

The Analysis of Food Recovery Organization Leadership: How Transformational and Servant
Leaders Overcame a Time of Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 Pandemic exacerbated a multitude of systems in the United States in 2020 up to current day. The structure of non-profit organizations across the country weakened as demands escalated for free food resources with specific pressure placed on food banks and food recovery organizations. There were citizens who had not previously relied on free food services who found themselves in drive through pickups, waiting for pre-packaged food boxes or the occasional you-pick operation to feed their families and themselves. The increase in demand for free food services was reacted to by those leading and directing the free food distribution sites through a time of crisis. This qualitative study serves to analyze food recovery organization (FRO) leadership strategies and principles that guided their decision making and problem-solving skills in response to food shortages and supply chain issues. The merge of the eight pillars of transformational and servant leadership theory provided propositional pillars that were tested in practice through interviews with FRO leaders in Appalachia. The discovery of how these leadership strategies were enacted during a time of crisis will guide the development of a training curriculum for nonprofit leaders in the future.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has served to be the deadliest pandemic in United States history (McKeever, 2021). Amongst the sheer mortality of this disease, there has been a tremendous alteration to the systems we once called “normal” (Sturmberg & Martin, 2020). This time of crisis created immense pressure for the essential critical infrastructure workers (Krebs, 2020). Considering the change in normalcy inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the American people have shown extreme resilience and adaptability (Stogner et al., 2020). One of the key contributors to maintaining community resilience were the food recovery organizations (FROs) across America that provided food to those in need (Bagwell et al., 2022).

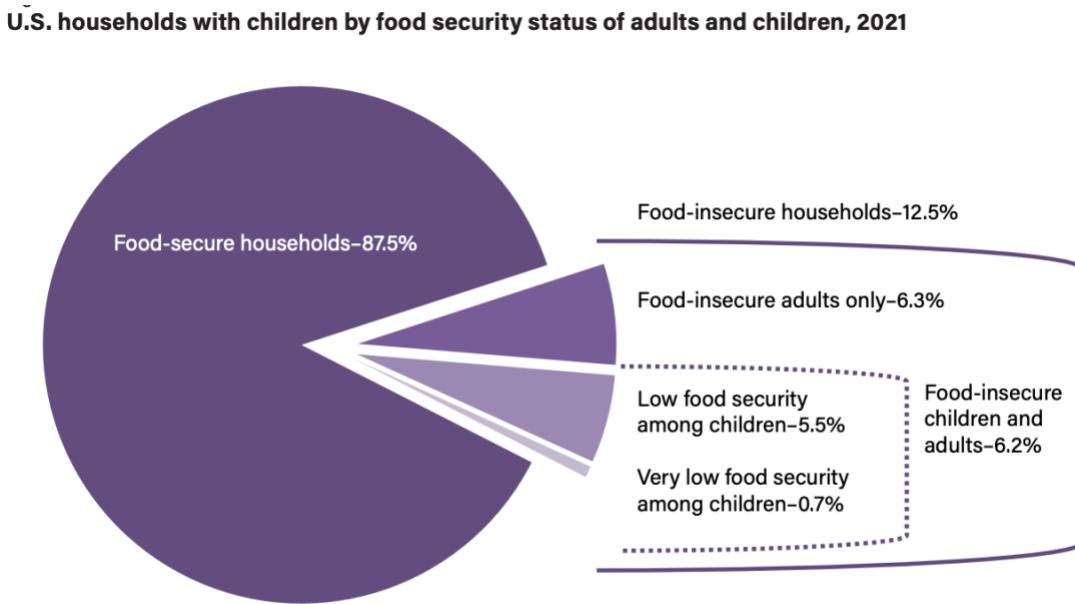
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 100 million dollars in infrastructure grants were distributed through the Build Back Better initiative directed by the USDA to transform America’s food system to be a more resilient and accessible outlet to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities (USDA, 2021). Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack proclaimed that the “USDA will put special emphasis on reaching rural, remote, and underserved communities, local and regional food systems, and socially disadvantaged farmers” (USDA, 2021, p. 1). The changes inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic “have been difficult but achievable for socioeconomically advantaged individuals but have only exacerbated long-standing disparities among low-income persons, the unemployed and underemployed, and people of color” (Campion et al., 2020, p. 6). Citizens who fall below the poverty line are more susceptible to face food insecurity, which was found to be a determinate of COVID-19 case numbers and other disparities under pandemic circumstances (Esobi et al., 2021). Shanks et al. (2020) found these disparities to be, “especially pronounced across the US food system. Before COVID-19, 11.1% of Americans lacked consistent access to adequate food for an active, healthy life” (p. 1133). The

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USDA released the food security report (Figure 1-1) for 2020 and 2021, discovering that 12.5% of Americans are food-insecure at a household level during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021).

Figure 1-1

U.S. Households with Children by Food Security Status of Adults and Children, 2021



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2021 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

Note. U.S. Households with children by food security status of adults and children is shown for the percentage food-secure households, food-insecure households, food-insecure adults, low food security among children, and very low food security among children. Pie graph represents food security status. From “Food Security Status of U.S. Households in 2021” by USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), 2021, *Key Statistics & Graphs*. Copyright 2021 by the USDA-ERS.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofit leaders overcame dynamic circumstances in short time frames to alter their mode of operation to serve their community while basing their decisions on government guidelines (Morries, 2022). In response to these circumstances, community foundations have indicated their ability to engage in leadership for their community by coordinating grantmaking support for COVID-19 relief funds, community mobilization, and leadership development to create vital programs and provide lifelines during

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this time of crisis (Azevedo et al., 2021). FRO leaders benefitted from this support in funding and managed to overcome the stress and demand inflicted by the pandemic to upkeep a steady source of free food deliverables.

FRO leaders served in a potential role of mitigating the problem of food insecurity in Appalachia during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Global Food Banking Network, 2020). These leaders served their community during this time of crisis by transforming their organizational operations to offer an increased outlet of free food resources (FAO, 2020). FRO leaders in the New River Valley Region of Virginia demonstrated leadership practices that resembled behaviors of both transformational and servant leadership theory throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

These two leadership theories provide prominent behaviors to consider when analyzing leadership practices that aided in FRO leader's ability to overcome the stress and demand of a time of crisis. Transformational leaders stimulate organizational involvement and success (Bass, 1985) through inspiring and motivating their followers through role model behavior that takes into consideration the development of their subordinates both personally and intellectually (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Servant leaders are guided by ethical behavior, development of followers, empowerment, emotional healing, conceptual skill growth, and creating value for the community (Liden, 2008). Additionally, servant leaders promote respect, motivation, positive attitude, and service as their main values of leadership (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018). Both leadership theories provide pragmatic opportunity for FRO leaders to develop and grow their team of employees, volunteers, and donors to overcome a time of crisis.

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Food Recovery Organizations (FROs)

“Food recovery is rescuing safe, edible surplus food that would otherwise go to waste and donating it to a hunger-fighting 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization” (Food Recovery Network, 2021, para. 1). FROs accept and procure food to distribute to citizens in need. The work of FROs served in the battle against food insecurity in America during the pandemic, all while balancing federally mandated protocols to keep volunteers and recipients safe from the spread of COVID-19 (Lewis et al., 2022). Amidst the surge of the pandemic, FROs faced a concerning decline in supply of donated food, with many organizations not having sufficient donations to distribute amongst their community (Higashi et al., 2022). The decline in supply worries leaders that donor support could dry up as the economic effects of the pandemic progress (Parlapiano et al., 2021). The Greater Chicago Food Depository Director Kate Maehr (2021) emphasized in an interview regarding the challenges and opportunities food banks faced under COVID-19 that, “we need food pantries to be strong, not just during the Covid crisis, but six months, 12 months, 18 months from now, when people are still struggling with food insecurity” (p. 11).

Purpose Statement & Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to analyze the transformational and servant leadership strategies that Food Recovery Organization leaders demonstrated to enhance deliverables and establish an avenue for access to free food services during a time of crisis. This study is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1. How can Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia sustain effective transformational leadership while under duress?

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- RQ2. How might servant leadership principles contribute to effective leadership of Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia during a time of crisis?

Conceptual Framework & Propositions

For qualitative research, propositions serve as a form of hypothesis to suggest a connection between two concepts in a scenario that links cannot be verified by scientific experiment (Clay, 2019). Propositions rely on prior research, reasonable assumption, and existing correlating evidence (Clay, 2019). A social scientist can utilize propositions to spur further research questions or promote further investigation of correlative evidence (Denyer et al., 2008).

The use of propositions in this study suggests a link between leadership concepts. The two concepts that form this link is transformational and servant leadership theory. The link suggested is found in each theories' principal behaviors that distinguish each concept as beneficial in leadership. Both leadership concepts focus on the development of their followers to reach organizational goals. Each theory provides different approaches to attaining this goal, but the proposition of this study is to discover if merging all eight pillars of leadership from both theories could provide leaders the best chance at overcoming a time of crisis.

