The advantages and disadvantages of situational leadership are disclosed in its strengths and weaknesses.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of situational leadership include a practical approach that works well in a variety of organizational settings, is widely used
for training the majority of managers throughout Fortune 500 companies, enables leaders to respond quickly in complex situations, and facilitates leaders to develop subordinates accordingly (Northouse, 2016). In contrast, McCleskey (2014) reported the weaknesses of situational leadership that Hersey and Blanchard (1969) identified as three flaws with the situational leadership model related to its (a) consistency, (b) continuity, and (c) conformity. Bass (2008) identified several weaknesses with situational leadership related to (a) lack of internal consistency, (b) conceptual contradictions, and (c) ambiguities. In addition, Northouse (2016) pointed out weaknesses with situational leadership, which include that (a) it lacks a strong body of research to validate the theoretical foundations, (b) there is ambiguity on elucidating how followers grow from developing levels to advanced levels, and (c) the model failed to prepare leaders to operate in group settings, it is structured for leader-subordinate environment. The situational leadership approach challenges leaders to adjust quickly to unexpected situations and effect change appropriately. Leaders must willingly adapt their leadership style to the current environment. The subsequent case study illustrates the consequences for applying the situational leadership approach.

Case study. Gumpert and Hableton (1979) conducted a study at the Xerox Corporation’s Information Systems Group division in Rochester, New York. The Information Systems Group was responsible for copier and duplicator products. The goal of the study was to facilitate Xerox managers to adjust their leadership style based on the maturity level of subordinates and task requirements. Xerox solicited 159 managers, and 65 managers participated. The managers were instructed to complete three forms: a manager questionnaire to collect demographic data, a professional maturity scale, and a
manager rating form. Also, managers were required to rate their effectiveness on two behaviors: task behavior and relationship behavior. In addition to managers’ participation, Gumpert and Hableton reached out to employees who were supervised by those managers and asked them to rate their supervisor’s effectiveness on the two behaviors. The study’s results revealed the following:

Highly effective managers knew more about situational leadership and use it more than less effective managers. Strong evidence revealed that when situational leadership was applied correctly, subordinate job performance was judged higher, and the gains in job performance were practically and statistically significant.

(Gumpert & Hableton, 1979, p. 12)

Situational leadership is a leadership approach that has been proven effective in various organizational settings, illuminating subordinates as the key variable. Gumpert and Hableton’s (1979) case study disclosed that situational leadership is identified by various circumstances; therefore, it has the potential to impact employee morale and productivity in a positive manner. Situational leadership is conditionally driven, whereas the following transactional leadership approach relies on an exchange process involving leaders and subordinates.

**Transactional Leadership**

The transactional leadership approach relies on contingent rewards for positive and negative reinforcement. Transactional leadership is an exchange process between leaders and followers in which the transactional leader (a) identifies the needs and goals of followers, (b) uses rewards and punishment to accomplish tasks, and (c) focuses on the present to ensure tasks are accomplished (Daft, 2011; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).
Transactional leadership operates from the basis that when a leader gives out one thing and he or she expects to receive something in return.

**Seminal research.** Scholars acknowledged Bass (1985) as the first individual to present transactional leadership as a new leadership style (Bian et al., 2019). The leadership style resembled two other well-known leadership theories, leadership-member exchange and path-goal leadership (Bian et al., 2019). In fact, Bass’s (1985) work highlighted that transactional leadership focused on an exchange between leaders and subordinates (Bian et al., 2019).

**Definition.** Rothfelder, Ottenbacher, and Harrington (2012) defined transactional leadership as a leadership model that primarily focuses on an exchange between leaders and subordinates in which leaders explicitly communicate their expectations as well as how subordinates will be rewarded for task completions. In addition, Northouse (2016) elucidated that transactional leadership is neither designed to single out individual needs of followers nor make followers’ development a priority. Rather, transactional leadership primarily focuses on goal accomplishments through rewards exchange from leaders and followers. The aforementioned definitions confirm that scholars are in agreement that transactional leadership involves an exchange of awards and tasks completion between leaders and subordinates. The advantages and disadvantages of transactional leadership are disclosed in its strengths and weaknesses.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of transactional leadership include its effectiveness when responding to crises, stimulating employee motivation and performance through rewards and punishment, facilitating leaders to effectively manage and complete tasks individually, and operating as a process-driven system (Odumeru &
In contrast, the weaknesses of transactional leadership include its passiveness in which leaders rely on contingent rewards for positive and negative reinforcement, it relies heavily on status quo, it restricts leaders to operate inside the box for solutions, and it operates at the fundamental level of needs through managerial style versus higher needs in the organization (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The transactional leadership approach gives leaders leverage to manage employees’ performance with the aid of passive methods built on awards and punishments. Transactional leadership involves an exchange process in which a leader uses awards and punishment to motivate employees to accomplish tasks. There are pros and cons to using the transactional leadership approach. The following case study illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of employing transactional leadership.

**Case study.** Bian et al. (2019) conducted a study to determine what impacts transactional leadership has on employee safety behavior. The study was conducted at a petroleum and construction site in Shandong Province, China. Two hundred sixty frontline male employees participated in the study. The results revealed that when it came to employee safety behavior, transactional leadership created a negative impact. However, transactional leadership was effective with motivation and increasing work behavior. Bian et al. concluded that the problem for the negative impact on employee safety behavior was due to leaders’ failed ability to comprehend that incentives alone were insufficient to cause a positive impact on employee safety behavior. Instead, what employees wanted was to be appreciated and trusted with more responsibility.

Transactional leadership is a leadership approach that is dependent on an exchange process between leaders and subordinates. Bian et al.’s (2019) case study
revealed that incentives alone were not enough to influence employee safety behavior. Therefore, transactional leadership has the potential to impact employee morale and productivity both negatively and positively. Transactional leadership is grounded in an exchange process between leaders and subordinates, whereas the primary focus of transformational leadership is on changing the culture of organizations.

**Transformational Leadership**

The transformational leadership approach produces a cultural shift in an organization through the stimulation of internal resources—employees, leaders, teams, and so forth. Transformational leadership is a process that brings about significant change in an organization from the inside (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016). Transformational leadership enables organizations to explore creativity and innovation on a greater level.

**Seminal research.** Scholars affirmed James Downton (1973), a sociologist recognized for his research studies on charismatic leadership, as the first individual to coin the term transformational leadership (Northouse, 2016). However, the broadening of the approach was initiated by political sociologist James MacGregor Burns (1978) through his classic work titled *Leadership* (Northouse, 2016). Burns’s work has lead scholars to equate transformational leader to charismatic leadership (Northouse, 2016).

**Definition.** Campbell (2016) explained that transformational leadership is an effective leadership style that enables leaders to change their organizations from the inside by proactively transforming culture, values, political processes, resources allocation, structure, rites, and rituals. Comparably, Rothfelder et al. (2012) expressed that transformational leadership is a process that focuses on changing the attitudes and
values of employees to align with the vision, goals, and values of the organization. In addition, Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) clarified that transformational leadership affords leaders several mechanisms for stimulating motivation and increasing employee morale and performance. Also, Miner (2005), Rawat (2015), and Pradhan and Pradhan (2015) expressed that transformational leadership is a paradigm for leaders to improve employees’ behavior and cultures of organization. Furthermore, Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2010) communicated that transformational leadership involves a fundamental shift from the old way of doing things to a transformed state, where organizations change their cultures significantly to include shifting employees’ behavior and mindsets. The previously mentioned definitions all expressed that transformational leadership affects organizations from within in order to bring about change. The advantages and disadvantages of transformational leadership are disclosed in its strengths and weaknesses.

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of transformational leadership include implementing leadership that is proactive by working to change the organizational culture by implementing new ideas, allowing employees to achieve objectives through higher ideals and moral values, motivating followers by encouraging them to place group needs first, and promoting creative and innovative ideas for solving problems (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Rawat, 2015). In contrast, the weaknesses of transformational leadership include unclear explanations of relational variables essential for stimulating employee productivity, too much focus at the leader-follower dyadic level, failure to reveal detrimental effects on both followers and the organization, and demonstration of favoritism toward upper management (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Rawat, 2015),
nonlinear process, results occur much later rather than sooner, requires a shift of organizational culture, employee’s behavior and mindset, and the process can be challenging for leaders (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010). The transformational leadership approach focuses on changing an organization’s culture through its employees who pursue change through creative and innovative ideas. Transforming an organization’s culture has the potential to produce favorable as well as unfavorable consequences. The subsequent case study illuminates the effects of implementing the transformational leadership approach.

**Case study.** In 2013, Binghamton University implemented the transformational leadership approach in its library services department to determine if the approach would facilitate the members to prepare for a significant increase in the student population (Abashian, 2017). The university was in the process of implementing a professional development initiative to change the mind-set of staff and faculty responsible for providing library services to 11,000 students. Library services would need to expand in order to accommodate approximately 20,000 students by the year 2020. Library employees were required to participate in a new leadership initiative involving the transformational leadership approach. The results of the case study revealed that transformational leadership was effective with helping Binghamton University implement a leadership development program that helped change the organization’s culture and prepare employees for the increase in the student population by 2020. Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that changes the culture of an organization from the inside. Binghamton University’s decision to implement the transformational leadership paradigm as a professional development initiative impacted the organization positively.
The results of the Binghamton University case study confirmed that transformational leadership has the potential to impact employee morale and productivity in a positive manner.

**Synopsis of Leadership Approaches**

The literature on the seven leadership approaches illustrated that they are dissimilar in their purpose, recognition, definition, and strengths and weaknesses. Their related case studies revealed that each approach has consequences that leaders and organizations must weigh. Leaders must thoroughly examine which approach can effectively enhance employee morale and productivity for the betterment of the organization.

**Federal Government Employee**

Federal government employees are essential to this nation’s defense. The services performed by federal government employees generate wealth and establish safe environments for the American people (OPM, 2018). Federal government employees are U.S. citizens employed by a federal agency either in the continental United States or outside the continental United States (Alvey, 2018). In 2017, OPM (2018) identified over 2,200,000 federal government employees on its payroll. However, Sherman (2018) reported that the Congressional Research Service listed the number of federal government employees higher at 2,600,000 employees. Federal government employees are critical to sustaining this nation’s defense and preserving the American way of life. The majority of federal government employees are employed by the Department of Defense (DOD), and the vast number of DOD employees are employed by the Army, working in six occupational categories (OPM, 2018).
**Occupational categories.** Federal government employees are professionals who work in distinct occupational categories. According to the 2018 Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, federal government employees are employed within the following six occupational categories: administrative, professional, technical, blue collar, clerical, and other white collar and unspecified (Vilorio, 2014). Federal government employees must meet the minimum educational requirement prior to receiving an official job offer. Table 1 shows the six occupational categories, number of federal government employee in each category and median salary as of 2013, which is the most current information available. Federal government employees are paid similar to private sector and other public sector employees.

Table 1

*Federal Employment and Median Salary by Occupational Category, Fiscal Year 2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational category</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Median salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>724,633</td>
<td>$85,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>469,456</td>
<td>$94,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>306,983</td>
<td>$47,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>172,967</td>
<td>$52,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical</td>
<td>86,138</td>
<td>$37,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other white-collar and unspecified</td>
<td>71,546</td>
<td>$55,844*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Educational requirements.** A federal government employee’s pay grade and job scope (duties and responsibilities) determines the educational requirements for the position of employment. The educational requirements for federal government
employees include having no high school diploma as an adult, high school diploma, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and doctoral or professional degree (OPM, n.d.). Although not all federal government employees are required to have education, the services that federal government employees provide is consequential and require a security background check.

**Security clearance.** Not all federal government employees are required to have a security clearance. However, in order for someone to receive an appointment as a federal government employee, the individual must be subject to an investigation (OPM, n.d.). An investigation is a critical step of the federal government hiring process. Nevertheless, working for the federal government is similar to working in the private sector: employees work set hours, receive pay and benefits, and compete for advancements (Sherman, 2018).

**Appropriated funds or nonappropriated funds.** Federal government employees receive pay via appropriated funds (AF) or nonappropriated funds (NAF; OPM. n.d.). AF are funds primarily authorized by Congress through legislation during the beginning of the fiscal year, whereas NAF are funds primarily generated by employees, thus bypassing congressional legislation (Sims, n.d.). Understanding the disparate pots of money is important. For instance, whenever the federal government shuts down, AF personnel do not have the same financial security as NAF personnel concerning pay because Congress holds the purse strings. NAF personnel are able to sustain the effects of a government shutdown because their funds are self-generated and require no congressional legislation. On the other hand, AF personnel have more to lose during a government shutdown because funds must be authorized by Congress through
legislation, and if those funds are delayed for months, it can have a significant impact on morale and productivity (Sims, n.d.).

**Morale**

Research of the literature has revealed that morale is a complex phenomenon and its interest has been traced back to the time of ancient Greek philosopher Xenophon. Xenophon believed that victory in war was won on the strength of a soldier’s soul and not merely the vast numbers of an army (Hardy, 2009). Although comprehending morale can be complex, it is important for leaders and organizations to pay close attention to employee morale. When morale is low, it will cost organizations time, money, and increased turnover, escalating the cost of accidents and absenteeism. Whereas, when morale is high, it will generate a productive workforce, reduce turnover, lower the cost of accidents, and create a surplus of opportunities for organizations (Blake & Mouton, 1985).

**Definition of morale.** Morale affects an individual’s state of mind and behavior, and defining its very nature has proven to be challenging. Morale has been difficult to define among researchers (Baehr & Renck, 1958). Jeter (2014) reported that, according to Arunchand and Ramanathan (2013), morale is a relationship that an employee has with other employees and leaders in his or her organization. Also, Tiwari (2014) stated that morale is the attitude that an employee has toward members within the organization. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defined morale as “the mental and emotional condition (as of enthusiasm, confidence, or loyalty) of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand” (“Morale,” n.d., Definition 2a). Although the definition of
morale remains subjective among researchers, it is associated with producing a positive result or state. Employee morale is a critical element of organizational success.

**Employee morale.** Employee morale has proven to be an essential component necessary for building and sustaining organizational efficiency, productivity, and stability. Studies have shown that management can be unaware as to what affects employee morale (MacRury, 1949). Giese and Ruter (1949) concluded that certain factors—production efficiency, error efficiency, labor turnover, tardiness, and absenteeism—are strong indicators for assessing employee morale. Conversely, Myeni (2010) contended that dignity and compassion through quality leadership are key factors for improving employee morale. It is imperative for organizations to comprehend that there are severe consequences associated with the decline of employee morale.

**Federal government employees’ morale.** Morale plays a major part in attracting and retaining federal government employees. For instance, Browning (2002) reported that when morale is low, the federal government has a difficult time attracting and retaining experienced workers. The morale of a federal government employee is important for job recruitment, retention as well as increasing productivity.

**Productivity**

Productivity is influenced by morale. Haire’s (1954) research revealed that during the interim stages of organizational research, morale and productivity was the most prominent topic discussed (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Later research conducted by Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg, and Kalleberg (2000) confirmed that a relationship existed between morale and productivity. Additionally, productivity was also influenced by job security, team interaction, and employees having a voice in decision-making (Kathirvel,
2010; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Researchers Tiwari (2014), Weakliem and Frenkel (2006), and Wofford (1971) also confirmed that there is a strong correlation between morale and productivity and that job satisfaction increased productivity.

**Definition of productivity.** Productivity is a measurement of output. Rouse (2014) defined productivity as an assessment of the quality of work produced by workers. In addition, Krugman (1994) described productivity as a relationship between the output amount and the amount of inputs. *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* defined productivity as “the quality or state of being productive” (“Productivity,” n.d., Definition 1). Furthermore, Fuller (2016) explained that productivity is the total value of output divided by the initial amount of input. The list of definitions described productivity as an important relationship between output and input as well as the quality of being valuable. Research of the literature revealed that a relationship exists between employee morale and employee productivity.

**Employee productivity.** There is a causal effect between employee morale and productivity. Scholars reported that there is a strong correlation between employee morale and employee productivity (Hardy, 2009; Kathirvel, 2010; Tiwari, 2014). Tiwari (2014), Weakliem and Frenkel (2006), and Wofford (1971) revealed that job satisfaction increases employee productivity. Research of the literature revealed that measuring employee productivity can be challenging for both leaders and organizations (Fuller, 2016). Employee productivity is a critical element required for measuring organizational success regardless of industry, which also includes the federal government.

**Federal government employees’ productivity.** Productivity numbers in the federal government are substantially limited. According to Danker (2006), the Bureau of
Labor Statistics stopped providing productivity statistics in 1994. The last report disclosed that productivity in the federal government lagged behind that of the private sector. Additionally, Risher (2018) reported that Gallup’s research in 2014 revealed that productivity for the federal workforce was 11% lower than that of organizations in the private sector. Also, Haenisch’s (2012) research revealed that leadership ranked as the single most important factor to impact productivity in the workplace. Furthermore, Ironman (2013) reported that federal government employees’ productivity was approximately one fifth less than that of private sector employees. In order to achieve high levels of employee productivity, organizations must create an environment that is inclusive and caters to the needs of employees (Tiwari, 2014). According to Hilgert and Leonard (1995), as time goes on, employees who display high morale often produce more work and seek greater responsibilities (Civil Service India, n.d.). Figure 1 shows the unique relationship between the disparate levels of morale and productivity and captures the causal relationship between morale and productivity.

*Figure 2.* Employee morale and productivity. From “Employee Morale and Productivity (Human Resource Management),” by Civil Service India, n.d. (https://www.civilserviceindia.com/subject/Management/notes/employee-morale-and-productivity.html).
Gaps in the Literature

There are relatively few research studies on effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity at the federal government level, which revealed a gap in the literature. In fact, research of the literature produced insufficient results on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness that leadership approaches have on federal government employees’ morale and productivity. The researcher discovered numerous results on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness that leadership styles have on employee morale and productivity in the private sector, whereas, the researcher uncovered only nine studies relating to U.S. federal government, employee and morale, and just 322 results concerning productivity, employee and U.S. federal government as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search</th>
<th>Search results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morale</td>
<td>Morale: 207,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morale and employee: 11,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morale and employee and workplace: 2,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morale and employee and U.S. federal government: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Productivity: 801,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productivity and employee: 178,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productivity and employee and workplace: 32,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Productivity and employee and U.S. federal government: 322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although search results for both morale and productivity revealed insufficient returns for the U.S. federal government, research studies in the private sector confirmed that leadership paradigms affect employee morale and performance significantly (Iqbal et al., 2015). Determining the most effective leadership model for increasing employee
morale and productivity can be challenging. However, the subsequent full range of leadership model framework has proven effective in enhancing employee morale and productivity.

**Full Range of Leadership Model Theoretical Framework**

Bass and Avolio’s (1994) FRLM is considered one of the modern leadership theories. The FRLM displays a range of leadership styles from nonleadership laissez-faire leadership to transactional leadership to transformational leadership. According to Kirkbride (2006), the principal strength of the FRLM is that it distinctly offers leaders a broad range of leadership styles to employ. The FRLM encompasses nine unique components—idealized influence active, idealized influence behavioral, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, contingent reward, management by exception active, management by exception passive, and laissez-faire leadership (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Salter et al., 2014). Studies have shown that depending on the environment, the components were effective with helping leaders to increase followers’ job satisfaction and work production (Al-Araimi, 2013). The following FRLM diagram (see Figure 2) illustrates the full range of leadership styles from laissez-faire, which some scholars have identified as being nonleadership, up to the modern-day transformational leadership. The FRLM also captures the corresponding dimensions of the leadership styles (Kirkbride, 2006).

**Transformational leadership.** Transformational leadership changes an organization through its cultural qualities. Transformational leadership is a process that brings about significant change to an organization’s cultural qualities from the inside, motivating both leaders and followers to rise to a higher relationship level for the betterment of the organization (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016). Transformational leaders demonstrate unique behaviors to gain followers’ trust and commitment in order to achieve organizational goals (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Instead of identifying processes or steps, transformational leadership targets four behavioral dimensions:

**Idealized influence (attributed).** Idealized influence (attributed) refers to a leader that followers respect and perceive as a good example to emulate because of the leader’s decision to live by a moral code that compels the leader to focus on things of higher
priority than self (Antonakis et al., 2003). The value of idealized influence (behavior) is that followers respect a leader who leads by example (Northouse, 2016).

*Idealized influence (behavior).* Idealized influence (behavior) signifies a leader whose behavioral actions are in line with the values, beliefs, and goals of the organization, and as a result, followers are inspired to emulate such a leader (Antonakis et al., 2003). The value of idealized influence (behavior) is that followers tend to value the leader as being trustworthy (Northouse, 2016).

*Inspirational motivation.* Inspirational motivation indicates a leader who uses inspirational methods through effective communication that inspires followers to be optimistic about accomplishing future goals through an idealized vision (Antonakis et al., 2003). According to Northouse (2016), a leader who incorporates inspirational motivation communicates excellence to followers in a way that followers become inspired and committed to the shared vision of the organization. The value of inspirational motivation is that it enhances team spirit within the organization (Northouse, 2016).

*Intellectual stimulation.* Intellectual stimulation represents a leader who stimulates followers’ intellect to think outside of the box to identify multiple courses of action for solving complex problems (Antonakis et al., 2003). Northouse (2016) pointed out that a leader who uses intellectual stimulation inspires creativity and innovation among followers to investigate new methods of solving organizational issues. The value of intellectual stimulation is that followers learn the importance of acquiring and mastering problem-solving skills.
Individual consideration. Individual consideration implies a leader who supports followers by placing a higher priority on their needs in order to promote and aid followers’ future growth and self-development (Antonakis et al., 2003). Leaders who employ individual consideration establish a supportive climate in order to closely see and listen to the individual needs of followers. The value of individual consideration is that followers gain their leader as a coach and adviser. The leader helps followers to embrace their individuality as well as the uniqueness of others.

Transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is designed for the purpose of controlling outcomes. Transactional leadership is an exchange process that functions on agreed obligations between leaders and subordinates for the purpose of controlling outcomes (Antonakis et al., 2003). The approach encompasses three distinct factors that are essential for achieving outcomes:

Contingent reward. Contingent reward refers to a leader who establishes a mutual contractual agreement with followers that is contingent on role assignment and tasks accomplishment by using rewards as the mechanism for motivation (Antonakis et al., 2003).

Management-by-exception (active). Management-by-exception (active) refers to a leader who remains energetically and consciously aware of task assignments and ensures that followers remain goal oriented for completing assigned tasks to standards (Antonakis et al., 2003).

Management-by-exception (passive). Management-by-exception (passive) refers to a leader who takes a reactive approach to task management and only intervenes after followers fail to achieve task standards (Antonakis et al., 2003).
Laissez-faire leadership. Laissez-faire is a hands-off passive form of leadership where a leader abdicates responsibility, is less concerned with the development of subordinates (Khan et al., 2015), and chooses an active approach in which followers are given the freedom to work in the absence of leadership, receive no feedback, delayed decisions become the norm, and the leader circumvents attending to followers’ needs (Northouse, 2016). Laissez-faire leadership can be just as effective as transactional leadership or transformational leadership for developing subordinates; however, it depends on the environment in which it is deployed. Laissez-faire leadership works best in environments where skilled professionals are able to set and achieve goals with no supervision (Delaney, 2016).

The FRLM framework, which encompasses three disparate leadership approaches—laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational—has the potential to increase employee morale and productivity. The effectiveness of the three pillars is predicated on the organizational environment as well as the correct employment of their nine embedded components of leadership: idealized influence (active), idealized influence (behavioral), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, contingent reward, management by exception active, management by exception passive, and laissez-faire.

Summary

The volume of literature presented in this chapter illustrated the effectiveness and ineffectiveness that the seven leadership approaches can have on employee morale and productivity. Although the literature did not produce sufficient material addressing the impact that the aforementioned leadership approaches can have on federal government
employees’ morale and productivity, the majority of literature did disclose sufficient studies relating to employee morale and productivity in the private sector. Furthermore, the literature disclosed a leadership approach framework—Bass and Avolio’s (1994) FRLM—that produced promising results on increasing employee morale and productivity in the private sector. The researcher determined that the three leadership approaches (laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational) embedded in the FRLM offer a sound option for understanding which leadership approaches are most and least effective for enhancing federal government employees’ morale and productivity.

**Synthesis Matrix**

A synthesis matrix (Appendix A) was developed in order to structure the review of literature parallel to the variables of the study. Furthermore, the synthesis matrix aided in the construction of semistructured open-ended interview questions. Finally, the synthesis matrix captured an extensive list of peer-reviewed references the author cited throughout the study.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter presents the methodology used in this descriptive qualitative study. The overview includes the purpose statement and research questions, followed by the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, reliability, validity, data collection, data analysis, and interrater reliability. The significance of the aforementioned sections collectively aided the researcher in comprehending and collecting the authentic thoughts and opinions of government employees concerning the leadership approaches that federal government civilian employees perceive to be the most and the least effective on employee morale and productivity. The data obtained in this section will contribute to filling a gap in the literature concerning leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity at the Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California. The chapter identifies the limitations of the study and concludes with a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity.

Research Questions

1. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee morale?
2. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee productivity?

3. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to enhance employee morale?

4. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to enhance employee productivity?

**Research Design**

The descriptive qualitative design allows the researcher to conduct one-on-one interviews with participants to ascertain the richness of data through the participants’ experiences, thus allowing the researcher to explore the participants’ stories in greater depth (McNamara, 1999). Therefore, the researcher determined a descriptive qualitative study is the appropriate method for this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described qualitative research designs as useful for “gathering data on naturally occurring phenomena” (p. 23). Furthermore, qualitative research is an exploratory descriptive research method where the researcher becomes the instrument in order to examine the characteristics of a population, and the study is primarily inductive, whereas quantitative research designs are focused on “objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 21). The qualitative research design aids the researcher in his or her ability to identify and describe data from federal government
employees’ perspectives about the efficacy and inefficacy certain leadership approaches have on employee morale and productivity.

The qualitative method supports researchers in obtaining abundant data that are rich, direct, and from the perspective of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the researcher used a qualitative research method to obtain the voluntary perceptions of federal government civilian employees (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research methods support the use of semistructured interview questions in a face-to-face environment. The semistructured face-to-face interviews provided opportunities for participants to openly express their perspectives. The perspectives of the federal government civilian employees aided the researcher by identifying and describing the effectiveness and ineffectiveness leadership approaches have on employee morale and productivity.

The rationale for using the selected research methodology is its effectiveness in allowing participants to openly share their personal perceptions on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness leadership approaches have on employee morale and productivity. Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses (McNamara, 1999).

In addition to the face-to-face interviews, the researcher reviewed artifacts to better understand how leadership approaches could influence employee morale and productivity. The artifacts reviewed that were related to the research topic included job descriptions, performance evaluations of employees and supervisors, the US Army
civilian creed, the organizational mission and values statements, and the most recent annual report of the organization. The review of the artifacts provided additional data to assess the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of current leadership approaches on the selected sample of the population of the study.

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined population as a group of individuals, objects, or events that meet specific criteria, and where a researcher makes an attempt to generalize the results of the study. The population for this study was the U.S. Army civilian employees of which there are 330,000 worldwide. Army civilians are skilled and talented individuals that fill noncombat jobs, and are responsible for providing mission-critical support to soldiers through numerous professions that are fixed in six occupational categories: administrative, professional, technical, blue collar, clerical, and other white collar and unspecified (Vilorio, 2014).

**Target Population**

A target population within a study is the entire group of individuals chosen from the overall population that meet specific criteria the researcher intends to use to make inferences. The target population defines the population to which the findings are meant to be generalized. It is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is typically not feasible, due to time or cost constraints, to study large groups; therefore, the researcher chose population samples from within a larger group. The target population was identified as the approximately 3,000 Army civilian employees working at the Presidio of Monterey army base, Monterey, California. The target population consisted of U.S. Army civilian
employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. In addition to representing the target population, the five aforementioned GS paygrades are associated with four occupational categories identified as administrative, clerical, law enforcement and security force.

Sample

The sample is a group of participants in a study selected from the population wherein the researcher aims to generalize. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a sampling involves the researcher selecting a “group of individuals from whom data are collected” (p. 129). Furthermore, Patton (2015) and Creswell (2003) described a sample as being a subgroup of the target population which represents the whole population.

The researcher chose the stratified random sampling method for the study, which is also a subsampling procedure of probability sampling. Stratified random sampling was chosen because the population was divided into subgroups (U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities) wherein the same number of participants was used in each stratum originating from the sample. Additionally, stratified random sampling is considered more efficient than simple random sampling due to a smaller number of participants required (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Furthermore, the stratified random sampling ensured that all participants were selected using a consistent method during the selection process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The different levels of GS pay grades represent increased responsibilities that U.S. Army civilian employees must perform. The higher the pay grade, the greater the responsibility. U.S. Army civilian employees in
pay grades of GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11 were chosen because of the vast number of employees not having supervisory responsibilities. The limited amount of U.S. Army civilian employees in pay grades GS-8 and GS-10 all have supervisory responsibilities.

McMillian and Schumacher (2010) stated that qualitative sample sizes will vary from study to study, and a proven method for determining the appropriate qualitative sample sizes is to understand the purpose of the study. Patton (2015) agreed with McMillan and Schumacher (2010), stating that in qualitative research, “the sample depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry . . . and what can be done with the available time and resources” (p. 311). Based on the guidelines propagated by McMillian and Schumacher (2010) and Patton (2015), the researcher determined that a sample size of 15 participants was appropriate for this study. The researcher’s strategy for selecting the 15 participants consisted of the following steps:

Step 1, use the organization’s table of distribution and allowances (personnel database) to identify GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11 employees with nonsupervisory responsibility;

Step 2, sort the list of employees into five separate spreadsheets: GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11;

Step 3, acquire the help of the organization’s personnel security manager to identify employees with nonsupervisory responsibilities and working in the organization for a minimum of 3 years, and then adjust spreadsheets accordingly;

Step 4, select every third name until three employees are selected from each spreadsheet for a total of 15 employees. The 15 participants, restricted to only to GS-5,
GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11 with nonsupervisory responsibilities, were selected from the USAG Presidio of Monterey table of distribution and allowances (TDA) personnel database.

Sample Selection Process

The study’s sampling frame consisted of 15 DA civilian employees employed by USAG Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California. The selection criteria for participants were the following:

- Department of the Army Civilian employees with nonsupervisory responsibilities in pay grades of GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11.
- Department of the Army Civilian employees who have been working in the organization for a minimum of 3 years.

The researcher selected 15 DA civilian employee participants from the USAG Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California. The protocols for selecting the sample participants are outlined in Table 3. These protocols were necessary to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Instrumentation

The quality of qualitative data is not only dependent on the skills and competence of the researcher but also on the tools deployed to ascertain the data (Patton, 2015). In this qualitative research study, the researcher used semistructured interviews as an effective instrument during face-to-face interviews to help maintain consistency throughout the instrumentation process. Semistructured open-ended questions were constructed using the theoretical framework—Bass and Avolio’s FRLM—as well as the support of organizational leadership experts. The FRLM includes three leadership
### Table 3

#### Protocol for Selecting Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtain permission to allow Department of the Army Civilians (DAC) employees to share their perspective on leadership approaches effectiveness and ineffectiveness on employee morale and productivity</td>
<td>Scheduled a meeting with the Deputy to the Garrison Commander (DGC), Senior Civilian Executive, explained the purpose of the research study and addressed classification of information to be collected. The researcher received permission to select the participation of DAC employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and select sample for the qualitative research study</td>
<td>The researcher perused the organization table of distribution and allowances (TDA) personnel database and compiled and sorted list of 15 DAC employees; three employees from each of the following paygrade: GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11. Next, the researcher truncated the list by developing five separate lists for GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11. Next, the researcher filtered each list by selecting every 3rd position (e.g. 3, 6, 9…). Once the lists were established, the researcher reduced the list further by selecting participants (a) working in the organization for a minimum of 3 years, and (b) having nonsupervisory responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send out invitation that authorizes participants to participate in the qualitative research study</td>
<td>The researcher sent out the official invitation requesting participants’ participation. The e-mail contained several attachments, which included the purpose of the study and selection criteria for the study. Also the researcher (a) informed participants that the Deputy to the Garrison Commander (DGC) approved of the study, (b) assured participants anonymity for participating in the study as well as confidentiality of information shared would be protected, and (c) the DGC assured that there would be no reprisal for their participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule interview with participants</td>
<td>After sending out invitation, the researcher scheduled interviews with participants. The researcher confirmed interview time and location with participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct qualitative research study interviews</td>
<td>The researcher conducted 15 interviews. The researcher adhered to the Brandman University’s compliant guidelines and provided and collected the required documents (a) informed consent form, (b) audio release form, and Participant’s Bill of Rights to/from each participant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from The Connection Between Learning and Achievement of Gifted and Talented (GATE) High School Students Using a Personalized Learning Framework From the Perspective of High School Teachers (Doctoral dissertation), by R. Shea, 2019. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 13806155).*
approaches: transformational, transaction and laissez-faire. The semistructured open-ended questions reflect leadership behaviors found in the FRLM, and are relevant to the purpose statement and research questions pertaining to federal government employees’ perceptions of the most and least effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Roberts (2010) emphasized that the alignment of research questions and questionnaire items is critical for preserving the reliability and validity of the research study’s instrument.