The pillars of leadership associated with transformational leadership theory were created by Bass (1985) in the “Four I’s of Transformational Leadership. These four factors are: Individualized Consideration, Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation. Each of these characteristics of transformational leaders served as the conceptual framework at which this study was developed around. From there, servant leadership theory was analyzed to discover four correlating behaviors that could merge with the four I’s of

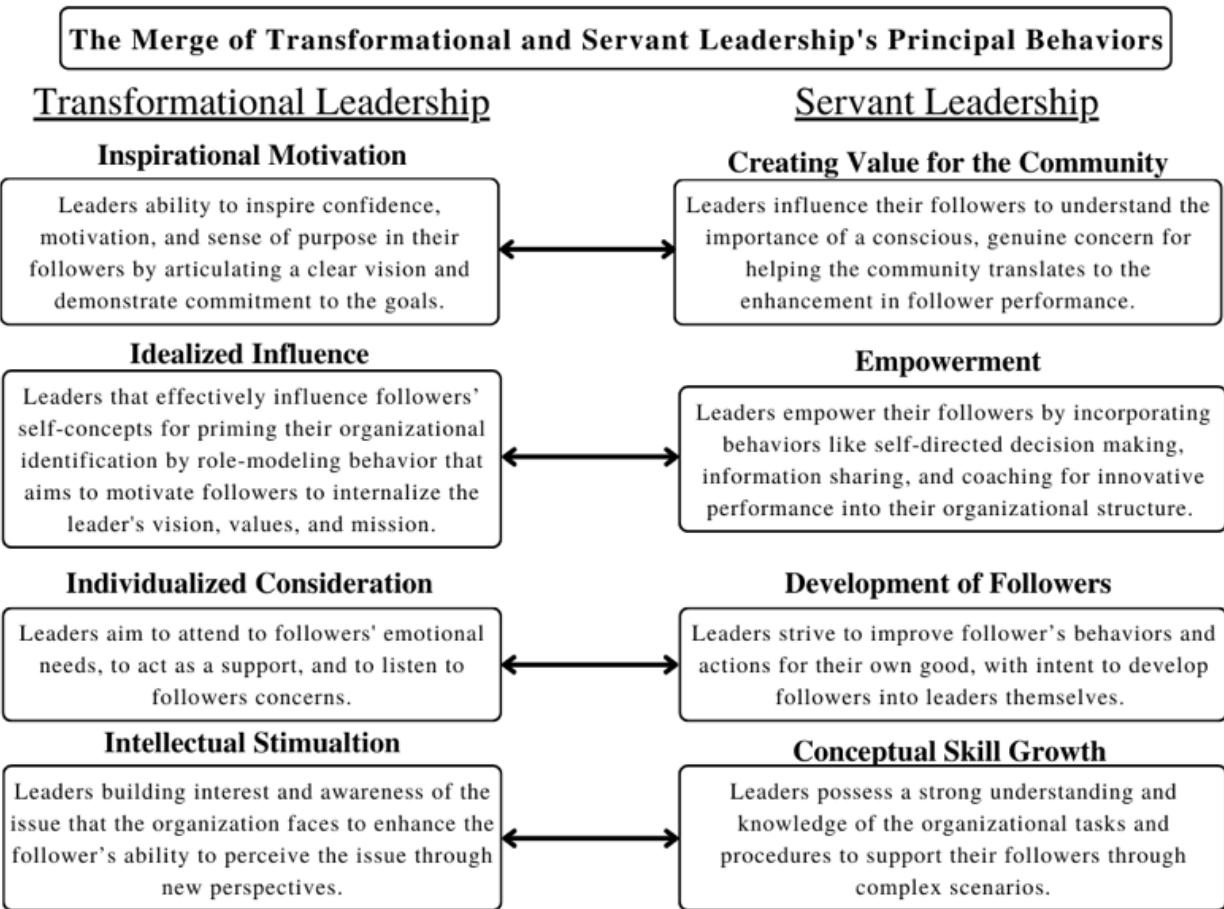
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transformational leadership. This surfaced Liden's (2008) "Nine Dimensions of Servant Leadership": Emotional Healing, Creating Value for the Community, Conceptual Skills, Empowering, Helping Subordinates Grow and Succeed, Putting Subordinates First, Behaving Ethically, Relationships, and Servanthood. After exploring each of these dimension's definitions and application in previous research, it was evident that creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment were the four pillars that best aligned to the four I's of transformational leadership. The merge of these two leadership theories principal behaviors (Figure 1-2) is the novel discovery this study aims to make. Each of the eight pillars proposed in this study served as instrumental principles to the success of FRO leader's ability to enhance deliverables and establish an avenue for access to free food services. If it is proven that each of the eight pillars of leadership from both transformational and servant leadership contributed to the effectiveness of leading FROs during a time of crisis, there is opportunity to strengthen FRO leadership through the adoption and development of this multifaceted approach to leading teams of employees, volunteers, and donors.

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Figure 1-2

The Merge of Transformational and Servant Leadership's Principal Behaviors



Eight Pillars of Transformational & Servant Leadership

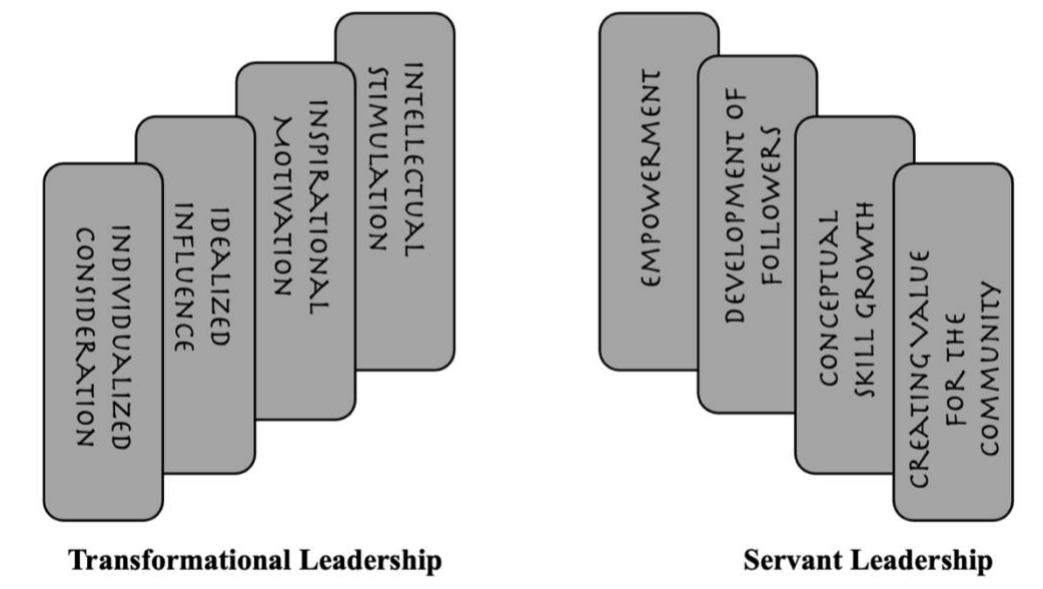
This study will analyze both leadership theories' principal behaviors in practice at FROs during a time of crisis to discover their application and benefit in leading teams of employees, volunteers, and donors of nonprofit organizations in Appalachia. The methodological tool developed for this study to define the instrument questions and organize this study can be found in the Eight Pillars of Leadership for Food Recovery During a Time of Crisis (Figure 1-3). Each of the eight variables in this tool serve to prove the benefit of merging the leadership behaviors associated with each theory to establish a multifaceted leadership approach to overcoming the

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COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-2022. This is the conceptual framework that guides the analysis of leadership practices during a time of crisis.

Figure 1-3

Eight Pillars of Leadership for Food Recovery During a Time of Crisis



Significance of Study

As time progresses from the impacts and societal structures that were created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to understand how to better train and prepare FRO leadership for future rise in demands created by upheaval in society. As food insecurity escalates and the chance of another time of crisis is inevitable, it is pertinent to continually develop the nonprofit leadership structure that supports communities across the country (Thompson, 2021). This study analyzed the lived experience of leaders who managed through adversity and overcame obstacles in their way to feed and support their communities in Appalachia.

The findings from this research study will provide valuable understanding of how merging transformational and servant leadership traits and practices improved FRO leaders'

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ability to overcome a time of crisis in rural Appalachia. This study serves as an analysis of the merge between transformational and servant leadership theories' key pillars of practice, with potential to explore the adoption of both theories in nonprofit leadership development opportunities. These findings could benefit people involved in food recovery organizations, or any nonprofit organization that utilizes volunteers in their services.

The New River Valley Region in Virginia was of interest for this study as it is a region in rural Appalachia. Communities in rural Appalachia are more susceptible to diet-related health disparities compared to other southern regions as the economic sustainability has been in decline over the past decade (Cardarelli, et al., 2021). Many families and individuals in this region still have limited access to affordable healthy foods, which leaves them to depend on FROs to upkeep their basic food needs (Feeding America, 2022).

Although this study focuses on the New River Valley Region in Virginia, the research may have broader implications for similar Appalachian regions and states. The transferability of the findings from this study can be applied to similar rural community leaders in Appalachia to enhance free food resources for families and individuals. This study will serve as an understanding of the principles and practices that guided the lived experience of FRO leaders in Appalachia through a time of crisis. This will serve as a building block for FRO and nonprofit leaders to utilize in reflecting and developing their organization's leadership for future times of crisis and disruption in the food supply chain.

Overview of Methodology

This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to analyze the lived experience of FRO leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in the New River Valley, Virginia. Participants were identified through the New River Valley Food Assistance Directory (NRV

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Food Access, 2020). The study used both purposive and snowball sampling to recruit potential key informants via email (Appendix A). After obtaining verbal informed consent (Appendix B), the data collection process followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C).

This qualitative analysis was guided by the merge of transformational and servant leadership's fundamental pillars of practice. The four pillars of leadership associated with transformational leadership theory are: individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The four pillars of leadership associated with servant leadership are: creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment (Liden et al., 2008). This framework seems especially suitable for FRO leadership, where leaders rely heavily on the volunteers, donations, and networking to sustain their output.

The phenomenological approach used for this study allows for a deeper understanding and interpretation of the lived experience of FRO leadership through a time of crisis. This approach allows for the analysis of the phenomenon through the lens of the leaders who were firsthand making the decisions and leading teams through a pandemic. The analysis investigated the lived experience while suspending the preconceived theoretical assumptions that guided this study. This approach allowed for outside affiliates to learn from the experience of others.