The purpose of this instrumentation method was to help the researcher to conduct quality in-depth interviews. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), open-ended response questions have proven to be an effective stimulus for inspiring participants to elucidate their personal worldview on a phenomenon. These data collection methods facilitated the researcher to comprehend federal government employees’ perceptions concerning the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of leadership approaches related to employee morale and productivity.

Reliability

For a test to be considered reliable, it must yield consistency (Patton, 2015). Roberts (2010) declared that reliability is achieved when the research method employed produces consistent results, regardless of the number of times it is repeated. According to Patton (2015), an instrument is reliable if it is able to yield consistent results. Therefore, in order to enhance the reliability in this study, the researcher engaged in fieldwork consisting of structured interview questions and face-to-face interviews.

The researcher tested interview questions on one participant during the pilot test to enhance reliability. In order to increase the reliability of interview questions, the
researcher provided each participant a copy of interview questions to ensure consistency. To increase reliability of face-to-face interviews, the researcher exclusively conducted all interviews to ensure all participants receive required documents and instructions consistently. The researcher acknowledged the potential existence of researcher bias because of the researcher’s status as an employee of USAG Presidio of Monterey, the same organization by which the participants are employed, which could impact reliability and validity. However, the researcher confirmed that there was no supervisory or personal relationship with participants. To ensure that the study’s research method of semistructured open-ended questions produced consistent results, the researcher conducted a pilot test consisting of reflexivity and face-to-face interview.

**Pilot test.** Field-testing the data reliability of the semistructured open-ended questions for interviews was critical. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a pilot test is an effective tool for evaluating the critical components of an interview and making the necessary adjustments to achieve proficiency. The researcher contacted and secured the support of a qualified expert who instructs doctoral courses at Brandman University to observe one pilot interview and provide constructive feedback. The pilot interview was conducted at the Presidio of Monterey army base. Following the pilot interview, both the participant and expert provided written evaluation to the researcher. Evaluations were consolidated and examined multiple times to check for “bias in the procedures, the interviewer, and the questions” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 206). Afterwards, the researcher made the appropriate adjustments prior to conducting face-to-face interviews with the participants.
**Reflexivity.** According to Patton (2015), reflexivity is important because it helps the researcher to be mindful and attentive of his or her personal, cultural, social, and political perspectives as well as the cultural, social, and political perspectives of the participants. On a much deeper level, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) acknowledged that reflexivity involves a “rigorous self-examination of the researcher” (p. 332).

Therefore, to increase the trustworthiness of the instrument, the researcher incorporated an effective qualitative strategy of maintaining a journal during each interview in order to examine “what I know and how I know it” (Patton, 2015, p. 604). The journal helped the researcher to comprehend how decisions were made throughout the process for the purpose of establishing credibility.

**Face-to-face interviews.** The researcher constructed the initial version of the semistructured open-ended interview questions, and with help from two experts who are both dissertation chairs and instructors of doctoral courses at Brandman University, finalized an updated list of semistructured open-ended questions that stayed true to the purpose of the study. Interviews were scheduled and conducted for approximately one hour at the Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California, or locations where participants felt most comfortable and free of distractions. For consistency, the researcher conducted all interviews. At the start of each interview, the researcher established rapport by asking participants to briefly introduce themselves, their professions, number of years working at the Presidio of Monterey army base, and any special talents or hobbies. The researcher obtained permission from each participant to record his or her interview. The researcher captured interview notes using a steno note pad and a digital recorder. The recorded interviews were transcribed either by the
researcher or a private for-profit organization recommended by Rev Transcription Services. After reviewing the data, the researcher developed key themes using NVivo.

**Validity**

The accuracy of the instruments used in this study was dependent on their validity. Roberts (2010) emphasized that the purpose of validity in quality research is to determine if the research measured what it initially set out to measure. Further illustrating the importance of validity, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) acknowledged that validity is where both the researcher and the participant have a mutual understanding of the phenomena being explained. In order to enhance validity, the researcher used two strategies. First, the researcher acquired the help of three experts, two of whom are dissertation chairs and instructors of doctoral courses at Brandman University, and one is a consultant at Brandman University. The acumen of these experts helped the researcher to construct interview questions that (a) aligned with purpose of study, (b) used language that is straightforward, and (c) focused on eliminating researcher bias (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The interview questions were tested during one pilot interview, and based on the feedback from the participant, the researcher edited interview questions accordingly. Second, the researcher acquired the support of an adjunct professor who instructs doctoral courses at Brandman University to observe one pilot interview and provide constructive feedback. Following the interview, both the qualified expert and the participant provided feedback to the researcher using the approved Brandman University “Interview Observer Feedback Reflection Questions” form, and “Field Test Interviewee Feedback Questions” form respectively. The evaluation assisted the researcher to
(a) build rapport with participants, (b) mitigate researcher bias, and (c) enhance the validity of the research instrument.

**Data Collection**

Data collection is an important step in the qualitative research process. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) affirmed that qualitative research is “a type of research that refers to an in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data from people in their natural setting” (p. 489). Prior to organizing semistructured face-to-face interviews, the researcher obtained approval from the Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board (BUIRB). Approval from BUIRB was imperative to ensure that the research adhered to ethical guidelines.

After receiving BUIRB’s approval, the researcher e-mailed out a formal request to participants requesting their support to participate in the study. Subsequent to gaining participants’ consent, the researcher sent out a second e-mail containing (a) interview time and location, (b) Brandman University Bill of Rights (Appendix E), and (c) Institutional Review Board (IRB) informed consent (Appendix C). Additionally, participants were instructed to complete the BUIRB informed consent form and return the form to the researcher no later than 1 week after receiving the form. To ensure the confidentiality, protection of each participant, and the safeguarding of information, the researcher strictly adhered to BUIRB’s protocols concerning the protection of the rights of participants. Participants who failed to meet the 1-week deadline received a follow-up phone call from the researcher. By the end of 2 weeks, the majority of participants completed the IRB informed consent form.
Prior to conducting semistructured interviews, the researcher constructed semistructured interview questions with the help of two experts who are both dissertation chairs and instructors of doctoral courses at Brandman University. The interview questions were open-ended and specific to the research study’s intent (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The next step involved data collection.

The researcher began data collection through semistructured face-to-face interviews with each participant. Interviews were conducted at the Presidio of Monterey army base or locations where participants felt most comfortable and free of distractions. The researcher recorded interviews using a digital recorder. The recorded interviews were transcribed either by the researcher or Rev Transcription Services.

Afterwards, the researcher e-mailed the interview transcription to participants separately with instructions to review for accuracy and provide feedback on where corrections were needed. After receiving each participant’s approved transcript, the researcher used NVivo to establish themes. Figure 3 captures the important steps of interview protocol process that the researcher adhered to after receiving approval from BUIRB.

Prior to face-to-face interviews, the researcher informed each participant that notes would be transcribed throughout the interview. The researcher remained consciously aware of his surroundings to eliminate personal bias when observing the behavior and body gestures of each participant during interviews. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher reviewed the responses of each participant, and afterwards, sent a copy of the responses of each participant to review for accuracy and to reduce the potential of researcher bias (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).
A qualitative data analysis involves the development of a process that captures data relevant to the study, explains the coding processes used, and demonstrates the development of themes (Roberts, 2010). Data collected during face-to-face interviews and artifacts were analyzed by the researcher. The researcher did not conduct observation of participants. The researcher’s process for gathering data consisted of semistructured open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews and analyses of artifacts collected by the researcher.

The researcher reviewed the data in order to investigate the study’s findings. The researcher used NVivo for themes and coding. NVivo is software that is used in
qualitative research to analyze data collected from interviews, recordings, and other literary sources (Kent State University, 2019).

**Interview Data Analysis**

After all interviews were transcribed by the researcher or Rev Transcription Services, the researcher coded the data based on the study’s purpose statement and research questions. Next, the researcher reviewed the data and initiated the process to identify themes and subthemes. Then, the themes and subthemes were coded. The researcher conducted a final review of codes to support the validity of findings. Finally, to check for accuracy and eliminate researcher bias, the researcher reached out to two 2017 graduates of the Brandman University doctorate program to reexamine the data coding.

**Interrater Reliability**

To establish interrater reliability, the researcher obtained the assistance of one graduate who earned a doctorate in organizational leadership at Brandman University and works for the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center at Presidio of Monterey army base in California, to independently analyze the data and compare the findings to help reduce any potential bias of the researcher. First, the expert reviewed the researcher’s interview data to validate that participants were asked the same semistructured open-ended questions consistently (Patten, 2014; Patton, 2015). Then the expert validated the researcher’s themes and subthemes for consistency. According to Roberts (2010), “Interrater reliability is established through a process in which two or more people independently analyze the same qualitative data and then compare the
findings” (p. 161). Final codes for the study were finalized after comparing the findings of both the researcher and the expert.

**Analysis of Artifacts**

The researcher reviewed artifacts to better understand how leadership approaches could influence employee morale and productivity. The researcher used the same theoretical framework to analyze the artifacts as was used to develop the interview questions. The artifacts reviewed that were related to the research topic included job descriptions, performance evaluations of employees and supervisors, the U.S. Army civilian creed, the organizational mission and values statements, and the most recent annual report of the organization. The researcher coded the artifacts and identified emergent themes. The emergent themes identified from the artifacts were triangulated and compared to the emergent themes the researcher identified from the interviews to test the validity of the different sources of information. Thus, the researcher completed the triangulation process. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), triangulation is a process of “cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes” (p. 379).

**Limitations**

This section describes areas of the research study outside of the researcher’s control. Roberts (2010) stated, “Limitations are particular features of your study that you know may negatively affect the results or your ability to generalize” (p. 162). The limitations identified in this study were (a) researcher as the instrument, (b) sample size, and (c) the duration of interviews.
**Researcher as the Instrument**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Researchers must constantly be aware of their personal bias and strive not to assert personal bias or opinion into the results. The researcher’s method for negating personal bias and opinions involved reaching out to experts to enhance interview questions, observe pilot interviews, and examine themes and coding in the study.

**Sample Size**

The sample size for this study consisted of 15 DA civilian employees with nonsupervisory responsibilities in the pay grade of GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11. Although this small sample size was appropriate for the purpose of this descriptive qualitative study, the size of the sample was not large enough to generalize the results to the larger population of the study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), it is critical for researchers involved in qualitative studies to only select participants who will provide relevant information to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

**Duration of Interviews**

The researcher spent only 1 hour interviewing each participant. The time constraint limited participants from sharing their information in greater detail. In addition, the time limitation did not allow participants to have time to reflect on each question for an extended period of time, which could have resulted in enhanced responses with greater depth of insight and information.
Summary

Chapter III provided a summation of the methodology used for the research study. The chapter was divided into several subsections and provided in-depth data relevant to the study. The subsections included the purpose statement, research questions, research design, population, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and limitations. The remaining chapters of the study include Chapter IV, findings obtained from data analysis, and Chapter V, summary, conclusions, and recommendations.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Ineffective leadership negatively affects federal government employees’ morale and productivity, which creates an inefficient workforce (Maurer, 2013). Therefore, this descriptive study aimed to identify and describe the leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. Thus, the researcher gathered and analyzed data for the study through face-to-face interviews with 15 U.S. Army civilian employees and analyses of artifacts at the Presidio of Monterey army base, Monterey, California. The amalgamation of participants’ perceptions and artifacts facilitated the researcher’s understanding of the topic in greater detail. This chapter reviews the purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, population, and sample, and presents the presentation of the collected data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity.

Research Questions

1. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee morale?
2. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to increase employee productivity?

3. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to enhance employee morale?

4. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to increase employee productivity?

**Methodology**

A descriptive qualitative method was used for this study to ascertain a deeper understanding concerning how leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) affect the morale and productivity of U.S. Army civilian employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews using semistructured open-ended questions. The theoretical framework, full range of leadership model, formed the basis for the development of the 12 interview questions and the framework for analyzing the artifacts. Each interview question had a specific theme related to the theoretical framework. There were 15 participants who participated in the interviews. The 15 participants worked at the Presidio of Monterey army base, Monterey, California. The interviews facilitated the researcher with experiencing firsthand how open-ended response questions stimulated participants to share their personal experiences willingly (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition to interviews, the researcher gathered
several relevant artifacts. Data collected during the interviews and artifacts were
triangulated by comparing emergent themes identified from the responses of participants
during interviews and emergent themes identified in artifacts.

Interviews were scheduled and conducted for approximately 40 minutes at the
Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California, or locations where participants
felt most comfortable and free of distractions. Each participant was provided with a
printed copy of the interview questions to refer to and read during interviews and signed
informed consent and audio release forms prior to the start of the interview.
Additionally, the researcher captured the entirety of participants’ responses with the aid
of a digital recorder. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher provided a
copy of the complete transcripts to participants to check for accuracy prior to the data
being analyzed.

The researcher collected seven relevant artifacts to help strengthen the reliability
and validity of the study. The seven relevant artifacts included job descriptions, blank
forms of performance evaluations of employees and supervisors, the U.S. Army civilian
creed, the organizational mission and values statements, and the most recent annual
report of the organization. The researcher used the same theoretical framework to
analyze the artifacts as was used to develop the interview questions.

The researcher coded the emergent themes that were derived from the analyses of
the artifacts. The emergent themes identified from the artifacts were triangulated by
comparing the emergent themes the researcher identified from the interviews to test the
validity of the different sources of information. Triangulation of the data collected from
interviews and artifacts provided the researcher with more comprehensive information on
the effectiveness and ineffectiveness leadership approaches have on U.S. Army civilian employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities.

**Population and Sample**

The population for this study was the U.S. Army civilian employees of which there are 330,000 worldwide. The target population was identified as the approximately 3,000 Army civilian employees working at the Presidio of Monterey army base, Monterey, California. The target population consisted of U.S. Army civilian employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The sample consisted of 15 U.S. Army civilian employee participants from the USAG Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California. The participants met the following criteria: (a) Department of the Army Civilian employees with nonsupervisory responsibilities in pay grades of GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11; and (b) Department of the Army Civilian employees who have been working in the organization for a minimum of 3 years.

The researcher used the stratified random sampling to select participants for the study. Stratified random sampling facilitated the researcher to separate participants into distinct subgroups of U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The stratified random sampling method helped the researcher ascertain a greater level of depth in understanding participants’ perceptions concerning the impact leadership approaches have on employee morale and productivity. The separation of participants into disparate paygrades via the stratified random sampling method allowed the researcher to comprehend the opinions of
participants during interviews on how their morale and productivity were affected by leadership approaches used by supervisors.

**Presentation of the Data**

Answering the research questions involved a process whereby the researcher first coded the data collected from the interviews and artifacts. Data collected from interviews were used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, perceptions, and opinions of the 15 participants in this study. These data provided insights into the problem and made sense of the phenomena under study. Artifacts collected in this study represented objects, records, journals, handbooks, and so forth, that supported the analysis of the interview data. Data collected from interviews and artifacts facilitated the development of themes to answer the research questions.

Themes were identified based on the repetition and synonymous responses of participants from interview questions and verbiage found in the artifacts. Next, the themes were defined based on their relationship to the interview questions. Each interview question was related to a specific leadership approach as defined by the full range of leadership model. For example, the interview questions to gather data for Research Question 1 included the themes of leading by example, leader acts with integrity, and leader enforces organizational policies. In this way, the themes were decided by using a method that was succinct and easily comprehensible. The researcher selected the top three themes for each research question to effectively communicate the majority of participants’ perceptions in relation to each research question. Lastly, the themes were aligned under the research questions in the study to ensure they were addressed appropriately.
The data were organized in tables. The data in the tables illustrate the frequency of themes. The frequency of themes resulted from the 15 participants who participated in the study, and only the themes that had the three highest frequencies for each research question were captured in the tables. The tables that include the frequency of emergent themes from the interview responses and analyses of the artifacts were aligned with the study’s purpose. The researcher presented the data by each research question. First, the data from interview questions were presented by themes in tables from highest to lowest frequency. Next, artifacts and their frequency count, in relation to themes, were displayed in tables from highest to lowest frequency.

**Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked, **“What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee morale?”** The 15 participants’ responses identified six themes supporting what participants perceived as the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale. The themes shown in Table 4 represent the codes and themes for each of the leadership styles. Three major themes emerged as a representation of the participant responses in response to the research question. The themes were identified based on those with the highest total frequency. Table 4 presents the themes, codes, and frequency associated with each of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) to identify the leadership style participants perceived as most important to enhancing the morale of federal government employees.
Table 4

*Frequency of Themes Identified in Research Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Leads by example</td>
<td>Total for all leads by example codes</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Set an example</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Turns words into action</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Take the lead</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Serve as a model</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Getting in the trenches</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acts with integrity</td>
<td>Total for all acts with integrity codes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moral values</td>
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<td>Ethical conduct</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High standards</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follows rules</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Enforces organizational policies</td>
<td>Total for all enforces organizational policies codes</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Impose policies</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advise standards</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintains the status quo</td>
<td>Total for all maintains the status quo</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>By the book</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow details</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>Delegates decision- making</td>
<td>Total for all delegates decision-making codes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keeping hands off</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Place trust in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stepping back</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Passing the buck</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides very little guidance</td>
<td>Total for all provides very little guidance</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Take it from here</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Basic instructions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Interview $n = 15$, artifact $n = 7$.

**Transformational Leadership**

Transformation leadership yielded a total frequency of 103 from interviews.

Setting an example, serve as a model, and getting into the trenches had a total frequency
of 46 indicating that it was the most valued area of all leadership to improve employee morale. As a cluster of leadership strategies, this suggests that leaders set the direction by helping others see what lies ahead and rising to the challenge. They see everyone’s potential and encourage and inspire those around them. Leading by example is a trait of a true leader and leaders do this with their actions as well as their words.

**Leader leads by example.** A leader who leads by example was the most frequently identified theme among participants concerning the most effective leadership approaches to enhance the morale of federal government employees. The theme achieved a frequency count of 55 and was expressed by 14 of 15 participants during interviews, and identified in two of seven artifacts. A leader who leads by example is consistent with the first “I” component (idealized influence—attributed) in the transformational leadership approach. “Idealized influence” is defined as having transformational leaders who behave in ways that result in their being role models for their followers. Idealized influence is tied to an emotional level where the actions of leaders project them as being role models throughout the organization. The actions of these leaders generate an emotional connection with followers where followers perceive leaders as being trustworthy. These leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them (Northouse, 2016). This style of leadership supports the development of morale in employees. Participants elaborated on the significance of leading by example to enhance employee morale. Participant E described the impact of a supervisor that exemplified the behavior to lead by example, stating:
I found that a lot of people who like to help others to better their life is a great leader, and then they lead by example, that’s how I would follow a leader. I think, no names, but we have a couple of people here that are good leaders and they lead by example. It impacts our morale by wanting to be like that person and makes you want to come to work every day.

Participant F shared a similar anecdote to that of Participant E regarding the effect of leaders who choose to lead by example:

There’s been numerous times actually, especially working here at the Garrison, where I observed leadership leading by example. You know, they would get out there and do the work with you. It’s not, “Hey go do this,” and they just go sit behind a desk. They are out there with you doing it, I would say out of 365 days easily 340. You know they are always out there, it boosts morale with everybody as a whole. When you come to work you are not just another number, you are a person as well, and they know everybody and they know when it’s personal or work related, and they interact with everybody.

Participant G’s experience shares a similarity with Participant F, when disclosing,

Most of my career working here, I worked with professionals. When they worked, they led by example. My boss led by example, which made me feel that I only have one choice to lead by example. It made me proud to come to work, and I did so every single day.

Fourteen participants shared their viewpoints on the theme leads by example. The perspectives of 14 participants revealed that a leader who leads by example can have an impact regarding the most effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.
Leader acts with integrity. A leader who acts with integrity was the second most frequently identified theme expressed by participants regarding the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale. Participants’ responses concerning a leader who was ethical and moral were implied to be synonymous with leader acts with integrity. The frequency count for the theme was 48, and 13 of the 15 participants identified with the topic during interviews. Furthermore, three of the seven artifacts had relevance to the theme. A leader who models a high degree of integrity is consistent with the second “I” component (idealized influence [behavior]) in the transformational leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003). Integrity is one of the top attributes of a great leader. It is a concept of consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes. It connotes a deep commitment to do the right thing for the right reason, regardless of the circumstances (Northouse, 2016).

The researcher listened to participants share their opinions on how a leader acts with integrity impacted their morale. For instance, Participant H stated, “My last immediate supervisor, very ethical, very moral, it impacted my standards as far as that person molding me to follow the same suit in this job. Integrity is key, basically that taught me.” Participant K expressed the impact of having a leader who held a high degree of integrity:

I’ve been working for a supervisor who up held high standards of moral and ethical conduct. He made sure you upheld those moral and ethical conduct as an officer, made sure I did my job. Holding myself to those higher standards is making me a better officer.

However, Participant J’s experience differed significantly from that of Participants H and K. Participant J described,
For quite a while working here, we have some upper management that I don’t believe have any ethics and lacked a lot of morals that you and I would be believed to be required of supervisors, and recently we had some changes in the upper management that have seemed to have changed that and have made life working here at the Garrison a lot better. When you don’t have trust above you, there’s a feeling of hopelessness that can overwhelm the organization and create a very unhappy or unstable workplace.

Thirteen participants shared their perspectives on the impact that leaders have a high degree of integrity would have on employee morale. The viewpoints of 13 participants showed that leaders with a high degree of integrity can have an effect concerning the most effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.

**Leader enforces organizational policies.** The need for a leader to enforce organizational policies was the third most frequently identified theme by participants. Ten of the 15 participants identified the impact a leader who enforces organizational policies would have on their morale. The theme produced a frequency count of 34, with three of the seven artifacts having a relationship with the topic. A leader who enforces organizational policies, whether actively or passively, is being consistent with the “management-by-exception” element in the transactional leader approach. A leader focuses on key areas of organization performance where tasks have failed or are in jeopardy of not being performed to standards. A leader is more concerned with maximizing productivity by changing processes to run efficiently in the organization (Antonakis et al., 2003). In order to understand the relationship between “leader enforces organizational policies” and the leadership approaches that federal government civilian
employees perceived most to enhance employee morale, participants were solicited to convey their perceptions. For instance, Participant D shared,

I work for a supervisor that imposes the organization’s policies, procedures and guidance which needs to be, and I can appreciate how it’s done, and what the standard is to be, and also that supervisor followed the same guidance, ethics, procedures and policy as they informed us in training, or me in training.

Furthermore, investigating the impact a leader who enforces organizational policies would impose on employee morale, Participant K expressed,

So, working for the supervisor who enforces all the current rules, procedures, standards and expectation, he holds you to that standard to make sure you’re enforcing those upon yourself and you’re also enforcing them with your other co-workers. We all have the same standard, knowing you’re doing a better job, your morale is going to be higher because you’re doing a better job, you know what you’re supposed to be doing.

Participant N illustrated a scenario where a leader who enforces organizational policies could have both negative and positive effects, such as,

I think that everybody tries to do their best enforcing current policies and standards. There’s always that little gray area enforcing current policies and standards that people might not agree on and I think as long as the individual or supervisor do their best to try to stick to those I think that’s positive for morale. When you deviate from that and start reading too much into it or slanting the policy and procedure for certain scenarios that would be a negative impact on morale.
Ten participants expressed their opinions on how the theme would impact employee morale. The viewpoints of participants were consistent. The perspectives of the 10 participants revealed that a leader who enforces organizational policies can have an impact concerning the most effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.

**Research Question 1: Artifacts**

**Leader leads by example.** There were two artifacts—supervisor performance evaluation form, and annual report of the organization—that revealed a relationship with the theme. The artifacts disclosed language that is synonymous with the theme leader leads by example.

1. Supervisor performance evaluation form: Leads by example.
2. Annual report of the organization: Employees are providing excellent customer service to customers.

There is a close relationship between an effective performance and employee morale. Actually, one of the primary reasons employees should be evaluated is for motivation. A leader has an opportunity to strengthen areas where an employee excels and identify areas of improvement (Kokemuller, 2020). The data exposed by the two aforementioned artifacts revealed information that support a relationship with the theme leader leads by example. The artifacts strengthened the relationship with the theme regarding the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale.

**Leader acts with integrity.** Three artifacts—supervisor performance evaluation form, organization values statement, and army civilian corps creed—were found to
support the theme leader acts with integrity. The data within each artifact contain the term *integrity*, which shows a relationship with the theme.

1. Supervisor performance evaluation form: Upholds Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

2. Organization values statement: Our values are the Army values: Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

3. Army civilian corps creed: I live the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

The three artifacts provided data that showed that the word integrity was a key element of organizational values. The data from artifacts also revealed a supporting relationship with the theme leader acts with integrity. The artifacts supported the theme regarding the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale.

**Leader enforces organizational policies.** The theme leader enforces organizational policies was connected to three organizational artifacts—supervisor performance evaluation form, job description, and Army civilian corps creed. Language enclosed within the artifacts revealed a connection that was synonymous with the theme.

1. Supervisor performance evaluation form: Implements Department of the Army policies; and takes immediate corrective action if sexual harassment or other discriminatory/unfair treatment is observed, reported, or suspected.

2. Job description: Provides authoritative guidance and information on regulations and procedures; and enforces variety of federal laws according to principle of exclusive jurisdiction.
3. Army civilian corps creed: I will always support the mission; and I support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

Each of the artifacts provided data that showed an alignment with the theme leader enforces organizational policies. The artifacts supported the theme with language that is consistent with a leader who enforces organizational policies, and assisted the theme concerning the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale.

**Research Question 1: Data Related to Paygrades**

Participants’ responses revealed a consistency among the paygrades that include U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The data revealed that the highest rated leadership areas are reflected in the following themes:

- Leader leads by example—55
- Leader acts with integrity—48
- Leader enforces organizational policies—34

Participants regardless of paygrade responded similarly to the interview questions related to Research Question 1. Therefore, the researcher did not gain additional knowledge in this area.

**Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to increase employee productivity?” The responses from 15 participants identified six themes supporting what participants perceived as the most
effective leadership approaches for increasing employee productivity. Three major themes surfaced as a representation of the participants’ responses to the research question. The themes were identified based on those with the highest total frequency. Table 5 displays the themes, codes, and frequencies associated with each of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) to identify the leadership style participants perceived as most important to increasing the productivity of federal government employees.

**Transformational Leadership**

Transformation leadership yielded a total frequency of 87. Think outside the box, creative problem solver, find a different way, and share the same vision had a total frequency of 56, representing that it was the most valued area of all leadership to enhance employee productivity. The collection of leadership strategies advocates that leaders inspire followers to transcend to a higher level of productivity. They set the trajectory for goals accomplishment, empowering followers to identify with the vision, and rising to the challenges. Thinking creatively is a leadership skill that helps set a leader apart to actively engage innovative ways to solve problems.

**Leader challenges employees to think creatively.** A leader who challenges employees to think creatively was recognized by all participants. Challenging employees to think creatively was identified by all 15 participants to be an important matter concerning the most effective leadership approaches for boosting employee productivity.

A supervisor who stimulates employees to think creatively was determined to have the greatest frequency, generating a frequency count of 48 from interviews, and supported by four of seven artifacts. According to Northouse (2016), a leader who uses
Table 5

*Emergent Themes Frequency Count Identified in Research Question 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Think creatively</td>
<td>Total for all think creatively codes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Think outside the box</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Free creativity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creative problem solver</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Find a different way</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieving a shared vision</td>
<td>Total for all achieving a shared vision codes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share the same vision</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working side by side</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Buy-in</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Micromanages employees</td>
<td>Total for all micromanages employees codes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet deadlines</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Customer support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quid pro quo relationship</td>
<td>Total for all quid pro quo codes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>Freedom to complete tasks</td>
<td>Total for all freedom to complete tasks using own methods codes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>using own methods</td>
<td>Hands off</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom to explore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Free rein</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides tools and resources</td>
<td>Total for all provides tools and resources needed codes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>needed</td>
<td>Achieve results</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Builds confidence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Interview $n = 15$, artifact $n = 7$.

intellectual stimulation inspires creativity and innovation among followers to investigate new methods of solving organizational issues. The leader engages followers’ sensible thinking processes and aids them with the further development of their abilities to analyze problems and find creative solutions to solving problems (Antonakis et al., 2003). A leader who models this behavior is consistent with the third “I” (intellectual
stimulation) in the transformational leadership approach. Participants expressed their opinions on the importance of having a leader who challenges them to think creatively or to think outside the box. For example, Participant E shared,

> In our jobs, we always have to think outside the box. Sometimes, supervisors let you solve problems and think outside the box. I think you get more productivity out of that because some of the things that are being asked is not within the standard operating procedures.

Although Participant H could not identify ever having a leader who challenged employees to think creatively, the individual did address the impact of having such a leader as follows: “The most effective leadership approach at this organization in my opinion would be to allow workers to be more creative and encourage thinking outside the box”; whereas Participant K, an individual who did encounter a leader who challenged employees to think creatively reported,

> I worked for a supervisor who would bring in scenarios, this is like our trainings and briefings, and would tell you that this is not the answer you can use. So the answer we would always go with, we couldn’t use that answer. You have to sit there and think, “Okay what other way can I solve this problem,” and if someone answered your answer, you’ve got to come up with a different answer. So, really make you think about an all-around goal on how you can solve the problem without doing the same thing every time, if that makes sense. It pushes it higher because now you’re thinking about when you go out and face all these situations now you know how to solve them, and it’s not the same thing every time.
Fifteen participants shared their beliefs on the impact that being able to think creatively would have on productivity. Participants perceived that a leader who challenges employees to think creatively can have an influence regarding the most effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision.** Inspiring employees toward achieving a shared vision was recognized by all participants. The theme leader inspires employees towards achieving the shared vision of the organization was recognized by all of the 15 participants. The theme is considered to be important concerning the most effective leadership approaches for increasing employee productivity. The theme was identified with having the second highest frequency count. It produced a frequency count of 39 from the interviews and was supported by three of the seven artifacts. A leader who incorporates the second “I” (inspirational motivation) of the transformational leadership approach communicates excellence to followers in a way that followers become inspired and committed to the shared vision of the organization. The leader inspires followers to comprehend the importance of seeing the vision of advancing forward. The leader uses emotional appeal to inspire followers to achieve above their level of expectation (Northouse, 2016). Additionally, inspirational motivation indicates that a leader who uses inspirational methods through effective communication inspires followers to be optimistic about accomplishing future goals through an idealized vision (Antonakis et al., 2003). Prompting participants to share their viewpoints on the impact of a leader who inspires employees toward achieving the shared vision, incited the following response from Participant H: “Last supervisor was instrumental in having me understand the shared vision of the organization. It impacted
my productivity by understanding it was a buy in”; whereas, Participant G believed that having a leader who inspires employee toward achieving the shared vision of the organization benefits the organization. The individual share the following narrative:

Working under my former and present boss, everybody that works in this organization supported the shared vision to help achieve our goals. The former and current boss, free thinkers, inspired us to work together and get things done for the organization.

In addition, Participant N reported that having a shared vision has the potential to stimulate productivity:

I think having a shared vision would keep everybody in place and supervisors on the same track of work and performance, which would help with productivity because everybody knows their job and what’s being asked of them. So, yeah, I think that would definitely help with productivity.

Fifteen participants expressed their belief on the impact that a leader who inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision would have on productivity. The 15 participants disclosed that the behavior can have an impact regarding the most effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method.** A leader who gives employees the freedom to work autonomously to build their confidence in solving problems through unconventional methods is consistent with the laissez-faire leadership approach. The laissez-faire faire leadership approach is defined as a hands-off style where the leader delegates authority and power to employees. The leader provides little or no direction and gives employees sufficient amounts of freedom.
as necessary. All authority and power is abdicated to the employees. The employees are responsible for establishing their own goals, making decisions and developing solutions to solving problems all on their own (Khan et al., 2015). Thirteen of the 15 participants conversed on the effects of a leader who gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method. The theme addressed the research question concerning the most effective leadership approaches for increasing employee productivity. The theme received the third highest frequency count, having a frequency count of 38 from interviews, and there were no artifacts that supported the theme. When probed to share their lived experiences concerning having a leader who gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method, Participant F verbalized the following:

If you can get the job done right within the scope and capacity which we’ve been handed, but you have a different method, that’s a win for the department. For instance, I do installation access, the individuals before me were decent at it, but they were still behind. I’ve been able to get it down with my own method and the lieutenants or my supervisor told me that you have a different set of skills let’s see what you can do with it, and within the first 2 days I had a full month caught up. Participant E believed using this method throughout the organization would be a boost to productivity. The individual revealed, “We use that a lot here in our department. Productivity would definitely increase throughout the organization if the Garrison let us do our own stuff.” However, Participant L thinks the method would generate a double-edged sword:

This can be like a double-edged sword like when you say use your own methods.

If you let an employee choose to accomplish tasks and commitments using their
own methods sometimes that would be fine. Every organization has their standard operating procedures, and rules and regulations, and if sometimes the employees uses something that is outside the boundary that can become a liability for the organization, and instead of positive it might have a negative.

Thirteen participants shared their viewpoints concerning a leader that inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision. The opinions of participants revealed that a leader who incorporates this type of behavior can have an impact regarding the most effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Research Question 2: Artifacts**

**Leader challenges employees to think creatively.** Four artifacts—supervisor performance evaluation form, employee performance evaluation form, job description, and annual report of the organization—supported theme leader challenges employees to think creatively. The artifacts detailed data that were equivalent with the theme.

1. Supervisor performance evaluation form: Provides challenging training and work assignments.
2. Employee performance evaluation form: Is willing to try new ways.
3. Job description: Develops surveillance techniques and procedures to use in inspecting the operation of functions under contract to determine efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Annual report of the organization: Energy manager seeks innovative solution that return savings to the organization.

Performance evaluation can be an effective tool for a leader to use for the purpose of maximizing employee productivity. A leader identifies those areas of weakness and then formulates strategies to improve and maximize the employee’s level of performance.
A leader enables employees to comprehend the importance of helping the organization achieve its goals and objectives (Matolo & Mukulu, 2016). A leader challenges employees to think creatively had a relationship with four artifacts. Data from the artifacts revealed that the information was in alignment with the theme regarding the most effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision.** The theme, leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision, showed a connection to three artifacts—supervisor performance evaluation form, employee performance evaluation form, and annual report of the organization. Data enclosed in the artifacts exposed a connection that was synonymous with the theme.

1. Supervisor performance evaluation form: Provides vision and communicates mission and organizational goals to all subordinates.

2. Employee performance evaluation form: Establishes priorities that reflect mission and organizational needs.

3. Annual report of the organization: Employees are devoted, enthusiastic, and passionate about achieving mission success.

Three artifacts showed to have a relationship with the theme leader inspires employees towards achieving a shared vision. Data from the artifacts revealed information that supported the theme concerning the most effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method.** A leader who chose to give employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method revealed a relationship with no artifacts.
Research Question 2: Data Related to Paygrades

The responses of participants revealed that there was consistency among the paygrades that include U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The data revealed that the highest rated leadership areas are reflected in the following themes:

- Leader challenges employees to think creatively—48
- Leader inspires employees towards achieving a shared vision—39
- Leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method—38

The responses of participants to Research Question 2 produced no data that differentiated the responses of one paygrade from another. Data revealed that participants were nearly unanimous with their responses. The researcher did not gain additional knowledge in this section.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to enhance employee morale?” The 15 participants’ responses recognized five themes supporting what participants perceived as the least effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale. Three major themes emerged as a representation of the participants’ responses to the research question. The themes were recognized based on those with the highest total frequency. Table 6 displays the themes, codes, and frequencies associated with each of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) to identify the leadership style participants perceived as least important to enhancing the morale of federal government employees.
Table 6

Emergent Themes Frequency Count Identified in Research Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Transformational</td>
<td>Acts with integrity</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better than you attitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opinions don’t count</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refuse to listen to ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of reprisal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to please</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>Deadline to meet</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Morale killer</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Keep everything calm</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Status quo</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refuse to listen to new ideas</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>By the book</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refuse to change with the time</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
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<td>Total for all provides very little guidance codes</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poor guidance</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Waste time</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of feeling lost</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegates decision-making</td>
<td>Total for all provides very little guidance codes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Passing the buck</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>keeping hands off</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Interview \(n = 15\), artifact \(n = 7\).

**Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leadership yielded a total frequency of 111. Control and status quo had a total frequency of 71 indicating that it was the least likely area of all leadership to
enhance employee morale. The collection of leadership strategies obstructed leaders’ abilities to raise the morale of followers. The strategies are designed to control outcomes. Control and maintaining the status quo are leadership tactics that facilitate a leader to seize control of task management to affect the desired outcome of tasks and objectives important to the organization.

**Leader micromanages employees.** A leader who micromanages employees’ primary focus is on task assignments and ensures that followers remain goal oriented for completing assigned tasks to standards; this behavior is consistent with the management-by-exception component of the transactional leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003). Management-by-exception is defined as a leadership style where a leader assigns tasks to employees and then monitors to ensure that tasks are performed to standards, and when employees failed to meet those standards, the leader implements corrective actions (Rothfelder et al., 2012). Thirteen of 15 participants encountered a leader who micromanages. The theme drew the highest frequency, had a frequency count of 44 from interviews, and discovered none in the artifacts. When identifying the least effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale, Participant O propagated why a leader who micromanages employees is a morale killer:

Unfortunately these kind of supervisors, they’re going to be just about everywhere. Did I come across it? Unfortunately, I have and it’s something that’s, like I said, a morale killer. It makes you not want to be around that supervisor. It makes you not want to go to them to ask questions, because it feel like they’re just nitpicking at you and it just kind of belittles you in a sense, and I don’t like it.
Participant C shared a personal encounter with a leader who micromanaged employees. The participant’s perspective on the matter disclosed the following encounter:

We do have a supervisor, you know he’s telling us every 5 minutes, repeating orders every 30 minutes, even though he already told us in the briefing what we are doing. He needs to know what we’re doing, if you’re doing it correctly, when are we going to finish it, and crazy reminders, and it’s frustrating, very frustrating, because sometimes you want to go against it. He calls and he asks if you finished what I told you to do.

Participant G’s revelation revealed an interaction with a previous leader. The participant disclosed, “My previous boss constantly reminded everybody every single day of something that they needed to do, the tasks that needed to be done at hand, instead of giving them the freedom to do their job.” Thirteen participants shared their viewpoints regarding a leader who micromanages employees. The perspectives of the 13 participants revealed that the theme leader micromanages employees can have an impact concerning the least effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.

**Leader provides very little guidance.** A leader who chooses to provide very little guidance was acknowledged by the majority of participants. An acknowledgement concerning “leader provides very little guidance” affected nine of the 15 participants. The theme had the second highest frequency, and captured a frequency count of 40, and reflected in one of seven artifacts. The theme is auxiliary to the research question of the least effective leadership approaches for raising employee morale. A leader who provides very little guidance abdicates decision-making to employees to set goals, make decisions, and resolve problems independently; this behavior is consistent with the
laissez-faire leadership approach (Khan et al., 2015). Laissez-faire leadership is defined as a leadership style where a leader circumvents making decisions, abdicates responsibility, and refuses to use his or her authority (Antonakis et al., 2003). Employees are given the freedom to work autonomously. Participant A shared the frustration that sometimes accompany having very little guidance:

Frustrated me at times! If you give me a project and with very little guidelines to start with and then tell me to take off with it, I would get frustrated, because I’m trying to accomplish that. Figure out first what is the goal that supervisor wanted, then I start to work on the project, then to find out that’s not what that person wanted, and then they go back and change it all around. I wasted a lot of time.

Participant B also shared disappointment when not receiving enough guidance to complete a task:

I worked under somebody that was like that. It goes into, you know, sometimes they don’t fully explain the guidance. I end up getting lost, and I ask questions and it’s more like you got to figure it out for yourself. It’s kind of a demeaning feeling, and I personally will try to figure out how to solve the problem. I try to find somebody that’s a little more experienced.

However, Participant K believes there is both pro and con with receiving very little guidance, for instance,

There’s a pro and a con for this. Pro for having somebody providing very little guidance that you have to sit there and make decisions and be confident in what you’re doing. However, on the other side, if you do have questions and somebody not providing you guidance, we don’t know everything in this job and
that’s what a supervisor is for, and so if they are not providing you that guidance it’s frustrating and it kind of bring you down, because you’re not getting the help that you need.

Nine participants expressed their viewpoints regarding the impact receiving very little guidance would have on employee morale. The perspectives of the nine participants showed that a leader who chooses to provide very little guidance can have an effect concerning the least effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.

**Leader prefers to do things the present way.** The impact of having a leader who chooses to keep things the present way impacted several participants. Leader prefers to do things the present way was the third most frequently mentioned when it comes to the least effective leadership approach to improve employee morale. The theme was remarked on by eight of the 15 participants, referenced 37 times, and noted in one artifact. According to Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013), leaders who focus on keeping things the same are preoccupied with achieving near-term goals with the aid of rewards and punishment; this behavior is consistent with the contingent reward component on the transactional leadership approach. Contingent reward is defined as a leadership practice where a leader assigns employees clear roles and tasks, and upon tasks being completed to the standards, awards tangible or psychological rewards as a fulfillment of predetermined obligations (Antonakis et al., 2003). Participant G spoke about the need for moving on from the past: “Everybody got to accept change, and just because we did something for 12 years doesn’t mean that it is right for the next 12 years.” Participant K shared personal feelings about how maintaining the status quo can be frustrating. The individual’s account revealed the following experience:
I had another supervisor who maintained the status quo. However, the status quo, the present way, needed to be updated by a change in laws and the change of the time like how time changes in everything. So because of that, it was frustrating to do your job and to do what you needed to do when they were not maintaining when they needed to update instead of maintaining the present way.

On the other hand, Participant N believed that everything is situational. For example, Participant N articulated,

I would think that would depend on the situation. There are times where the status quo is definitely a tried-and-true way, and that’s why it’s the status quo, and then, there are times when trying a new solution to a way things are being done and not changing the status quo could be a problem. But, I cannot say that every time status quo would have a negative impact around morale it would depend on the scenario.

Eight participants shared their viewpoints regarding the impact of a leader who maintains the status quo. The viewpoints of participants disclosed that the behavior to do things the present way can have an influence concerning the least effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.

Research Question 3: Artifacts

Leader micromanages employees. There were no artifacts that supported a leader who chose to micromanage employees.

Leader provides very little guidance. One artifact, titled job description, was discovered to have a relationship with the theme leader provides very little guidance.
The artifacts detailed data that were synonymous with the theme leader provides very little guidance.

1. Job description: Responsible for resolving a full range of nonrecurring and unusual visitor access assignments.

   Job descriptions are important tools for employees, leaders, and organizations. Job descriptions define employees’ roles and responsibilities. Properly written job descriptions facilitate employee commitment. A job description benefits an organization by improving its ability to manage employees (Brannen, 2016). The theme leader provides very little guidance was connected to one artifact. Data from the artifacts revealed that the information was associated with the theme concerning the least effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale.

   **Leader prefers to do things the present way.** The theme leader prefers to do things the present way showed a connection to one artifact—job description. Data within the artifact uncovered a connection that was synonymous with the theme.

1. Job description: Performs duties in accordance with appropriate regulations.

   The one artifact that supported the theme leader prefers to do things the present way revealed data that showed a relationship with the theme concerning the least effective leadership approaches for increasing employee morale.

**Research Question 3: Data Related to Paygrades**

   The responses of participants disclosed that there was consistency among the paygrades that include U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The data revealed that the highest rated leadership areas are reflected in the following themes:
• Leader micromanages employees—74
• Leader provides very little guidance—40
• Leader prefers to do things the present way—37

The responses of participants revealed that no theme received less than 50% of acknowledgment from participants. Therefore, the data did not reveal any additional information. For this reason, the information did not offer the researcher additional knowledge.

**Research Question 4**

Research Question 4 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to increase employee productivity?” The 15 participants, in their responses, recognized six themes corroborating what participants perceived as the least effective leadership approaches for increasing employee productivity. The themes exhibited in Table 7 represent the codes and themes for each of the leadership styles. Three major themes surfaced as a representation of the participants’ responses to the research question. The themes were recognized based on those with the highest total frequency. Table 7 displays the themes, codes, and frequencies associated with each of the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) to identify the leadership style participants perceived as least important to increasing the productivity of federal government employees.

**Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leadership yielded a total frequency of 116. Control hinders productivity, creates favoritism, and disappointment had a total frequency of 93
Table 7

*Emergent Themes Frequency Count Identified in Research Question 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Styles</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Artifacts</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Difficult</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regulatory guidelines</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slows productivity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Achieving a</td>
<td>Achieving a shared vision</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>shared vision</td>
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<td>Difficult to agree on one vision</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creates competition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple visions</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Requires buy-in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slows progress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Don’t have a voice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Opinions don’t count</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refuse to listen to ideas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of reprisal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to please</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards in exchange for favors</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total for all rewards in exchange for favors codes</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits supervisor</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hinders productivity</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creates favourism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disappointment</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
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<td>Total for all complete freedom for followers to make decisions codes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hands off</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Requires trust</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of failure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No standards</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No accountability</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tasks not completed to standards</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achieve control through less obvious means</td>
<td>Total for all achieve control through less obvious means</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Too much freedom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liability for the organization</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Interview *n* = 15, artifact *n* = 7.
representing that it was the least of all leadership areas to increase employee productivity. The collection of leadership strategies center heavily on contingent rewards through positive and negative reinforcement. These reinforcements, such as status quo and operating inside the box, reinforce a leader’s authority to manipulate employee productivity levels and achieve the goals and objectives important to the organization. The strategies are designed to maximize employee productivity whether actively or passively. Micromanaging helps a leader to influence the desired outcome of task assignments and completions.

**Leader micromanages employees.** Leaders who micromanage employees tend to stimulate employee productivity via active and passive management techniques; this behavior is consistent with the management-by-exception component of the transactional leadership approach (Northouse, 2016). The active and passive management techniques facilitate the leader to influence employee performance throughout the stages of task management to ensure that tasks and objectives have been performed to standards. Micromanaging employees compiled a frequency count of 79 from interviews, and was recorded in zero artifacts. Thirteen of the 15 participants experienced leaders who micromanaged employees. The theme was tied with the first most frequently mentioned among participants. Participant C shared how difficult it can be working for a leader who micromanages employees by choosing to have a myopic view when doing everything by the book,

> We do have a supervisor that is very much by the book. He doesn’t see anything outside of it. Sometimes it’s difficult because there are better ways to accomplish the same mission in a short time and a better, more productive happier way. But
it’s very difficult when you have a person that is set by the rules and set to standards that sometimes are old and obsolete, and he will not see outside of that it’s just frustrating.

Participant G shares a comparable anecdote to that of Participant C of how a leader who micromanages employees can negatively impact productivity, divulging:

Last boss gave a lot of guidance that was almost their way or it wasn’t done right and that meant that we were not allowed to be free thinkers and do things our own way; it was the way the boss wanted it to be done and that impacted us as a staff to be minimized by the ability that we could actually perform at. By not being micromanaged, it would give you more freedom to do what you felt needed to be done to help or assist a client.

Participant N’s viewpoint concerning a leader who micromanages employees was the most direct of the 13 participants, “Least effective, definitely micromanaging or ruling by fear. The supervisor attacks you for completing the task a certain way.”

Thirteen participants shared their perspectives the impact of being micromanaged would have on productivity. Participants’ viewpoints reveal that the theme can have an impact regarding the least effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors.** A leader who offers employees rewards in exchange for favors was acknowledged by 13 of the 15 participants. The theme had the second highest frequency. There was a frequency count of 37 references from interviews, and it was associated in one artifact. When a leader offers rewards in exchange for favors, a mutual contractual agreement is established with followers that is contingent on role assignment and tasks accomplishment for motivation;
this behavior is consistent with the contingent reward component of the transactional leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003). Participant F believed a leader who attempts to stimulate employee productivity by using a tangible rewards exchange method would negatively impact productivity,

I haven’t physically observed that myself, but productivity would definitely go down. If I see a supervisor going up to subordinates and say, “Hey do this for me and I will get you this.” Hold on for a second, it’s not like you scratch my back and I scratch your back. I’m over here busting my butt and doing the job so why am I not being appreciated while this person over here doing favor for you and you going to reward them; it’s not fair to everybody else.