List of Terms

- **Community Resilience** – “The ability of a community to use its assets to strengthen public health and healthcare systems and to improve the community’s physical, behavioral, and social health to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity” (Oregon Health Authority, 2017, p. 108).

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- **Conceptual Skills** – “The abilities that allow an individual to understand complex situations to develop creative and successful solutions” (Herrity, 2022, para. 3).
- **Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19)** – “COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2; a coronavirus discovered in 2019. The virus spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Some people who are infected may not have symptoms” (CDC, 2021, para. 1).
- **Food Insecurity** – “Food Security means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (USDA-ERS, 2022, para. 1).
- **Food Recovery** – “Food recovery is rescuing safe, edible surplus food that would otherwise go to waste and donating it to a hunger-fighting 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization” (Food Recovery Network, 2021, para. 1).
- **Servant Leadership** - “A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible” (Emig & Shepard, 2018, para. 3).
- **Transformational Leadership** – “A leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms” (Jaafari, 2019, p. 1).

Chapter Summary

FRO leaders served in a potential role of mitigating the problem of food insecurity in Appalachia during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Global Food Banking Network, 2020).

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The FRO network in the New River Valley Region of Virginia was a large contributor to the mitigation of these food disparities in their region. It is pertinent to understand the methods and strategies that these organizations and their leadership team enacted to overcome this time of crisis. The purpose of this study is to analyze the leadership strategies that FROs demonstrated to enhance free food deliverables and establish an avenue for access to food services during a pandemic. This study utilizes propositions rooted in transformational and servant leadership theory to analyze leadership practices through the eight pillars of leadership demonstrated by FROs during a time of crisis. These pillars of leadership were tested in their application and effectiveness through a qualitative exploration. The outcome of this analysis will align these theories to be applied into the development of FRO and nonprofit leadership for future times of crisis.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to food recovery organizations, community resilience, transformational leadership theory, and servant leadership theory. The two leadership theories are the basis for this study. “Transformational Leadership focuses on increasing participation towards organizational goals (Bass, 1985), which generally involves inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1990)” (Xu et al., 2022, p. 2). Servant Leadership theory is built upon the foundation of serving and creating value for their community by developing followers’ conceptual skills and empower them to become leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 1970; Liden et al., 2014). This is a contrasting leadership concept in its practice of serving and creating value for stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization (Greenleaf, 1970). The sections allocated to FRO and Community Resilience are reviewed in support of the phenomenon and give breadth to the accomplishment of leadership during a time of crisis.

Food Recovery Organization (FRO) Resilience

During the pandemic, FROs were a large contributor to establishing food security for marginalized and underrepresented population’s access to food throughout the pandemic (Global Food Banking Network, 2020). The marginalized and underrepresented populations focused on in this study include people who experience systemic discrimination of any kind or encounter social barriers (e.g., racial, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.) (Soria et al., 2020). By enhancing FRO capabilities, small grassroot organizations demonstrated a transformation in food recovery and food rescue for their communities (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006). In response to the pandemic, FROs adapted and expanded their business models quickly to meet the increase in demand by reinforcing their capacity to utilize food waste

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and evolve their process to ensure the safety of their volunteers and people operating within their networks of charities and institutions (FAO, 2020, p. 5). The accomplishment of resiliency displayed by FROs is pronounced by Morello (2021) in the discovery that:

1. “Food banks nationwide distributed 6 billion meals to our neighbors facing hunger in the United States.”
2. “Food banks across the country are serving 55 percent more people now than before the pandemic.”
3. “As a result of the pandemic, Feeding America estimates 1 in 8 Americans could face hunger.”

Regarding the last point, Morello (2021) notes: “That’s 42 million people in the United States, including 13 million children, may face hunger in 2021.... Because of COVID, millions of people are visiting food banks and many of them are getting help for the first time.” In Virginia, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank (2021) reported:

Each month prior to the pandemic, the Food Bank provided enough food for about 1.8 million meals to an average of 115,390 people in need across 25 counties and eight cities in central and western Virginia. During the 12 months of the pandemic from March 2020 thru February 2021, we served an average of 125,350 visitors each month. That number soared to 141,000 in May 2020 and subsided to a higher-than-normal average of 118,000 individuals in the Blue Ridge every month of 2021. (p. 7)

This source of goods used by many nonprofits involves picking up or having goods delivered that go to waste in restaurants, grocery stores, produce markets, or dining facilities (Herling, 2021). Food bank and recovery organizations across the country were reduced to a skeleton on-site crew, with many administrative staff members working from home during the

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COVID-19 pandemic (Herling, 2021). Food pick-up for food recipients shifted to curbside or walk-through areas with volunteers distributing food baskets and pre-packaged meals directly to clients (Herling, 2021). Even with reduced exposure, if one volunteer or staff member tested positive for COVID-19, the whole team had to quarantine (CDC, 2022). This resulted in the need of standby crews. Each organization implemented creative strategies that fit their organization, resulting in an uneven patchwork of support for leadership in the decision-making process (Kinsey et al., 2020).

When looking at the adaptation and shifts initiated in the nonprofit sector across the United States, we must observe the federal guidance placed on handling meals to reduce the spread of COVID-19 (Jablonski et al., 2020). Federal guidance forced FROs across the country to modify their entire organizational structure in a short time frame. In the,

“Absence of federal guidance cities quickly developed their own programming and policies, leveraging additional resources and waivers provided by the federal government to result in a diverse patchwork of emergency feeding programs to support children and families across the United States” (Jablonksi et al., 2020, p. 170).

FROs throughout America took ownership in making their community a better place during the pandemic by designing innovative distribution, donation, and volunteer development.

Community Resiliency

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is widespread agreement among researchers to maintain and strengthen community resiliency (South et al., 2020). Communities and community-based organizations play a pivotal role in the recovery process of social, health, and economic structures affected by COVID-19 (South et al., 2020). “The ability of communities to cope with and recover from large-scale emergencies is often referred to as community

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resilience” (Patel et al., 2017, para. 3). The “term community resilience is used to describe the interconnected network of systems that directly impact human society at a grassroots community level, including the socioeconomic, ecological, and built environments” (McArdle & Walker, 2020, p.15). A community is resilient when:

Members of the population are connected to one another and work together, so that they are able to function and sustain critical systems, even under stress; adapt to changes in the physical, social, or economic environment; be self-reliant if external resources are limited or cut off; and learn from experience to improve itself over time. (Arbon et al., 2012, p. 11)

Community resilience can play a major role in coping with shock (Magis, 2010). However, it is an ambiguous concept, hard to define and measure (Zamboni, 2017). Community resilience is a “complex and dialogical process in which communities create, develop and/or engage their resources to cope with shocks and its consequent uncertainty” (Fransen et al., 2022, p.433). By shifting the attention from the global to the local, “resilience puts ‘community’ at the center of analysis and engenders curiosity as to why some communities stay more resilient than others, even if they may have fewer resources and be less prosperous comparatively in material wealth” (Korosteleva & Petrova, 2022, p. 7). Resilience, as discussed above is understood in two ways:

A quality of a complex adaptive system with a range of components that make it enduring and responsive to change, and as an analytic of governance, a way of thinking and governing, that draws on self-reliance and self-organization, mobilizing communities’ inner strengths, and capacities in the face of adversity. (Korosteleva & Petrova, 2022, p. 8)

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“Scholars have observed that the communities with more well-developed community organizations, civic associations, and volunteer groups are more resilient to disasters” (Norris et al., 2008, p.3). Evidence of community resiliency displayed in the United Kingdom’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic “stresses the importance of enabling spontaneous community-led action alongside the need for public services to work in partnership with voluntary partners to coordinate efforts” (Cabinet Office, 2019, p.3). Examples of this community-led action include parish councils, local businesses, faith organizations, community hubs, and resident associations (South et al., 2020). The efforts for community resiliency in food comes in the form of nonprofit organizations’ development of long-term and self-sufficient community-based means of food security, i.e., community gardens, food cultivation educational programs, and accessible food distribution sites (Kneareem et al., 2021). “Communities can address food insecurity independently with their own capacities, and such self-sufficiency will eventually make them more prepared and resilient in future crises” (Norris et al., 2008, p.107).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders stimulate organizational involvement and success (Bass, 1985) through inspiring and motivating their followers through role model behavior that takes into consideration the development of their subordinates both personally and intellectually (Bass & Avolio, 1994). “Transformational leaders motivate their followers to perform beyond expectations by making them more aware of the importance and value of goals, inducing them to transcend self-interest for the good of the group/organization, and appealing to followers' higher order needs” (Khattak et al., 2014, p.154; Bass, 1985). They promote concepts and ideas that encourage their participants and colleagues to demonstrate new methods of thinking in response to problematic events (Carmeli et al., 2014). This calls for malleability in practice, by allowing

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organization member input towards overcoming challenges and achieving goals that seem impossible (Bommer et al., 2004). In fact, Mason et al. (2014) found that “through transformational leadership training, leaders can enhance their self-effectiveness, positive affect, and ability to consider multiple perspectives” (p. 14), which can lead to a positive psychological advancement for both leaders and participants.

In their study on ethical preferences of transformational leaders, Banerji and Krishnan (2000) stated that “transformational leadership involves elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, uplifting, and raising the ethical aspirations of the leader and of the led” (p.58). Additionally, Burns (1978) “characterized transformational leadership as a process that motivates followers by appealing to ideals and moral values” (p.58). Transformational leaders serve as community role models by inspiring the volunteers and challenging their organizations to optimize performance by taking great ownership in the work being done (Roberts, 1985). The adoption of transformational leadership practice will enhance the possibility of new avenues for pursuing food security in America (Galli et al., 2016).