Participant L, similar to Participant F, did not experience firsthand a leader who offers rewards in exchange for favors, but the participant agreed that such behavior would be negative for productivity,

I never had any chance, so far, to meet somebody with the employee with a quid pro quo. But, I think that will not be a very productive situation for any organization when there is quid pro quo, because you are basically not doing anything, you are just giving somebody favor for the job.

However, Participant J experienced several supervisors who adopted the rewards in exchange for favors method. The participant’s recollection revealed,

We had several supervisors over the almost 18 years I’ve been here that lived under this type of behavior, and you will see individuals that that I trained quickly became a higher ranking than I did, even though being a field training officer and should have been in next in line for the promotion. I was passed over very
quickly, and when that type of behavior happens, the productivity in the agency just tanks.

Thirteen participants expressed their viewpoints on the impact that rewards in exchange for favors would have on employee productivity. The opinions of participants disclosed that the behavior can have an impact regarding the least effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

**Leader gives complete freedom for followers to make decisions.** The absence of leadership abdicates decision-making to followers without fear of reprisal; this behavior is consistent with the laissez-faire leadership approach (Northouse, 2016). Laissez-faire gives followers the freedom to work autonomously from a leader. The leader assumes a passive role where the relationship between leader and followers is nonexistent. Followers undertake the responsibility of determining goals, making decisions, and resolving problems on their own. There were eight of the 15 participants who attested to being given the complete freedom to make decisions. The theme received the lowest frequency among the top three themes, with 25 references and two artifacts. Participant B believed that giving employees the freedom to make decisions can conceive unexpected consequences. For example, the individual professed,

I worked under a person that had more of a hands-off approach. It’s more like talking to a wall because he is more of an administrative person so he knows that’s more of his strength and he’s really great at tasking and managing the time.

Participant K revealed a much different experience where giving employees complete freedom to make decisions empowered employees to not perform to standards,
Working for a supervisor who let everybody complete things and there was no fear of reprisal, actually caused more issues because people weren’t doing their jobs to the standards that they should have been doing the job. They were not doing the job correctly. They knew they were not going to get in trouble, and they continued to maintain not doing their jobs correctly which is extremely frustrating as an employee.

In concurrence with the perception of Participant K, Participant N communicated that giving employees the freedom to make decisions has the potential to decrease productivity,

There is definitely a line of complete freedom and making decisions. I could see too much maybe going the other way and getting lackadaisical and in tasking jobs that need to be done with the employee being able to make the decision himself to complete the task, that might not be the way it needs to be done.

Eight participants shared their opinions concerning the impact having complete freedom to make decisions would have on productivity. The perspectives of these eight participants revealed that the practice of giving employees complete freedom to make decisions can have an influence regarding the least effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity.

Research Question 4: Artifacts

Leader micromanages employees. There were no artifacts that supported the theme leader micromanages employees.
**Leader provides very little guidance.** The theme leader provides very little guidance was discovered to have a connection to one artifact—job description. Language revealed within the artifact was synonymous with the theme.

1. Job description: Responsible for resolving a full range of nonrecurring and unusual visitor access assignments.

   A job description can be an effective communication tool that articulates to employees what tasks an organization expects them to perform. Embedded in a job description are standards, rules, and responsibilities that are essential to a particular job. A job description needs to written with clear instructions, or employees may become confused and fail to perform to leaders’ expectations (Brannen, 2016).

   One artifact was discovered to have a connection to the theme leader provides very little guidance. Job description was one of seven artifacts that support the theme. The data disclosed a relationship that supported the theme regarding the least effective leadership approaches to maximize employee productivity.

**Leader prefers to do things the present way.** The theme leader prefers to do things the present way disclosed a relationship with one artifact—job description. The data uncovered in the artifact supported a connection that was synonymous with the theme.

1. Job description: Performs duties in accordance with appropriate regulations.

   There was one artifact that supported the theme leader prefers to do things the present way. The data revealed language that supported the theme concerning the least effective leadership approaches to increasing employee productivity.
Research Question 4: Data Related to Paygrades

The responses of participants indicated that there was consistency among paygrades that include U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The data disclosed that the highest rated leadership areas are reflected in the following themes:

- Leader micromanages employees—79
- Leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors—37
- Leader gives complete freedom for followers to make decisions—25

Participants’ responses to the three themes in Research Question 4 disclosed that all themes received greater than 50% of participants’ acknowledgments. The researcher did not acquire any additional knowledge. The responses from participants from the various paygrades were very similar with no distinguishing differences.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the research, data collection, and findings of this descriptive qualitative study. The study sought to identify and describe leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceived as being most and least effective for enhancing employee morale and productivity. The findings from the study revealed the opinions of 15 U.S. Army civilian employees concerning the effectiveness and ineffectiveness leadership approaches have on employees’ morale and productivity. In addition, there was an analyses of seven artifacts. Chapter V presents conclusions based upon the findings and offers implications for action and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER V: MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a restatement of the purpose of this study, research questions, methodology, and population and sample. Subsequent sections of this chapter include major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research. The researcher culminates the chapter with concluding remarks and reflections.

Purpose

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to identify and describe the leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity.

Research Questions

1. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee morale?

2. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to increase employee productivity?

3. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to enhance employee morale?
4. What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to increase employee productivity?

**Research Methods**

A descriptive qualitative research method was used to ascertain a deeper understanding concerning how leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) affect the morale and productivity of U.S. Army civilian employees. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews using semistructured open-ended questions with 15 U.S. Army civilian employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities. The interviews facilitated the researcher with experiencing firsthand how open-ended response questions stimulated participants to share their personal experiences willingly (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition to interviews, the researcher gathered seven artifacts. The amalgamation of interviews and artifacts aided the researcher in ascertaining a greater understanding of participants’ perceptions concerning the effects leadership approaches have on their morale and productivity.

**Population and Sample**

The population for this study was the U.S. Army civilian employees of which there are 330,000 worldwide. The target population was identified as the approximately 3,000 Army civilian employees working at the Presidio of Monterey army base, Monterey, California. The target population consisted of U.S. Army civilian employees in paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities.
The sample consisted of 15 U.S. Army civilian employees with nonsupervisory responsibilities from the USAG Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California. The participants met the following criteria: (a) Department of the Army civilian employees in paygrades of GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities, and (b) Department of the Army civilian employees who have been working in the USAG Presidio of Monterey for a minimum of 3 years.

Major Findings

The major findings in this descriptive qualitative research are organized by research question.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to enhance employee morale?” The major findings produced three major themes that participants perceived consequential to identifying the most effective leadership approaches for elevating employee morale. The three major themes that surfaced in the first research question were (a) leader leads by example (transformational leadership), (b) leader has a high degree of integrity (transformational leadership), and (c) leader enforces organizational policies (transactional leadership).

Finding 1. Leading by example is effective to enhance employee morale.

Leader leads by example was the most frequent theme. The theme attained a frequency count of 55, was acknowledged by 14 of the 15 participants during interviews, and was identified in two of seven artifacts. The 14 participants perceived it to be the most important to enhance employee morale. The participants shared testimonies of how such
a leader not only elevated their morale but also the morale of the workplace. From the participants’ account, the behavior was communicable where participants wanted to come to work. The behavior where a leader leads by example was associated with the first “I” component (idealized influence [attributed]) in the transformational leadership approach (Northouse, 2016).

**Finding 2. Leaders who have high integrity enhance employee morale.**

Leader has a high degree of integrity was the second most frequent theme. The theme produced a frequency count of 48 and was identified by 13 of the 15 participants. The 13 participants identified the theme as important to enhance employee morale. Participants believed that a leader who modeled a high degree of integrity inspired them to emulate that leader and pursue a high degree of integrity. Furthermore, participants expressed that a leader of such caliber would significantly impact employee morale in a positive way. A leader’s behavior that mirrors a high degree of integrity is linked to the second “I” component (idealized influence [behavior]) in the transformational leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

**Finding 3. Leaders who enforce organizational policies enhance employee morale.**

Leader enforces organizational policies received the third most frequency count. The theme produced a frequency count of 34 and was recognized by 10 participants. Ten of the 15 participants acknowledged the theme as important to heighten employee morale. Participants conveyed that enforcing organizational policies is essential for improving employee morale. Participants also noted that when leaders hold themselves to those same standards, it not only boosts employee morale, but it also improves the feeling of wanting to come to work. Leader enforces organizational policies is a
leadership practice that is consistent with the management-by-exception element in the transactional leader approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

The findings from Research Question 1 revealed that the opinions of participants were aligned with two leadership approaches concerning improving employee morale. Two of the three aforementioned themes—leader leads by example and leader has a high degree of integrity—were linked to the transformational leadership approach and produced a combined frequency count of 103. The third theme—leader enforces organizational policies—was associated with the transactional leadership approach and generated a frequency count of 34.

Summary. Participants perceived that the transformational leadership approach was the most effective to enhance employee morale. Transformational leadership elements—leader leads by example and leader has a high degree of integrity—received the highest frequency count of the three major themes. The transformational leadership elements supported participants’ perceptions that the approach was the most effective to enhance employee morale.

- Transformational—leader leads by example (55), and leader has a high degree of integrity (48): 103
- Transactional—leader enforces organizational policies (34): 34
- Laissez-faire—no finding achieved the three major themes (0): 0

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as most effective to increase employee productivity?” The major findings generated
three major themes that participants recognized as important to identifying the most
effective leadership approaches for increasing employee productivity. The three major
themes produced in the second research question included (a) leader challenges
employees to think creatively, (b) leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared
vision, and (c) leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own
method.

**Finding 4. Leaders who challenge employees to think creatively increase**
employee productivity. Leader challenges employees to think creatively was the first
most frequent theme. The theme attained a frequency count of 48, was recognized by 15
participants during interviews, and was supported by four of the seven artifacts. The 15
participants recognized the theme as being crucial for increasing employee productivity.
Participants professed that thinking creatively challenged them to think outside the box.
Also, participants stated that thinking outside the box increased their productivity.
Furthermore, participants believed the behavior stimulated employees to solve problems
using creative ideas. A leader who challenges employees to think creatively is associated
with the third “I” (intellectual stimulation) in the transformational leadership approach
(Northouse, 2016).

**Finding 5. Leaders who inspire employees toward achieving a shared vision**
multiply employee productivity. Leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared
vision was the second most frequent theme. The theme obtained a frequency count of 39,
was identified by 15 of the 15 participants during interviews, and was supported by three
of the seven artifacts. The 15 participants acknowledged the themes as being imperative
for raising employee productivity. The participants shared that achieving a shared vision
was very positive for increasing employee productivity. Participants expressed that a leader who inspired employees toward achieving a shared vision impacted their productivity because it was good for the organization, and because everybody understood what was being asked of them. The practice where a leader inspired employees to achieve a shared vision was linked to the second “I” (inspirational motivation) of the transformational leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

**Finding 6. Leaders who give employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method raise employee productivity.** Leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method was the third most frequent theme. The theme acquired a frequency count of 38, was acknowledged by 13 of the 15 participants during interviews, and was identified in no artifacts. The 13 participants perceived the leadership practice as being very important to increase employee productivity. Participants shared that giving employees the freedom to accomplish tasks via their own technique increased employee productivity. One participant shared that productivity decreased where employees were unskilled. The behavior where a leader offered employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method draws was connected to the laissez-faire leadership approach (Khan et al., 2015).

The findings from Research Question 2 revealed that the opinions of participants were connected with two leadership approaches concerning increasing employee productivity. Two themes—leader challenges employees to think creatively, and leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision—were linked to the transformational leadership approach and produced a combined frequency count of 87, whereas the third theme—leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using
their own method—was found to be associated with the laissez-faire leadership approach and generated a frequency count of 38.

**Summary.** The participants perceived that the transformational leadership approach was the most effective to increase employee productivity. Transformational leadership elements—leader challenges employees to think creatively and leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision—received the highest frequency count of the three major themes. The transformational leadership elements supported participants’ perceptions that the approach was the most effective to increase employee productivity.

- Transformational—leader challenges employees to think creatively (48), and leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision (39): 87
- Transactional—no finding achieved the three major themes (0): 0
- Laissez-faire—leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method (38): 38

**Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to enhance employee morale?” The major findings produced three major themes that participants identified to be the least effective leadership approaches for increasing employee productivity. The three major themes generated in the third research question were (a) leader micromanages employees, (b) leader provides very little guidance, and (c) leader prefers to do things the present way.

**Finding 7. Leaders who micromanage employees have a negative effect on employee morale.** Leader micromanages employees was the most frequent theme. The
theme received a frequency count of 74, was acknowledged by 13 of the 15 participants during interviews, and was discovered in none of the artifacts. The 13 participants perceived the theme to be ineffective to increase employee morale. The participants shared that a leader who micromanages employees is a morale killer. Also, participants indicated that it is frustrating to work with a leader who micromanages employees. A leader who espoused a leadership approach where employees were micromanaged was affiliated with the transactional leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

**Finding 8. Leaders who provide very little guidance reduce employee morale.**

Leader provides very little guidance was the second most frequent theme. The theme attained a frequency count of 40, was acknowledged by nine of the 15 participants during interviews, and was identified in one of the seven artifacts. The nine participants shared that the experience of receiving very little guidance frustrated them. The frustration surfaced when participants did not have a clear picture of what the end result needed to be. One of the nine participants expressed that a leader has to be confident with his or her decision, which sometimes produces a sense of feeling lost. A leader who provides very little guidance to employees was associated with the laissez-faire leadership approach (Northouse, 2016).

**Finding 9. Leaders who prefer to do things as they have always been done had a negative impact on employee morale.** Leader prefers to do things the present way was the third most frequent theme. The theme obtained a frequency count of 37 and was recognized by eight of the 15 participants during interviews, and connected to one of the seven artifacts. The participants believed that when a leader prefers to do things the present way, refusing to change with the times because the method worked in the past, it
lowered employee morale. One of the eight participants shared that doing business the present way is a tried and true method; however, the approach can be harmful to employee morale in other situations. The eight participants expressed being frustrated with having to work with a leader who maintains the status quo. A leader who chooses to maintain the status quo does so to achieve near-term goals and was identified with the transactional leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

The findings from Research Question 3 divulged that the viewpoints of participants were identified with two leadership approaches concerning the least effective leadership approaches to enhance employee morale. The first and third themes—leader micromanages employees, and leader prefers to do things the present way—were aligned with the transactional leadership approach and produced a combined frequency count of 111, while, the second theme—leader provides very little guidance—was connected to the laissez-faire leadership approach and obtained a frequency count of 40.

**Summary.** The perceptions of participants indicated that the transactional leadership approach was the least effective to enhance employee morale. Transactional leadership elements—leader micromanages employees and leader prefers to do things the present way—received the highest frequency count of the three major themes. The transactional leadership elements supported participants’ perceptions that the approach was the least effective to enhance employee morale.

- Transformational—no finding achieved the three major themes (0): 0
- Transactional—leader micromanages employees (74), and leader prefers to do things the present way (37): 111
- Laissez-faire—leader provides very little guidance (40): 40
Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, “What leadership approaches (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do federal government civilian employees perceive as least effective to increase employee productivity?” The major findings delivered three major themes that participants perceived to be the least effective leadership approaches for increasing employee morale. The three major themes identified in the fourth research question were (a) leader micromanages employees, (b) leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors, and (c) leader gives complete freedom for followers to make decisions.