Transformational Leadership is built upon the principles of inspiring followers to achieve a shared vision of the organization’s future (Maslennikova, 2007). This involves passion and energy towards all facets of the organization. Transformational leaders lead by example through their attitudes and actions (Farahnak et al., 2020), making sure to engage and re-engage their followers with a high level of commitment to the vision and ultimately seeking to simultaneously transform their organization and followers (Saad Alessa, 2021).

Four Pillars of Transformational Leadership

As mentioned earlier in this chapter “transformational leadership focuses on increasing participation towards organizational goals (Bass, 1985), which generally involves inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass

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& Avolio, 1990)" (Xu et al., 2022, p. 2). These four I's of transformational leadership describe characteristics that are valuable to the transformation process (Northouse, 2019). The use of these four factors served to be advantageous for leaders to effectively lead their organization (Hall et al., 2002). Bass (1985) believed the adoption of each of these elements were influential in developing and inspiring followers to transform an organization. For this study, they will be analyzed alongside four dimensions of servant leadership to suggest a merge in leadership practice to overcome a time of crisis.

Individualized Consideration

As noted by Barbuto (2005), "Individualized consideration describes leaders acting in the role of employee mentors (Bass, 1985)" (p. 28). Koveshnikov and Ehrnrooth (2018) emphasize that "individualized consideration leadership aims to attend to followers' emotional needs, to act as a support, and to listen to followers' concerns (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006)" (p. 749). These leaders might spend time teaching and coaching volunteers and followers to maximize their organizational involvement.

Idealized Influence

"Idealized influence is defined as having transformational leaders who behave in ways that result in being role models for their followers. These leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them" (Chukwu et al., 2018, p. 253). Koveshnikov and Ehrnrooth (2018) discovered that, "Idealized influence for leadership entails role-modeling behavior that aims to motivate followers to internalize the leader's vision, values, and mission. Idealized influence will be effective in influencing followers' self-concepts for priming their organizational identification" (p. 12).

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Inspirational Motivation

As noted by Barbuto (2005), “Inspirational motivation describes leaders passionately communicating a future idealistic organization that can be shared (Hater & Bass, 1988)” (p. 28). Furthermore, “inspirational motivation is one of the elements of transformational leadership that helps pseudo-transformational leaders appear transformational and what inspires people to follow them” (Barling et al., 2008, p. 853). These leaders might “talk optimistically about the future” or “talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished” (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 94).

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation in action demonstrates the ability of leadership to enhance follower interest and awareness of the problem to think through the problem constructively (Bass, 1985; Rafferty et al., 2004). The reaction of intellectual stimulation enacted by leadership entails the ability for followers to conceptualize, comprehend, and analyze problems for a higher quality solution to complex scenarios (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Rafferty et al., 2004). Leaders can intellectually stimulate followers by building interest and awareness of the issue that the organization faces. This enhances the follower’s ability to perceive the issue through new perspectives. Further research needs to be conducted on this pillar of transformational leadership as it is the most underdeveloped component of the theory (Lowe et al., 1996; Rafferty et al., 2004).

Servant Leadership

In 1970, Robert Greenleaf published his essay *The Servant as Leader*, establishing the philosophy of servant leadership. In that original essay, Greenleaf proclaims that “a servant leader fundamentally emphasizes the development and benefits of followers and their organizations or communities” (Langhof & Güldenberg, 2020, p. 1). This is a contrasting

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leadership concept in its practice of serving and creating value for stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization (Greenleaf, 1970). The key emphasis of servant leadership falls upon the ethical behavior, development of followers, empowerment, emotional healing, conceptual skill growth, and creating value for the community (Liden, 2008). Additionally, servant leaders promote respect, motivation, positive attitude, and service as their main values of leadership (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018).

Servant leadership highlights that leaders are attentive to the concerns of their followers and empathize with them (Northouse, 2019). “The motive of the servant leader’s influence is not to direct others but rather to motivate and facilitate service and stewardship by the followers themselves” (Nobari et al., 2014).

The theory states that a person emerges as a leader by first becoming a servant. The focus is less on institutional or position power, but rather, authority is shifted to those who are being led. Servant leadership values everyone’s involvement in the community because it is within the community that one experiences and builds respect, trust, and individual strength (Piorun et al., 2021, p.4).

Organizational success is achieved when followers are given tasks that meet their strengths and acquires their interest (Maslennikova, 2007). “Servant leadership is best applied in mature organizations where the needs of shareholders are valued above profit” (Maslennikova, 2007, p. 4).

Servant leadership’s positive relationship with organizational commitment sets it apart as a form of leadership that is advantageous for nonprofit organizations (Williams, 2009). There are intentional efforts by servant leaders to develop a follower-focused environment (Maslennikova, 2007). By engaging with participants rather than followers, leaders can

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demonstrate their values and virtues, which are the “component constructs of servant leadership” (Patterson, 2003, p. 17). Still serving with humility, servant leaders can create organizational output that exceeds other leadership methods (Choudhary et al., 2013). Robert Greenleaf (1970) emphasizes the leader’s role to “make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (p. 27). This moral approach to leadership is guided by responsibility to serve the organization and all stakeholders within its reach (Allen et al., 2016). Doraiswamy (2012) found that, “in times of crisis, the application of servant leadership principles can be used to motivate, engage, and empower employees. There are few documented examples of servant leadership being utilized during a crisis” (Piorun et al., 2021, p.6).

Four Pillars of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership literature offers a multitude of dimensions when defining the key components to embracing the construct (Liden et al., 2008). Based on previous development and taxonomies of servant leadership, the key emphasis of servant leadership falls upon the ethical behavior, development of followers, empowerment, emotional healing, conceptual skill growth, and creating value for the community (Liden et al., 2008). For this study, it was beneficial to observe four of the nine dimensions of servant leadership emphasized in Liden’s study to propose a merge in practice with another leadership theory for leaders to adopt during a time of crisis. The four dimensions chosen for this study were: creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment. Each of these four dimensions are perceived to bring value to nonprofit leaders as they navigate a time of crisis. The following description of each behavior will merge with the four I’s of transformational leadership theory.

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Creating Value for the Community

Liden and associates (2008) found that servant leaders create value for their community by enhancing their community citizenship behaviors to aid marginalized and underrepresented citizens ability to overcome disparities. Servant leaders influence their followers to understand the importance of a conscious, genuine concern for helping the community (De Witt, 2015). This influence for creating value for the community translates to the enhancement in follower performance (Ehrhart, 2004). It takes individual initiative from followers to understand what is happening in their community and how they can improve it (Vondey, 2010).

Conceptual Skill Growth

Servant leaders possess a strong understanding and knowledge of the organizational tasks and procedures to support their followers through complex scenarios (Liden et al., 2008).

According to career expert Maciej Duszyński (2022):

“Conceptual skills include thinking skills which let you grasp complex ideas and come up with answers for difficult problems. These skills are valuable because they allow people to find many solutions for different challenges through deliberate thought and abstract reasoning.” (p. 2)

Development of Followers

Servant leaders strive to improve follower’s behaviors and actions for their own good, with intent to develop followers into leaders themselves. This is not for the leader or organization to benefit from to reach a goal, it is for the follower to develop into a better citizen (Ehrhart, 2004). The development of followers extends beyond the leader and empowers the employees and volunteers within an organization to create a productive workplace environment (Omanwar & Agrawal, 2021). Servant leaders value and develop the people associated with their

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organization to create an environment rooted in trust (Ferch, 2005) that promotes the common good of the community it serves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Empowerment

Empowerment has been defined as “the act of strengthening an individual’s beliefs in his or her sense of effectiveness . . . it is not simply a set of external actions; it is a process of changing the internal beliefs of people” (Conger, 1989, p. 18). Leaders can empower their followers by incorporating behaviors like “self-directed decision making, information sharing, and coaching for innovative performance into their organizational structure” (Van Dierendonck & Nijhuis, 2011, p. 251). Empowering followers “involves entrusting others with power and responsibility with an understanding of the accountability that goes with it. This form of service to others enables them to find their own way towards individuation that has their best interests at heart” (Greasley, & Bocârnea, 2014, p. 14).

Chapter Summary

By unpacking the evolution of both transformational and servant leadership theory, it opens an avenue for understanding the development of the traits aligned to each concept through years of study. By testing these theories in the nonprofit sector, it will add validity to the work of Bass and Avolio (1994) and Liden et al. (2008). This study will analyze the utilization of inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) in transformational leadership theory and gauge the application of empowerment, development of followers, conceptual skill growth, and creating value for the community (Liden et al., 2008) in servant leadership theory.

Having a theoretical understanding of FROs and the impact they had towards feeding the United States in 2020 to 2022 allows for a deeper understanding towards the importance of this study as it validates the need for continual development of leadership application in a volunteer-

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based nonprofit. The literature directed towards community resilience systematically deconstructs the research conducted on the ability of communities to cope with and recover from large-scale emergencies (Patel et al., 2017). This gives context to the importance of utilizing this study as an opportunity for training and leadership development opportunities.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to analyze the lived experience of FRO leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in the New River Valley, Virginia. This qualitative analysis was guided by the merge of transformational and servant leadership's fundamental pillars of practice. The four pillars of leadership associated with transformational leadership theory used in this study are: individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The four pillars of leadership associated with servant leadership are: creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment (Liden et al., 2008). This framework seems especially suitable for FRO leadership, where leaders rely heavily on the volunteers, donations, and networking to sustain their output.