Finding 10. Leaders who micromanage employees decrease employee productivity. Leader micromanages employees was the most frequent theme. The theme received a frequency count of 79, was acknowledged by 13 of the 15 participants during interviews, and was discovered in none of the artifacts. The 13 participants recognized the theme to be unproductive to increase employee productivity. The participants shared that the leadership approach to micromanage employees had reduced productivity. Two participants expressed fear of reprisal from the leader for completing tasks a certain way. For instance, one participant feared being belittled by the supervisor for completing the task a certain way. A leader who micromanages employees has chosen a leadership style that operates inside the box (where a leader does not allow for individual creativity in problem-solving and accomplishing tasks) and is known to be associated with the transactional leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

Finding 11. Leaders who offer employees rewards in exchange for favors reduce employee productivity. Leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors
was the second most frequent theme. The theme reached a frequency count of 37, was recognized by 13 participants during interviews, and had a relationship with one of the seven artifacts. The 13 participants perceived the theme to be ineffective for increasing employee productivity. Participants perceived that the practice to offer employees rewards in exchange for personal favors was harmful to maximizing employee productivity. Participants shared that the practice of offering employees special treatment in exchange for personal favors would be harmful. This ineffective approach could occur if employees who were not performing to standards received personal favors, which could undermine the morale of other employees who possibly could see it as showing favoritism. Furthermore, participants shared that the approach was not only destructive to employee productivity but also bad for the organization. A leader who offers rewards in exchange for favors is consistent with the transactional leadership approach (Antonakis et al., 2003).

**Finding 12. Leaders who give complete freedom for followers to make decisions curtail employee productivity.** Leader gives complete freedom for followers to make decisions was the third most frequent theme. The theme received a frequency count of 25, was recognized by eight participants during interviews, and was supported by two of the seven artifacts. The 15 participants recognized the themes to be negative for increasing employee productivity. Participants shared that such freedom would bring about unexpected consequences such as employees performing poorly. Participants perceived that employees could become lackadaisical and not meet the standards. Also, participants believed productivity would decline. A leader who gives complete freedom
for followers to make decisions was connected to the laissez-faire leadership approach (Northouse, 2016).

The findings from Research Question 4 disclosed that the perspectives of participants were associated with two leadership approaches concerning the least effective leadership approaches to increase employee productivity. The first two themes—leader micromanages employees, and leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors—were linked to the transactional leadership approach and produced a combined frequency count of 116, while the third theme—leader gives complete freedom for followers to make decisions—was connected to the laissez-faire leadership approach and achieved a frequency count of 25.

**Summary.** The thoughts of participants indicated that the transactional leadership approach was the least effective to increase employee productivity. Transactional leadership elements—leader micromanages employees and leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors—received the highest frequency count of the three major themes. The transactional leadership elements supported participants’ perceptions that the approach was the least effective to increase employee productivity.

- Transformational—no finding achieved the three major themes (0): 0
- Transactional—leader micromanages employees (79), and leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors (37): 116
- Laissez-faire—leader gives complete freedom for followers to make decisions (25): 25

The major findings for the four research questions indicated that employees perceived that laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational leadership approaches did have an impact on federal government employees’ morale and productivity. Participants’
responses for Research Questions 1 and 2 showed that the transformational leadership approach received the greatest frequency count and was perceived most effective for enhancing both employee morale and productivity. Participants’ perceptions for Research Questions 3 and 4 indicated that the transactional leadership approach was perceived least effective for increasing employee morale and productivity.

**Unexpected Findings**

The responses of 15 U.S. Army civilian employees, paygrades GS-5, GS-6, GS-7, GS-9, and GS-11, with nonsupervisory responsibilities revealed one unexpected finding. The one unexpected finding was that there were no differences among the different paygrades of participants in the study. The responses of participants during interviews concerning leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity were consistent. There were no differences in the responses including frequency counts based upon themes. The unexpected finding surfaced during analysis of the findings. The findings from participants illuminated a major common denominator, and that major common denominator was transformational leadership. The responses of all participants, regardless of paygrade, produced similar findings related to the four research questions.

Paygrades reflect various characteristics of a participants, including level of education, successful professional experiences, and competencies and skills. However, the findings indicate that participants, regardless of these characteristics, shared similar perceptions on both effective and ineffective characteristics of leadership. The unexpected findings facilitated the researcher to gain a deeper understanding that a leader resembling the aforementioned behaviors associated with the transformational leadership
approach can have an impact on employees’ morale and productivity regardless of the paygrade category.

Conclusions

This study identified and described the leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive most effective and least effective for enhancing employee morale and productivity using the full range of leadership model (FRLM) as the theoretical framework for the study. The FRLM, developed by James McGregor Burns, encompassed three distinct leadership approaches—laisse-faire, transactional, and transformational. The FRLM is a leadership theory that facilitates leaders to lead based upon their subordinates’ behavioral patterns (Stafford, n.d.). Results of the study inferred that the transformational leadership approach was perceived by federal government civilian employees to be the most effective to increase employee morale and productivity. The literature on transformational leadership supports the study’s outcome with the following conclusions.

Conclusion 1. Employee Morale Is Enhanced by Leaders Who Lead by Example With Integrity.

The data and literature showed that the transformational leadership behaviors of lead by example and possess high integrity were most effective to enhancing employee morale, which is also supported in the literature. The majority of participants identified with the behaviors and expressed wanting to emulate leaders in their organization who modeled such behaviors. The literature supports that transformational leadership is a process that brings about significant change to an organization’s cultural qualities from the inside, motivating both leaders and followers to rise to a higher relationship level for
the betterment of the organization (Daft, 2011; Northouse, 2016). Therefore, leaders who consistently demonstrate the transformational leadership behaviors of lead by example and possess high integrity will effectively impact employee morale.

**Conclusion 2. Employees Are More Productive When Inspired by Leaders Who Challenge Them to Act Creatively.**

The data and literature revealed that the transformational leadership behaviors of leader challenges employees to think creatively and leader inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision were the most effective approaches to increasing employee productivity and were also supported in the literature. The majority of participants acknowledged that the behaviors inspired and motivated them to maximize productivity. The literature confirms that transformational leadership enables leaders to gain followers’ trust and commitment in order to achieve organizational goals (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). Consequently, leaders who espouse transformational leadership behaviors that challenge employees to think creatively and inspire employees to commit to a shared vision will effectively influence employee productivity.

**Conclusion 3. Employees Can Be Demoralized by Leaders Who Micromanage, Take Rigid Approaches and Do Not Adapt to Current Needs.**

The data and literature disclosed that the transactional leadership behaviors of leader micromanages employees and leader prefers to do things the present way were least effective to enhance employee morale. The majority of participants voiced that the behaviors frustrated them and lowered morale. The literature validates that transactional leadership restricts leaders to operate inside the box for solutions, and it operates at the fundamental level of needs through managerial style versus higher needs in the
organization (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). For instance, a leader that prefers to do things the present way may restrict employees from using creative ideas to complete a task. Instead, the leader could communicate to employees that they will not go home until the task is completed in accordance with the guidelines that the leader already established. Thus, leaders who deploy transactional leadership behaviors that micromanages employees and promotes the status quo will ineffectively increase employee morale.

**Conclusion 4. Quid Pro Quo Practices by Leaders Negatively Impact Employee Productivity.**

The data and literature indicated that the transactional leadership behavior of leader offers employees rewards in exchange for favors was least effective to increase employee productivity. Participants identified with the behavior and conveyed that the behavior would decrease productivity. The literature reinforces that transactional leadership is an exchange process that functions on established obligations between leaders and subordinates for the purpose of controlling outcomes (Antonakis et al., 2003). Therefore, leaders who implement a transactional leadership behavior that operates on a favor for favor exchange relationship will negatively impact employee productivity.

**Conclusion 5. Employees Who Are Trusted to Problem Solve Can Be More Productive.**

The data and literature showed that the laissez-faire leadership behavior of leader gives employees the freedom to complete tasks using their own method was somewhat effective to increasing employee productivity, which is also authenticated in the literature. Participants recognized the behavior and viewed the behavior as a win and
good for increasing productivity. The literature documents that laissez-faire leadership facilitates leaders with giving employees the freedom to establish goals and become experts in problem-solving without fear of receiving negative feedback (Khan et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016). Accordingly, leaders who incorporate laissez-faire leadership behavior that entrust employees to problem solve using their own methods will positively affect employee productivity.

**Conclusion 6. Employees Are Demoralized by Leaders Who Do Not Provide Structures and Guidelines That Define Success.**

The data and literature revealed that the laissez-faire leadership behavior of leader provides very little guidance was not an effective approach to enhance employee morale, which is also supported in the literature. Participants acknowledged the behavior and expressed being frustrated with not knowing the standards or receiving insufficient guidance. The literature validates that laissez-faire leadership enables leaders to give employees who are self-confident and experienced the freedom to work autonomously (Khan et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016). Therefore, leaders who provide very little guidance to employees lacking self-confidence and experience will ineffective impact employee morale.

**Implications for Action**

The results of the study and a review of the literature revealed that the transformational leadership approach proved most effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. In order to have a ubiquitous and long-term effect, not only on improving but also on sustaining employee morale and productivity, the transformational leadership approach needs to be implemented and reassessed regularly at the levels of
leadership where employees are supervised most. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) disclosed that transformational leadership affords leaders innumerable methods to positively affect employee morale and productivity. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the following implications need to be implemented by army, navy, and air force organizations with civilian employees at the Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California.

**Implication 1: Provide Professional Development Workshops**

Currently, only workshops are provided to enhance customer service. The senior leadership for the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force employing federal government civilian employees at the Presidio of Monterey army base must develop leaders using the transformational leadership approach. The deputy to the Garrison Commander should direct the directorate of human resources to provide ongoing professional development workshops for all supervisors. It is imperative for the U.S. Army Garrison to invest in the directorate of human resources and fund representatives to attend transformational leadership professional development workshops and produce subject matter experts. The directorate of human resources must facilitate organization-level professional development workshops to leaders at the Presidio of Monterey quarterly to communicate the effectiveness of the four transformational leadership components—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration—to enhance employee morale and productivity.

Each participant will complete formative and summative assessments at the conclusion of each workshop and each series of workshops. The information will be used to monitor and adjust the learning activities to ensure effectiveness. Participants
will also be directed to apply elements of each workshop session and then return to subsequent sessions to share how the learning is impacting the supervisor’s effectiveness.

**Professional development workshop—idealized influence.** All supervisors at the Presidio of Monterey must attend quarterly organizational professional development workshops for idealized influence. The directorate of human resources should facilitate the workshop and train leaders on the first “I” component—idealized influence—in the transformational leadership approach. Leaders will learn the benefits of investing in higher priorities than self (Antonakis et al., 2003), such as leading by example and modeling a high degree of integrity. The value of idealized influence is that followers have respect for a leader who leads by example and possesses a high degree of integrity (Northouse, 2016). Two texts, *Emotional Intelligence* (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009) and *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012), are effective sources that will facilitate leaders’ development regarding a leader who leads by example and possesses a high degree of integrity. The behaviors have proven effective to enhancing employee morale.

**Professional development workshop—inspirational motivation.** All supervisors at the Presidio of Monterey must attend quarterly organizational professional development workshops for inspirational motivation. The directorate of human resources will facilitate the workshop and train leaders on the second “I” component—inspirational motivation—in the transformational leadership approach. Leaders will learn the benefits of implementing an idealized vision (Antonakis et al., 2003), such as inspires employees toward achieving a shared vision. The value of inspirational motivation is that it enhances team spirit within the organization (Northouse, 2016). *The Change Leader’s
Roadmap (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010) and Beyond Change Management (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010) are two effective sources that will aid in the development of leaders to understand the importance of inspiring employees to achieve an idealized vision. The behavior proved effective concerning increasing employee productivity.

**Professional development workshop—intellectual stimulation.** All supervisors at the Presidio of Monterey must attend a quarterly organizational professional development workshop for intellectual stimulation. The directorate of human resources will facilitate the workshop and train leaders on the third “I” component—intellectual stimulation—in the transformational leadership approach. Leaders will learn the benefits of inspiring those they supervise to think outside of the box to solve complex problems (Antonakis et al., 2003), such as challenging followers to think creatively. The value of inspirational motivation is that followers learn the importance of acquiring and mastering problem-solving skills (Northouse, 2016).

Creative People Must Be Stopped: Six Ways We Kill Innovation (Owens, 2012) and Thinkertoys: A Handbook of Creative-Thinking Techniques (Michalko, 2010) are two references recommended for the development of leaders regarding challenging followers to think creatively to problem solve. The behavior was recognized to be effective in maximizing employees’ productivity.

**Professional development workshop—individual consideration.** All supervisors at the Presidio of Monterey must attend a quarterly organizational professional development workshop for individual consideration. The directorate of human resources will facilitate the workshop and train leaders on the fourth “I”
component—individual consideration—in the transformational leadership approach. Leaders will learn the benefits of establishing a supportive climate to listen to the individual needs of those they supervise (Northouse, 2016). The value of individual consideration is that followers see leaders as coaches and advisers (Northouse, 2016).

*The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*” (Hammond, 1998) and *Becoming a Resonant Leader* (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008) are effective sources recommended for the development of leaders to comprehend the benefits of having followers perceive them as effective coaches and advisers.

**Implication 2: Implement the Use of Transformational Leadership Skills Inventory (TLSi)**

All supervisors at the Presidio of Monterey should take the Transformational Leadership Skills Inventory (TLSi) and implement the results to improve their leadership practices. The TLSi will enable leaders to assess transformational leadership competency skills in 10 domains: (a) visionary leadership, (b) communication, (c) problem-solving and decision-making, (d) personal and interpersonal skills, (e) character and integrity; (f) collaboration and sustained innovation, (g) managing change, (h) diversity, (i) team development, and (j) political intelligence. Results of the TLSi will help leaders to comprehend eight skill areas associated with successful transformational leaders.

Leaders should take the TLSi prior to attending organizational professional development workshops covering the four “I” components of the transformational leadership approach. Supervisors should also retake the TLSi following the professional development workshop. Each leader, with the assistance of an assigned coach, will develop a personalized professional development plan based upon the results of the TLSi. The plan
will include specific objectives, actions, timelines, and methods for assessing effectiveness of implementation.

**Implication 3: Leadership Evaluations**

The senior leadership for the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force must provide supervisors with regular and periodic evaluations based upon the competencies included in the evaluation designed by each branch of service. The deputy commanders must evaluate department managers to support the organizational professional development workshop. Department managers must require employees with supervisory responsibilities to attend the professional development workshops. Department managers and employees with supervisory responsibilities should be evaluated at least annually. Leaders will benefit from knowing how effectively or poorly they are implementing the transformational leadership components in alignment with increasing employee morale and productivity. The evaluation process should offer some benefit if leaders are frequently encouraged to reflect upon the assessments of their performance. In addition, more effectively using the evaluation process will better hold the supervisors accountable for improving leadership practices. Each supervisor will be assigned a mentor who will meet with him or her periodically as needed to ensure that new skills and information are applied. Each mentor will document supervisor’s performance in response to how effective new skills are being implemented. If necessary, the mentor will advise and train the supervisor on methods that are effective for attaining positive results.

**Implication 4: Create Opportunities for Employee Feedback**

The directorate of human resources should be responsible for creating a feedback program for employees that protects their anonymity. Employees who are being
supervised by leaders participating in the transformational leader workshops will benefit by having a mechanism where they can submit feedback anonymously on their leaders’ ability to enhance employee morale and productivity. The feedback program must educate employees on the benefits of having transformational leaders.

**Implication 5: Implement a Recognition Program**

The directorate of human resources should enhance the recognition program to recognize leaders who complete the workshops and effectively apply the skills of a transformational leader. The directorate of human resources will be responsible for conducting quarterly recognition ceremonies. Leaders who exceed expectations and consistently improve employee morale and productivity should be recognized by their organizations. Having a recognition program will encourage other leaders to want to become transformational leaders.

**Implication 6: Provide Coaching and Mentoring**

Personalized coaching and mentoring should be provided for all supervisors based on the information found in evaluations, employee feedback, and level of success in learning and applying new skills and information through the professional development workshops. The purpose of the coaching and mentoring is to ensure supervisors development and to effectively implement transformational leadership skills. Centralized to the coaching and mentoring session will be the monitoring and adjusting of the personalized professional development plan based on the results of the TLSi.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The following recommendations for further research are based on the findings and conclusions of this study.
1. Conduct a mixed methods study between federal government civilian employees with supervisory responsibilities and those they supervise to explore and identify any differences or similarities between the leaders’ perceived most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity and the perceptions of those they supervise for most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Share results of the study with decision makers at the Department of Defense.

2. Replicate this research in other U.S. Army Garrisons in the Continental United States (CONUS) and Outside Continental United States (OCONUS) to determine the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Share results of the study with U.S. Army garrison organizations throughout the U.S. Army Installation Management Command.

3. Conduct a comparative study between leaders and those they supervise to explore and identify any differences or similarities between leaders and employees’ perceptions regarding most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Share results of the study with major commands (MACOMS) throughout the Department of Defense.

4. Conduct a quantitative study to reach more federal government civilian employees by using surveys based on gender, age, and number of years working for the federal government to determine the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Share the results of the study with MACOMS throughout the Department of Defense.
5. Conduct a comparative study between federal government civilian employees working in the five military branches—Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard—to determine the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Share the results of the study with decision makers throughout the five military branches.

6. Conduct a comparative study between federal government civilian employees and employees in the private sector to determine the most effective leadership approaches for enhancing employee morale and productivity. Share the results of the study with organizations throughout the federal government and private sector.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

I have been working for the federal government for over 35 years. Twenty of those years I served as a soldier in the U.S. Army, where I had the privilege of experiencing both sides of the leadership spectrum. First, as a follower, I gravitated toward those leaders who led by example and attended to my basic needs. Second, as a leader, I wanted those I led to know that I had their best interests in mind, and that I would not ask them to do anything that I would not first do myself. The past 15 years, I have been working as a U.S. Army civilian employee; 3 years at U.S. Army Garrison Fort Bliss, Texas, and 12 years at the U.S. Army Garrison Presidio of Monterey, California. I worked under several leaders who used different leadership approaches in an attempt to maximize employee morale and productivity. Like so many other federal government employees, I was the recipient of both effective and ineffective leadership methods.
My journey to understand what leadership approaches were effective for improving the morale and productivity of federal government civilian employees was surprisingly launched in 2017. At that time, several experienced employees within my organization started an exodus. Those employees who confided in me had shared that their reasons for leaving were due to poor morale and the lack of effective leadership in their organization. This is where I felt a calling to investigate these phenomena. Looking through the lens of a federal government employee, I knew that I had to be an advocate for change. Having earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Organizational Leadership from Brandman University, I was more than prepared to accept this challenge; however, I was not prepared to learn how widespread these phenomena were in the federal government. Research revealed that there has been a decline in federal employee morale over the past 10 years. In order to understand what leadership approaches would be most effective in improving employee morale and productivity, I decided to use a theoretical framework that encompassed a broad range of leadership approaches. The FRLM includes three very distinct leadership approaches: laissez-faire, transactional, and transformational. The FRLM was the vehicle that enabled me to learn the perspectives of federal government civilian employees concerning what leadership approaches were the most effective to improve employee morale and productivity.

The 15 participants in the study perceived the transformational leadership approach to be the most effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. Although I had become a knowledgeable expert in organizational leadership, I remained incredulous about the effectiveness that the transformational leadership approach could have on federal government employees’ morale and productivity. I was skeptical,
because the major leadership paradigms I encountered over the many years of working for the federal government included autocratic, situational, and transactional. Transformational leadership was not very high on the list.

Going forward, my goal is to share the results of my dissertation. First, I will share the results with the leadership of my organization with the hope of creating major change in employee morale and productivity. Then, I will share the results with organizations that have federal government civilian employees at the Presidio of Monterey army base, Monterey, California. The sacrifices that I endured along the dissertation journey were too numerous to count and at times were steeper than Mount Everest. However, the experiences I gained are invaluable. Metaphorically, at the beginning of the journey I was like raw steel being delivered to the crucible, and now coming out the other end, I have been purified and fashioned into polished steel. Dr. G, thank you for being the ladle that successfully guided me through the crucible.
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## APPENDIX A

### Synthesis Matrix

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<th>Author(s)</th>
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<tr>
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**Note.** 1 = Leadership Approaches; 2 = Seminal Research; 3 = Definitions of Leadership Approaches; 4 = Federal Government Employee; 5 = Morale; 6 = Employee Morale; 7 = Productivity; 8 = Employee Productivity; 9 = Gap in Research; 10 = FRLM Theoretical Framework.
APPENDIX B

Participant Consent

STUDY TITLE: Leadership Approaches Federal Government Civilian Employees Perceive Most Effective for Enhancing Employee Morale and Productivity

Dear Participant,

If this consent form contains language that is unclear, please ask the researcher to answer any questions or concerns you may have about the consent process and the purpose of this study. If you consent to participate in this study, please sign and return this form in the envelope provided.

My name is Darryl E. Powe Sr. and I am a Doctoral Candidate from Brandman University. I am conducting research on leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive effective and ineffective for enhancing employee morale and productivity according to the testimonies of GS-05 through GS-11 having nonsupervisory responsibilities. I am here to ask you questions on your point of view concerning your supervisor effectiveness and ineffectiveness to increase employee morale and productivity.

You may decide not to answer a question, and you may stop this interview at any time. The interview is scheduled to last for approximately 60 minutes. If you decide to be a part of this research study, you will be asked to sign this form. Please do not sign the form until you have all of your questions answered and understand what will happen to you.

Your answers to the interview questions are strictly confidential. We will not tell anyone the answers you give. We will not share your answers to supervisors, directors, or the command team. If we talk about this study in speeches or in writing, we will not use your name.

You do not have to be in this study. If you chose not to be in this study, you may stop at any time. No one will blame you or criticize you if you do not complete the study. If you have questions about being in this study, you can contact the following person:

Dr. Doug DeVore
Interim Dean and Chair, BUIRB, Organizational Leadership
Brandman University,
ddevore@brandman.edu  T: 623.293.2421 | Fax: 623.748.9705

CONSENT
I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about this study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study.

| Participant Printed Name | Participant Signature | Date |
| Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion/Witness (Printed) |
| Date |
| Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion/Witness |
| Date |
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

INFORMATION ABOUT: Leadership Approaches Federal Government Civilian Employees Perceive Most and Least Effective to Enhance Employee Morale and Productivity

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Darryl E. Powe Sr., Doctoral Candidate

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Darryl E. Powe Sr., a doctoral student at Brandman University. This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. The study will strive to identify and describe federal government employees’ perspective on leadership approaches effectiveness and ineffectiveness on employee morale and productivity. This study aims to close the gap in research concerning leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive as being most effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. The results of this study will provide the federal government with new perspectives to explore and potentially espouse more effective leadership approaches that have proven to be the most successful in increasing employee morale and productivity in the private sector. Additionally, the results will inform the federal government that refining approaches is not an admission of failure but rather a positive change in trajectory to improve leadership development throughout the enterprise by informing the development of new policies and procedures. This study will also encourage military organizations—army, navy, and air force—with civilian employees at the Presidio of Monterey army base in Monterey, California, to embrace the results and actively pursue leadership approaches most supported by employees for enhancing morale and productivity.

By participating in this research study, I agree to partake in an audio-recorded, semi-structured interview. The interview will take place, in person, at the Aiso Library, Presidio of Monterey or other pre-determined location, and will last about an hour. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my point of view, as a federal government employee, on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness leadership approaches have on my workplace morale and productivity.

I understand that:

a) The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to one hour in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at the Aiso Library or at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience.
b) I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to determine which leadership approaches are most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Darryl E. Powe Sr., Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mr. Powe may be contacted by phone at (831) 760-6716 or email at powe6706@mail.brandman.edu. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. George Giokaris at ggiokari@brandman.edu.

d) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be kept for a minimum of three years by the investigator in a secure location.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that 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 informed and my consent re-obtained. 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 Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 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 voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_________________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_________________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

_________________________________________
Date
APPENDIX D

Audio Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Leadership Approaches Federal Government Civilian Employees Perceive Most and Least Effective to Enhance Employee Morale and Productivity

I authorize Darryl E. Powe Sr., Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording. If I have questions about the recording, I will addressed them to the researcher, Darryl E. Powe Sr., at powe6706@mail.brandman.edu, or the Chair, Dr. George Giokaris, at ggiokari@brandman.edu.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party  Date
APPENDIX E

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

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.

Brandman University IRB Adopted November 2013
APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Darryl E. Powe Sr.

Interview time planned: Approximately one hour

Interview place: Aiso Library, Presidio of Monterey or other convenient agreed upon location

Recording: Digital voice recorders

Introductions: Introduce ourselves to one another.

Opening Statement: [Interviewer states:] Thank you for taking time to meet with me and agreeing to participate in this interview. To review, the purpose of this study is to identify and describe the leadership approaches federal government civilian employees perceive as most and least effective to enhance employee morale and productivity. The questions I will ask are written to elicit this information and to provide you an opportunity to share any personal stories and experiences you have had, at your discretion, throughout this interview. Also, your identity will remain anonymous, our interview will not take place until after a consent form is signed, and I encourage you to be open and honest for the purposes of this research study. Please only use the experiences you have had here at the Garrison working as a US Army civilian employee as the basis for your responses.

Interview Agenda: [Interviewer states:] I anticipate this interview will take about an hour today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via email, and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for this study. We will begin with reviewing the Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent Form, the Participant’s Bill of Rights, and the Audio Release Form. Then after reviewing all the forms, you will be asked to sign documents pertinent for this study, which include the Informed Consent and Audio Release Form. Next, I will begin the audio recorder and ask a list of questions related to the purpose of the study. I may take notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recorder and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the questions?

Questions:
Morale

In this study I am interested in understanding more about leadership effects on employee morale in the workplace. I am going to give you some specific leadership behaviors, and you tell me, in your own words, how that particular behavior would impact your workplace morale. Of course, there are many things that will affect workplace morale, but I would like you to divorce yourself from your current workplace and the person to whom you report, and just pay attention to the single behavior that I am asking about.

For the purpose of this interview, the definition of morale is defined as *a relationship that an employee has with other employees and leaders in his or her organization (Arunchand & Ramanathan, 2013).* Are you okay with this? Do you have any questions?.... Okay, here we go.

1. When I talk about leading by example, I mean someone who leads by his/her actions. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically led by example, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transformational Leadership)

2. When I talk about maintaining the status quo, I mean someone who prefers to do things the present way to achieve objectives. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically maintained the status quo, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transactional Leadership)

3. When I talk about keeping hands off and allowing group members to make decisions, I mean someone who spends less time interacting with group members and more time delegating tasks. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically kept hands off and allowed group members to make decisions, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Laissez-faire leadership)

4. When I talk about upholding very high standards of moral and ethical conduct, I mean someone who enforces organizational values and code of ethics. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically upheld very high standards of moral and ethical conduct, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transformational Leadership)

5. When I talk about enforcing current rules, procedures, standards and expectations, I mean someone who imposes organizational policies, procedures and guidance regularly. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically enforced current rules, procedures, standards and expectations, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transactional Leadership)
6. When I talk about providing very little guidance, I mean someone who chooses to let employees figure things out on their own without interferences. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically provided very little guidance, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Laissez-faire leadership)

**Productivity**

We are now going to transition from employee morale to employee productivity. Productivity also is a very important part of the workplace culture. I am going to give you some specific leadership behaviors and you tell me, in your own words, how that particular behavior would impact your workplace productivity. Of course, there are many things that will affect workplace productivity, but I would like you to divorce yourself from your current workplace and the person to whom you report, and just pay attention to the single behavior that I am asking about. For the purpose of this interview, the definition of productivity is defined as an assessment of the quality of work produced by workers (Rouse, n.d.). Are you okay with this? Do you have any questions?.... Okay, here we go.

7. When I talk about inspiring followers towards achieving the shared vision of the organization, I mean someone who encourages followers to achieve the shared vision of the organization. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically inspired followers towards achieving the shared vision of the organization? (Transformational leadership)

8. When I talk about building relationships with employees that is quid pro quo, I mean someone who offers employees rewards in exchange for favors. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically built relationships with employees that is quid pro quo? (Transactional leadership)

9. When I talk about giving complete freedom for followers to make decisions, I mean someone who allows followers to accomplish tasks unsupervised and without fear of reprisal. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically gave complete freedom for followers to make decisions? (Laissez-faire leadership)

10. When I talk about pushing followers to think outside the box, I mean someone who challenges followers to think creatively to solve problems. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically pushed followers to think outside the box? (Transformational leadership)
11. When I talk about telling the group members what to do and when to do it, I mean someone who communicates regularly to members about their tasks and standards. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically told the group members what to do and when to do it? (Transactional leadership)

12. When I talk about achieving control through less obvious means, I mean someone who chooses to let employees accomplish tasks and commitments using their own methods. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically achieved control through less obvious means? (Laissez-faire leadership)

Final question: Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding the most and least effective leadership approaches?

**General Probes with Participants if Needed**
These may be used during the interview when you want to get more information and/or expand the conversation with the participants. These are not questions you share with the interviewee. It is best to be very familiar with them and use in a conversational way when appropriate to extend their answers.

1. What did you mean by...?
2. Do you have more to add?
3. Would you expand upon that a bit?
4. Why do you think that was the case?
5. Could you please tell me more about...?
6. Can you give me an example of...?
7. How did you feel about that?

**Ending Interview**
This concludes the interview. Do you have any questions for me? Again, I want to thank you for your time and I appreciate your passion and candidness that you shared throughout the interview. Your participation has given me a wealth of information that will contribute immensely to this study.
APPENDIX G

Post Pilot Interview Questions

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe strategies used to reduce student truancy?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview?
## Qualitative Interview Questions Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MORALE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What leadership approaches do federal governmental employees perceive most effective to enhance employee morale?</td>
<td>1. When I talk about leading by example, I mean someone who leads by his/her actions. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically led by example, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transformational Leadership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: What leadership approaches do federal government employees perceive least effective to enhance employee morale?</td>
<td>2. When I talk about maintaining the status quo, I mean someone who prefers to do things the present way to achieve objectives. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically maintained the status quo, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transactional Leadership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. When I talk about keeping hands off and allowing group members to make decisions, I mean someone who spends less time interacting with group members and more time delegating tasks. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically kept hands off and allowed group members to make decisions, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Laissez-faire leadership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. When I talk about upholding very high standards of moral and ethical conduct, I mean someone who enforces organizational values and code of ethics. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically upheld very high standards of moral and ethical conduct, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transformational Leadership)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. When I talk about enforcing current</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rules, procedures, standards and expectations. I mean someone who imposes organizational policies, procedures and guidance regularly. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically enforced current rules, procedures, standards and expectations, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Transactional Leadership)

6. When I talk about providing very little guidance, I mean someone who chooses to let employees figure things out on their own without interferences. Can you tell me about a time you experienced working under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically provided very little guidance, and, if so, how that impacted you? (Laissez-faire leadership)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRODUCTIVITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ 3: What leadership approaches do federal government employees perceive most effective to increase employee productivity?

RQ 4: What leadership approaches do federal government employees perceive least effective to increase employee productivity?

7. When I talk about inspiring followers towards achieving the shared vision of the organization, I mean someone who encourages followers to achieve the shared vision of the organization. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically inspired followers towards achieving the shared vision of the organization? (Transformational leadership)

8. When I talk about building relationships with employees that is quid pro quo, I mean someone who offers employees rewards in exchange for favors. Can you tell me about a time you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically built relationships with employees that is quid pro quo? (Transactional leadership)

9. When I talk about giving complete freedom for followers to make decisions, I
mean someone who allows followers to accomplish tasks unsupervised and without fear of reprisal. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically gave complete freedom for followers to make decisions? (Laissez-faire leadership)

10. When I talk about pushing followers to think outside the box, I mean someone who challenges followers to think creatively to solve problems. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically pushed followers to think outside the box? (Transformational leadership)

11. When I talk about telling the group members what to do and when to do it, I mean someone who communicates regularly to members about their tasks and standards. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically told the group members what to do and when to do it? (Transactional leadership)

12. When I talk about achieving control through less obvious means, I mean someone who chooses to let employees accomplish tasks and commitments using their own methods. Can you tell me about a time when you worked under the supervision of and reported to a person who typically achieved control through less obvious means? (Laissez-faire leadership)
APPENDIX I

National Institute of Health (NIH) Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Darryl Powe successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

Date of Completion: 05/17/2018

Certification Number: 2820676
APPENDIX J

Approval Letter For Dissertation

Office of the Deputy to the Garrison Commander

Dr. George Giokaris, Dissertation Chair
Brandman University
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618

Dear Dr. Giokaris:

This letter is to inform you that I have approved Darryl E. Fowe Sr.'s request to use the United States Army Garrison, Presidio of Monterey, as a case study for his dissertation in the pursuit of his Ed.D. degree. His dissertation research and thesis will take place outside of his normal work hours on the Presidio of Monterey.

If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at (831) 242-6604.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Hug H. Hardin
Deputy to the Garrison Commander