The phenomenological approach used for this study allows for a deeper understanding and interpretation of the lived experience of FRO leadership through a time of crisis. This approach allows for the analysis of the phenomenon through the lens of the leaders who were firsthand making the decisions and leading teams through a pandemic. The analysis investigated the lived experience while suspending the preconceived theoretical assumptions that guided this study. This approach allowed for outside affiliates to learn from the experience of others.

Researcher Stance

Qualitative inquiry methodology is influenced by a researcher's background, personal experience, perceptions, and philosophical assumptions (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). My lived experience guides my purpose and passion to pursue the education that empowers my ability to make lasting societal change. By growing up in the fifth poorest city in America, I was exposed to the grim realities of poverty from an early age. I come from a lineage of factory workers from

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a factory city in Alabama. All the factories have closed now, leaving a city of abandoned buildings, and climbing crime rates. These fault lines in economic sustainability have intensified food insecurity as the marginalized and underrepresented are no longer the minority.

My passion for food security started at the age of seven when I visited my first FRO. My Sunday School teacher from my hometown church asked if I would like to help prepare three hundred Thanksgiving dinners for families in need. I was in disbelief that there were three hundred families that were not going to have food for the holidays, so I willingly volunteered at the local Salvation Army. From that day forward I have held a deeper understanding that access to food is not as simple or convenient as I had once romanticized in my mind. This revelation has stimulated my academic endeavors and guides this analysis of FRO leadership. This study aided in the fulfilment of a dream I have had for many years: To gain wisdom and guidance from leaders who have stood the test of time and can influence their perspectives and practice onto me for my own discernment and application to mitigate food insecurity in America.

Population

The population for this study consisted of leaders from FROs in the New River Valley region of Virginia. FRO leaders contacted for this study were identified through the New River Valley Food Assistance Directory (NRV Food Access, 2020). Their affiliated organization, physical address, and contact information was provided through this resource. Additionally, the food assistance directory provided information regarding program type, population served, food types distributed, and other program information regarding documentation required for clients to receive service. This research study aimed to interview leaders of FROs in the New River Valley, Virginia with the intent to analyze the leadership practices and protocols that guided their respective organizations from 2020 to 2022 amidst a time of crisis. The NRV was of specific

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interest for this study as it resides in the Appalachian Region. Appalachia is made up of a predominant rural population that are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, making regions like the NRV more susceptible to supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Cardarelli et al., 2021). A total of 52 prospective participants were identified through the directory. The IRB approved protocol addressed the recruitment of leadership and excluded the participation of volunteers, clients, and outside affiliates. The participants for this study were identified as key informants as they provided data sourced for this study. A unique identifier was used to help protect their identity. Each key informant was identified by “KI-” followed by a letter. For example, KI-a represents one respondent, and KI-b represents a different respondent.

Recruitment

On May 17, 2022, using an IRB-approved recruitment message (Appendix A), I emailed the listed contacts of 52 FRO leaders in the New River Valley region of Virginia. The recruitment email requested interested parties respond directly to the researcher by email or phone. These individuals received a follow-up email, which included an informed consent sheet and an invitation to schedule a time to talk. After reviewing an informed consent sheet (Appendix B), participants gave verbal informed consent.

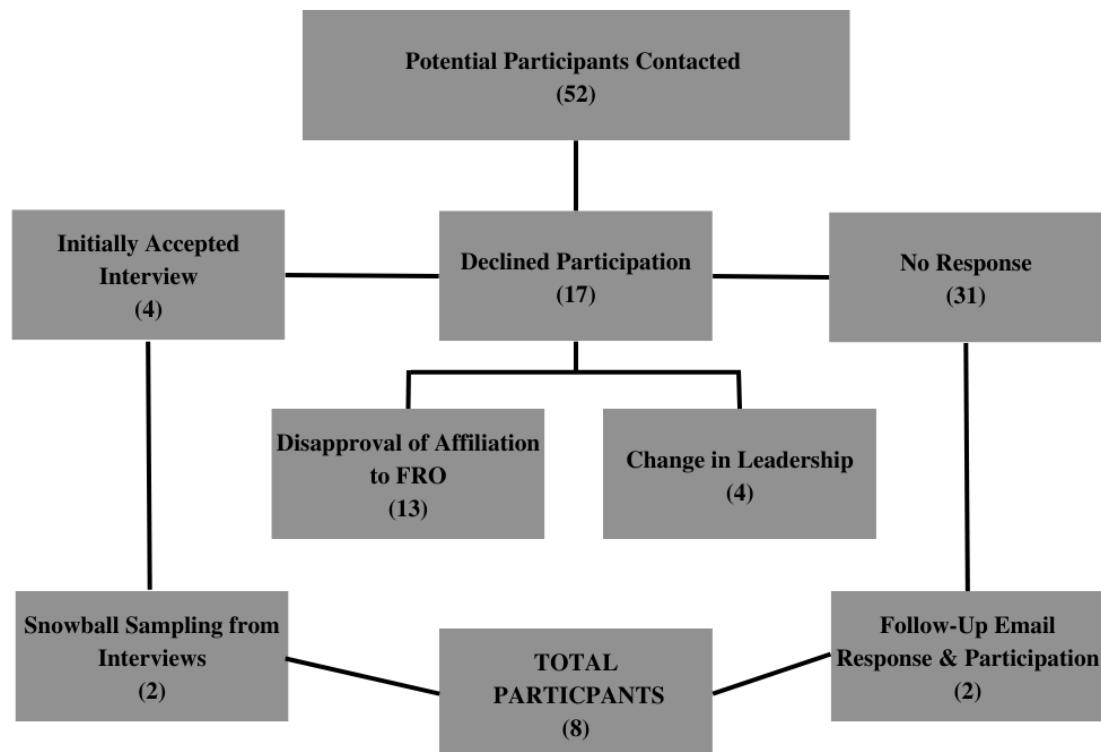
As highlighted in Figure 3-1, initial recruitment efforts yielded a total of four FRO leaders’ willing to participate in an interview. Four prospective participants turned down the opportunity to share their experience after the first recruitment email. Another nine organization leaders responded, notifying their disapproval of affiliation to food recovery and would not like to move forward with an interview regarding their leadership experience. There were also four organization leaders who notified the researcher of a change in leadership in the past four months, with different reasons of leadership change. There was a total of 27 FRO leaders

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contacted through the initial recruitment process as well as a follow up email sent on May 24, 2022, who failed to respond. After sending a follow up recruitment email, another two FRO leaders acknowledged their willingness to participate. During the first two interviews, key informants provided additional contact information for FRO leaders in Montgomery County, Virginia; this snowball sampling yielded additional recruitment opportunities and generated two additional key informants with valuable input on their experience leading an FRO through a time of crisis. In all, a total of eight participants were interviewed for this study.

Figure 3-1

Participant Recruitment Diagram



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Conceptual Framework

The pillars of leadership associated with transformational leadership theory were created by Bass (1985) in the “Four I’s of Transformational Leadership. These four factors are: Individualized Consideration, Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation. Each of these characteristics of transformational leaders served as the conceptual framework at which this study was developed around. From there, servant leadership theory was analyzed to discover four correlating behaviors that could merge with the four I’s of transformational leadership. This surfaced Liden’s (2008) “Nine Dimensions of Servant Leadership”: Emotional Healing, Creating Value for the Community, Conceptual Skills, Empowering, Helping Subordinates Grow and Succeed, Putting Subordinates First, Behaving Ethically, Relationships, and Servanthood.

After exploring each of these dimension’s definition and application in previous research, it was evident that creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment were the four pillars that best aligned to the four I’s of transformational leadership. The merge of these two leadership theories principal behaviors (Figure 1-2) is the novel discovery this study aims to make. Each of the eight pillars proposed in this study served as instrumental principles to the success of FRO leader’s ability to enhance deliverables and establish an avenue for access to free food services. If it is proven that each of the eight pillars of leadership from both transformational and servant leadership contributed to the effectiveness of leading FROs during a time of crisis, there is opportunity to strengthen FRO leadership through the adoption and development of this multifaceted approach to leading teams of employees, volunteers, and donors.

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Merge in Transformational and Servant Leadership Behaviors

Each of these leadership concepts place value on the development and empowerment of their followers to reach an idealized organizational output. To understand how FRO leaders sustained effective leadership throughout a time of crisis, it was important to merge these two leadership theories' principal behaviors to discover their application and adoption. This framework stimulated the propositions used to analyze each behavior in practice from 2020 to 2022 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was determined that the four I's of transformational leadership were the foundation this study was built upon. The merge in theory was found in the reciprocating behaviors of servant leadership theory pulled from the nine dimensions discovered by Liden (2008). To discover if this merge in theory was beneficial, each of the eight leadership behaviors were analyzed through interviews with FRO leaders who lived and led through a time of crisis. If this novel merge of the eight pillars of leadership remained to be true, it could provide developmental opportunities for FRO leaders. The coding process will first analyze the application of each pillar and then discover if the merging behavior reciprocated in effectiveness.

Creating Value for the Community Through Inspirational Motivation

The first merge in behaviors analyzed in this study is transformational leadership's inspirational motivation and servant leadership's creating value for the community. Inspirational motivation is found in leaders who inspire confidence, motivation, and sense of purpose at their organization (Hater & Bass, 1988). These leaders might "talk optimistically about the future" or "talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished" (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 94).

Creating value for the community is the ability of leaders to influence their followers to understand the importance of a conscious, genuine concern for helping the community translates to the enhancement in follower performance (Ehrhart, 2004). It takes individual initiative from

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followers to understand what is happening in their community and how they can improve it (Vondey, 2010). These two pillars of leadership merge in the sense of purpose each behavior encourages in organizational output. If a leader can inspire and motivate their followers, the organization has a better chance to create value for community they serve.

Empowerment Through Idealized Influence

The second merge in behaviors analyzed in this study is transformational leadership's idealized influence and servant leadership's empowerment. Idealized influence in practice are leaders who behave like role models at their organization (Chukwu et al., 2018). These leaders influence their followers through their vision, values, and mission to the organization (Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018). Leaders who idealized influence are admired, respected, and trusted (Chukwu et al., 2018). Leaders empower their followers by incorporating behaviors like "self-directed decision making, information sharing, and coaching for innovative performance into their organizational structure" (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011, p. 251). The merge of these two leadership pillars brings value to the organization structure. If leaders provide role model behavior, they create an environment where followers will enact their behaviors. This will create opportunity to empower followers with decision making and innovative performance because they have witnessed it through the leader at the organization. This creates a circular leadership model that proposes leaders setting a level of intentionality that will be adopted by followers in their own organizational involvement.

Development of Followers Through Individualized Consideration

The third merge in behaviors analyzed in this study is transformational leadership's individualized consideration and servant leadership's development of followers. Individualized consideration is enacted by leaders who act as role models to their followers (Bass, 1985). Leaders who enact individualized consideration care about their follower's emotional needs,

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support their followers, and listen to follower's concerns (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). The development of followers is similarly displayed by leaders who strive to improve follower's behaviors and actions for their own good, with intent to develop followers into leaders themselves (Ehrhart, 2004). Servant leaders value and develop the people associated with their organization to create an environment rooted in trust (Ferch, 2005) that promotes the common good of the community it serves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These two leadership behaviors merge in their focus on development and value of followers. If leaders adopt both pillars, they sustain effective leadership by developing an organizational environment rooted in a follower first mentality that will translate into followers performing at their highest potential by embracing the organization's values and mission.

Conceptual Skill Growth Through Intellectual Stimulation

The fourth and final merge in behaviors analyzed in this study is transformational leadership's intellectual stimulation and servant leadership's conceptual skill growth. Intellectual stimulation looks like leaders building interest and awareness of the issue that the organization faces to enhance follower's ability to perceive the issue through new perspectives (Bass, 1985; Rafferty et al., 2004). These leaders develop their follower's ability to conceptualize, comprehend, and analyze problems for a higher quality solution to complex scenarios (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Rafferty et al., 2004). Conceptual skill growth is similarly embraced by leaders who possess a strong understanding and knowledge of the organizational tasks and procedures to support their followers through complex scenarios (Liden et al., 2008). Leaders assist and support the growth of follower's ability to perceive these scenarios through creativity (Liden et al., 2008). These two leadership behaviors merge in their focus on problem solving for improved success. Both behaviors focus on leaders developing their follower's ability to think through complex scenarios and overcome obstacles through creativity and new perspective.

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Data Collection

Data collection followed a semi-structured interview protocol, which was pilot tested with research committee members and modified in response to their feedback. The changes prompted by the pilot test focused on the alteration of interview questions regarding the analysis of application in conceptual skill growth, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation. The first round of interview questions did not prompt an opportunistic approach to discovering FRO leader's application of these three propositional pillars. By further developing the questions aligned to each of these three pillars, FRO leaders could understand and articulate their experience applying or dismissing these behaviors during a time of crisis.

The pilot test data was not used in the analysis of data used for the findings of this study. An IRB-approved semi-structured interview protocol included a review of the informed consent sheet, review of questions or concerns, and obtainment of participant's verbal consent to be interviewed and recorded (Appendix C). Verbal consent was recorded, tracked, and stored in a password-protected VT Google Drive. Interviews were conducted over a three-month period, with the first four interviews conducted between May 20 and June 01, 2022, two interviews conducted June 16 and June 20, 2022, and the final two interviews taking place August 22nd and 23rd. All respondents who met the research study criteria, volunteered, and provided informed consent were interviewed. Each interview participant was engaged upon the phenomenon of their lived experience leading through a time of crisis. The three research criteria were: 18 years or older; holds a leadership position at an FRO in Montgomery County, Virginia; and willingness to share insights into leading FROs during a time of crisis. At the convenience of the participants, interviews were conducted virtually through Virginia Tech's Zoom conferencing system. All key informants consented to being recorded.

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Data Preparation

The recorded interviews were fully transcribed through an automatic transcription service provided by the Zoom system. The transcriptions were downloaded to the researcher's password-protected computer, reviewed, and corrected for accuracy. Transcriptions were stored on a password-protected Google Drive as well as on the researcher's computer in the software application, ATLAS.ti 22.1.4.

Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview method was used to collect data and surface findings based on predetermined themes from the theoretical elements included in the Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership (Figure 1-3) developed from the key principles in transformational (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008) theories. Data was coded in ATLAS.ti utilizing a deductive manner, focusing on alignment to the eight propositional pillars. This top-down approach focused on analyzing each proposition based on definitions and comprehension acquired through previously conducted research regarding each pillar in practice.

The initial coding process focused on identifying the essence of each proposition's acceptance or disregard by FRO leaders. This was structured by an in vivo and values coding approach that focused on the participant's own words and worldviews based on the questions asked about their adoption of each pillar in practice at their respective organization. As I worked through the initial coding process, I utilized the a priori propositions (Table 3-1) to question each alignment identified. After the initial pass through, a line-by-line approach was followed to dig deeper into the understanding of each participant's understanding and input on each pillar of leadership. To keep track of the meaning of each propositional pillar, I inlayed the definitions displayed in chapter one into the codebook to assure accuracy and alignment as I worked through

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the transcribed data. Each of the eight deductive codes used for this study helped to analyze FRO leader's lived experience in the world from 2020 to 2022.

Table 3-1

A Priori Propositions Used to Analyze the Transformational and Servant Leadership Strategies Demonstrated in a Time of Crisis at Food Recovery Organizations

Propositions	Supporting Literature	Interview Prompt
#1 FRO leadership demonstrates individualized consideration to followers during a time of crisis.	Bass, 1985 Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006	How did your organization's leadership consider individuals during a time of crisis?
#2 FRO leadership idealized influence on their followers during a time of crisis.	Chukwu et al., 2018 Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018	How did your organization's leadership serve as a role model during a time of crisis?
#3 FRO leadership inspired motivation to followers to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	Hater & Bass, 1988 Bass & Avolio, 1994	How did you or your organization inspire and motivate followers during a time of crisis?
#4 To overcome a time of crisis, FRO leaders intellectually stimulate followers to improve their quality of solutions.	Bass, 1985 Bass & Avolio, 1994 Rafferty et al., 2004	How did your organization's leadership challenge followers during a time of crisis?
#5 FRO leadership creates value for their community through food to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	Ehrhart, 2004 Vondey, 2010	How did your organization's leadership create value for the community it served?
#6 FRO leadership develops their follower's conceptual skills to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	Liden, 2008	How did your organization's leadership develop conceptual skill growth of followers during a time of crisis?

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Propositions	Supporting Literature	Interview Prompt
#7 FRO leadership develops their followers to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	Ehrhart, 2004 Ferch 2005 Peterson & Seligman, 2004	How did your organization's leadership develop followers during a time of crisis?
#8 FRO leadership empowers their followers to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011	How did your organization's leadership empower its followers during a time of crisis?

Propositions

In this study, the a priori propositions serve to state each of the eight behaviors from both transformational and servant leadership theory to determine if each statement is true or false in the observable phenomenon of leadership during a time of crisis. The following propositions were formulated (Table 3-1) from the predetermined understanding of the “Four I’s of Transformational Leadership” (Bass 1985) and the four selected pillars from the “Nine Dimensions of Servant Leadership” (Liden, 2008). The propositions developed for this study translated to the interview prompts that key informants were asked during their interview. Propositions 1 through 4 were associated to transformational leadership. Propositions 5 through 8 were associated to servant leadership. The following descriptions of each proposition served to determine the application and understanding each key informant contributed towards the propositions during the data analysis process.

Individualized Consideration

Leaders who act as role models to their followers (Bass, 1985). Leaders who enact individualized consideration care about their follower’s emotional needs, support their followers, and listen to follower’s concerns (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006).

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Proposition #1: FRO leadership demonstrates individualized consideration to followers during a time of crisis.

Idealized Influence

Leaders who behave like role models at their organization (Chukwu et al., 2018). These leaders influence their followers through their vision, values, and mission to the organization (Koveshnikov & Ehrnrooth, 2018). Leaders who idealized influence are admired, respected, and trusted (Chukwu et al., 2018).

Proposition #2: FRO leadership idealized influence on their followers during a time of crisis.

Inspirational Motivation

Leaders who inspire confidence, motivation, and sense of purpose at their organization (Hater & Bass, 1988). These leaders might “talk optimistically about the future” or “talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished” (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 94).

Proposition #3: FRO leadership inspired motivation to followers to overcome the pressure of drastic change and stress during a time of crisis.

Intellectual Stimulation

Leaders building interest and awareness of the issue that the organization faces to enhance follower’s ability to perceive the issue through new perspectives (Bass, 1985; Rafferty et al., 2004). These leaders develop their follower’s ability to conceptualize, comprehend, and analyze problems for a higher quality solution to complex scenarios (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Rafferty et al., 2004).

Proposition #4: To overcome a time of crisis, FRO leaders intellectually stimulate followers to improve their quality of solutions.

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Creating Value for the Community

Leaders influence their followers to understand the importance of a conscious, genuine concern for helping the community translates to the enhancement in follower performance (Ehrhart, 2004). It takes individual initiative from followers to understand what is happening in their community and how they can improve it (Vondey, 2010).

Proposition #5: FRO leadership creates value for their community to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.

Conceptual Skill Growth

Leaders possess a strong understanding and knowledge of the organizational tasks and procedures to support their followers through complex scenarios (Liden et al., 2008). Leaders assist and support the growth of follower's ability to perceive these scenarios through creativity (Liden et al., 2008).

Proposition #6: FRO leadership develops their follower's conceptual skills to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.

Development of Followers

Leaders strive to improve follower's behaviors and actions for their own good, with intent to develop followers into leaders themselves (Ehrhart, 2004). Servant leaders value and develop the people associated with their organization to create an environment rooted in trust (Ferch, 2005) that promotes the common good of the community it serves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Proposition #7: FRO leadership supports their followers in development to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.

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Empowerment

Leaders empower their followers by incorporating behaviors like “self-directed decision making, information sharing, and coaching for innovative performance into their organizational structure” (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011, p. 251).

Proposition #8: FRO leadership empowers their followers to overcome the obstacles of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.

Chapter Summary

This study used a phenomenological approach with qualitative data drawn from semi-structured Zoom video conference interviews. The study explores the factors that influence FRO leadership. Participants were identified through the New River Valley Food Assistance Directory (NRV Food Access, 2020). The study used both purposive and snowball sampling to recruit potential key informants via email (Appendix A). After obtaining verbal informed consent (Appendix B), the data collection process was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix C). Discussion of findings was framed through the lens of eight pillars of leadership stemming from transformational (Bass & Avolio 1994) and servant leadership (Liden, 2018) theories. Limitations of the study were described. The findings of this research can be found in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter reports the findings of research questions:

- RQ1. How can Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia sustain effective transformational leadership while under duress?
- RQ2. How might servant leadership principles contribute to effective leadership of Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia during a time of crisis?

The method this study follows to analyze FRO leadership is through the Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership (Figure 1-3) developed from the key principles in transformational and servant leadership theories. The four transformational leadership principles: individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and the four servant leadership principles: creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment (Liden et al., 2008) were tested based on the two research questions that guide this study. To test the application and effectiveness of each principle in FRO leadership during a time of crisis, four pillars were reviewed per research question to understand each theory in practice.

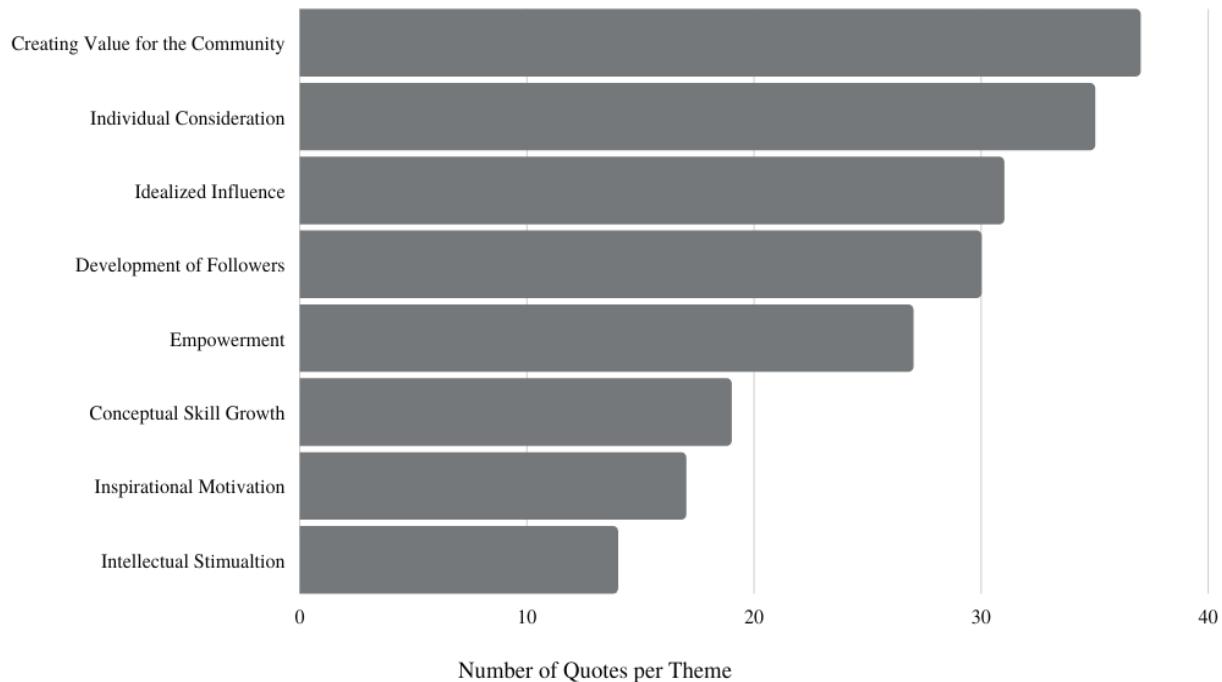
This chapter will translate the findings from interviews conducted with FRO leaders. Each research question is addressed in this chapter by accompanying key informant's application of the four pillars associated with each pillar. This report is organized by stating each research question followed by key informant's statement of application to each pillar that aided in their effectiveness of acting out transformational and servant leadership theory in practice. The number of times each a priori proposition was attested to by FRO leaders interviewed is

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calculated in Figure 4-1. These findings are a testament of the value each pillar brought FRO leaders as they overcame a time of crisis onset by a pandemic.

Figure 4-1

Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership Addressed During Interviews



RQ1. How can Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia

sustain effective transformational leadership while under duress?

The first research question focuses on the sustainability of effective transformational leadership application under duress. Based on the data provided by key informants, each principle of transformational leadership was applied in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The a priori codes that served to answer the first research question for this study were the four pillars of transformational leadership: Individualized Consideration, Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, and Intellectual Stimulation.

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Individualized Consideration

Many key informants noted the increase in demand of service resulting from the economic and environmental distress that was onset by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time of crisis, FRO leaders were pressured to upkeep a heightened demand in free food services while overcoming lack of support from volunteers, donors, and supply chain partners. One participant provided input that, “it was really taxing on us to be able to continue to do our job and yet serve the people that we were trying to serve” (KI-a). This stress and demand on leadership can be taxing on the ability of those in charge of making decisions and overseeing daily operations that aided in the communities’ access to food during a time of crisis. Attendance to follower’s emotional needs was addressed by a key informant stating that, “we were all feeling very stressed. I can't fathom who might not have felt very stressed during that time. So, it's important as a leader for me to make sure that my staff manages their stress level in these times” (KI-b). The followers addressed by key informants were those that worked, volunteered, donated, and aided the organization they led to feed their community. Individualized consideration became a crucial aspect of how leaders attended to their followers during this time to relieve the demand on them and disperse the responsibilities upon people that could thrive in certain tasks. This was supported by a key informant stating, “I work to people’s strengths. If you put people in an area where they have strengths and interests, they are going to thrive in that environment” (KI-h).

Individualized consideration for low-income persons, the unemployed, and underemployed was emphasized by a key informant as they stated, “I don’t think people realize the burden that folks in poverty deal with. My personal convictions are because I have benefited from society. In my privilege it's my job to do everything I can to make other people's lives

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easier and better along the way” (KI-b). This level of service for individuals in need of free food services puts consideration towards clients that fall under the poverty line.

Another way that FRO leaders addressed individualized consideration was through developmental opportunities for their followers, volunteers, and clients. This was observed in a key informant’s input that:

“I feel like at this point in my life, I am at a stage of mentoring and thrive from bringing out the best in people and building other’s strength, but also building on maybe things that they see as a weakness. My volunteers and clients need to be built up and providing a safe environment for people to be able to make mistakes without criticism is important.”

(KI-c)

At the core of individualized consideration comes mentorship, coaching, and guidance to followers. During the interviews with key informants, there was acknowledgment of individualized consideration for clients to develop alongside receiving free food. A key informant expounded upon their mentorship program stating:

“We have implemented a mentoring program where each of our clients come in at the beginning of their experience at the organization to schedule a monthly appointment, and the first 15 to 20 min they’re sitting with a mentor who samples relationship with them, builds into their lives, helps them to establish some goals and you know, just encourages them. We found that that was super needed through Covid and something that people even though they might have been resistant in the beginning, come to really appreciate and look forward to on their visit to our organization.” (KI-d)

An additional individualized consideration that surfaced in the interviews was the consideration for the older volunteer demographic that makes up a majority of FROs in

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Montgomery County, Virginia. This was observed by a key informant's input that "we've got a lot of older volunteers that have simply decided maybe it's time for me to step back" (KI-b). The heightened risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus forced the elderly community to reduce their involvement in volunteering over the previous two years, which demanded young and middle-aged adults to take ownership in volunteering and serving their community during a time of crisis.

Idealized Influence

Within leading a nonprofit organization that donates free food to their community, FRO leaders exemplify behavior that aligns with the organization's goal and mission. "Leaders portraying idealized influence embrace high compliance with organizational values and encourage employees to exert their highest efforts toward positive organizational outcomes by modeling the way" (Afshari, 2022, p. 809). A profound example of this role model behavior was found in a key informant's emphasis that "I am open to lead through my actions, and my passion, and I hope that inspires others. To follow me, I think my leadership style is building relationships, because relationships are key to me" (KI-a). Another key informant supported this behavior by stating, "I'm a real person and I care. We're all in this together. So I didn't really have to pivot or shift my leadership, because that's genuinely who I am, but it was important for my staff to understand that was a real part of me. I was here to help us do good work and help us be our best selves and managing stress was an incredibly important aspect" (KI-b).

Idealized influence is enacted by the leader's ability to motivate followers by emulating their values, convictions, and missional purpose by their actions. This ability to motivate was mentioned in a key informant's statement that:

When I try to motivate our congregation, I'll bring in those classic examples often leading from the front, so actually going into the mission, and serving there, not just

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serving on the board and on the periphery. Going in and grabbing a sledgehammer and doing what you have to do to get these walls down, to put that door in, and fulfilling the primary mission. I think leading by example is a huge part of that because I'm not going to ask somebody to do something that I'm not willing and ready to do myself." (KI-c)

To influence followers, leaders must be willing to demonstrate that they are willing to step up and help others when needed. This is displayed by a key informant's statement that, "I am in this role to help others. Sometimes it's direct help, sometimes it's guidance. You may not be fit to help at times, but you certainly don't leave someone hanging, and hope they can find the answer on their own. I lead by guiding and doing" (KI-c). This was supported by an additional key informant stating, "I'm not going to ask somebody to do something that I'm not willing and ready to do myself. That's an essential leadership mantra that I remind myself of. You know, before I ask somebody else to do something, am I willing to go and do that?" (KI-d). Input like this validates the importance of displaying an idealized influence in a nonprofit and FRO setting. To model the way is how leaders build trust and respect. This develops a culture of service at their respective organization.

To serve as an idealized influential leader means to serve as a positive role model for your followers, clients, and community at large. This calls for FRO leaders to model a way of behavior that is adopted by followers and inspire influential behavior among those serving alongside leadership. Idealized influence was embraced by a key informant stating:

"I'm the hardest working person at the organization. I ended up dropping out of college to run a business and I've always been willing to do anything that I may ask someone else to do, and I think people respect that you know that you know. I've always felt like a more of a team player. As the leader I realize the buck stops here and it must stop

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somewhere, but I've always been conscientious of other people and relationships are important, and I work people to their strength.” (KI-a)

Inspirational Motivation

A key component of transformational leadership is the ability to inspire action and motivate a sense of purpose in followers and volunteers. Inspirational motivation is instrumental in the success of an organization amidst a time of crisis (Lee & Raschke, 2016). One way this was enacted from 2020 to 2022 was aligned to a key informant’s purpose statement: “My whole purpose is to help people and be a part of making a difference in my community, and it's not difficult to motivate people when that is your purpose” (KI-b). This sense of ownership in motivating and inspiring followers was additionally evident in a key informant stating, “I am deeply passionate about the issue, and sincerely care about all our participants. I am driven by a lot of intrinsic motivation” (KI-d). The leader must be passionate about the purpose of their organization to translate that into motivating their followers. The followers inspired and motivated by FRO leaders are the employees, volunteers, and donors of the organization.

This key informant’s alignment to intrinsic motivation stemmed the exploration of what motivates the leaders at FROs to be in the position they are in. To understand what stimulates these individuals that contribute so much to their community for so little in return. It is the internal rewards that feeds these leaders drive to overcome tremendous hurdles and maintain a healthy supply of food to their community. One key informant describes this motivational leadership style to be a way they serve God, stating:

“My leadership style is just by example; and, you know, I feel like that I take my leadership image from Jesus when he washes the feet of his disciples and that's kind of what I need to be doing. So, to me that's the ultimate model of leadership.” (KI-a)

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Inspirational motivation is depicted by a leader's ability to communicate an idealistic future through an optimistic outlook on the situation. A key informant embraced this optimism in practice by stating they lead by "modeling behavior of giving up for others to receive" (KI-d). This translates to the leader's ability to motivate and stimulate volunteers during this time of crisis.

Intellectual Stimulation

A facet of transformational leadership that is aligned to the ability of organizations overcoming obstacles during a time of crisis is intellectual stimulation. This is the leader's role in challenging assumptions, taking risks, and utilizing the strength of followers to overcome complex scenarios. This is translated through a key informant's affirmation to "being a leader that's open to new ideas and always interested in getting better is very important" (KI-e). This concept is strengthened by an additional key informant's statement that, "our job is to solve problems and reach out if we need help" (KI-d). To demonstrate intellectual stimulation is not to act like you know all the answers.

Demonstrating intellectual stimulation looks different for each key informant's respective organization. Multiple key informants stimulated followers through creativity and innovation, with a specific key informant explaining their organization's leadership experience to be, "constantly learning about things along the way. We've had to shift gears, and change our normal practice, but generally things worked out well" (KI-c). A way that FROs were perceived to demonstrate intellectual stimulation during a time of crisis was through educational opportunities and training. A key informant strengthened this by stating, "I think it's important that volunteers understand why they're doing the work that they're doing. And so that learning piece is really core to when we do engage with volunteers in service learning and experiential learning" (KI-e).

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Another key informant stated, “you know we don't just get food out; we provide a lot of different things, like training and development opportunities for our clients” (KI-d).

A form of intellectual stimulation that was attested to by several key FRO leaders during the interviews was the importance of networking and relationships between organizations in the NRV region. This was unveiled by a key informant stating:

“Having those solid relationships with other nonprofit leaders or nonprofit staff is crucial.

To realize we're not the only one in this predicament and everybody's smart and we can come up with creative ideas and share creative ideas. And just keep moving.” (KI-b)

Another key informant gives the advice that, “you focus on the problem together to solve because we're all experiencing the same thing” (KI-e). A great affirmation to the power of networking for intellectual stimulation was stated by another key informant's input that at their organization “information on what was working and what was not working was available to anybody who needed to have access to that, and we would work with anybody to help them. So that's the nonprofit world in my eyes” (KI-a).

RQ2. How might servant leadership principles contribute to effective leadership of Food

Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia in time of crisis?

The second research question focuses on the contributions FRO leaders made towards effectively overcoming a time of crisis utilizing servant leadership principles. Based on the data provided by key informants, the four pillars of servant leadership developed for this study was applied in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The a priori codes that served to answer the second research question for this study were the four pillars of servant leadership: Creating Value for the Community, Conceptual Skill Growth, Development of Followers, and Empowerment.

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Creating Value for the Community

A major aspect of servant leadership is the ability to help subordinates grow, including personal and organizational community service. This sense of growth is best expressed by a key informants' proclamation that:

“I hope that the work we do is shared with the community, so that people know somebody does care, and that there are people—even during this kind of challenging time—that are actually working behind the scenes trying to make life better for people that are disadvantaged and find themselves really struggling.” (KI-g)

To overcome the hurdles set in place by times of crisis, community members need to take ownership in creating value for their neighbors. Creating value in the community was attested to by another key informant stating, “I’m thankful, because the community made it work. It wasn’t just the mission staff or the leadership of the mission” (KI-a). Another key informant addressed their organization’s ability to stimulate community value through their service by stating: “Our organization brings a lot of community, and we’re in a time right now where people really need community and something that is uplifting. To focus on helping others kind of helps us to take attention off ourselves” (KI-c). There was additional alignment to governmental organization’s ability to create value for communities during a time crisis with a key informant stating that, “governmental organizations came together and really helped the community navigate COVID” (KI-b). This was the only data addressing collaboration between government and non-government organizations during this time of crisis.

Further conversations with FRO leaders brought up the connection to food recovery as a piece that brought value to their community during this time of crisis. This is most clearly depicted by a key informant stating:

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“So many volunteers will come to us because they're also environmentally motivated about the implications of all the food we waste as a country. But that in a way I kind of see sometimes is a town gown, like, you know; it's a partnership with the community. It's also a positive thing that our organization tries to bring to the community.” (KI-e)

Additional key informants stated that, “in our community, it's certainly our goal to increase food access, but I also see it as a champion of reducing food waste” (KI-f).

Conceptual Skill Growth

Conceptual skills include thinking skills that allow organization leaders to grasp complex ideas and develop solutions to complex scenarios. FRO leaders were placed in a time of crisis that propelled organization members to support and assist others throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This was evidenced in a key informant's statement that:

“We had to adapt very quickly to meet the needs. So, you know being a leader that's open to new ideas and always interested in getting better is very important and having staff that has a similar mindset is very important and cultivating that with the team is key to our success.” (KI-b)

This key aspect of follower development was further emphasized by another key informant stating:

“All staff at our organization really took a major role in shifting what we typically did on a day-to-day basis and became more front and center with serving the older adults. People wanted to find their niche within the organization rather than you tell them. So, it took a great deal of creativity with our volunteer director to find out how we can support this.” (KI-g)

It was evident that FRO network and outside resources were the two components to conceptual skill growth that FRO leaders leaned on during this time of crisis to equip their

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followers with the right approach to develop solutions to be able to support and assist others.

This is attested by a key informant's input that:

“We started networking with other pantries to make sure that the food that we had was being served and not going to waste. We continue to build networks with several different agencies to support our clients.” (KI-c)

Another key informant supports this idea of networking to build conceptual skills by asking their team, “what other outside resources might be brought in to help us resolve this situation because we're kind of an impasse of what to do next?” (KI-f).

As time moves forward from this time of crisis, FROs still face adversity. This is emphasized by a key informant stating: “We still have needs; the numbers are still there, but we don't have the supply channels available that are coming in, so there are always obstacles” (KI-a). These obstacles are navigated by leaders developing conceptual skills and sharing their success and failures with other organizations. One way this was discovered was by a key informant sharing, “We were the first ones to create an online web page that had all the resources that anybody would need” (KI-b). Another key informant supported this by stating, “Information was truly public, so I could disseminate that information out to the other leaders of the nonprofit, so that they could manage everybody freaking out at the beginning of Covid” (KI-d). These types of platforms allow for FROs to communicate and discuss their practices and develop their follower's conceptual skills to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during this time of crisis.

Development of Followers

It is important for servant leaders to create an atmosphere of trust with their followers to create a setting that brings out the best in people. Servant leaders develop their followers for their

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own good, not merely a means for leaders to reach organizational goals. This was initially observed by a key informant's proclamation that:

"Ideally, I engage volunteers by building a personal connection, sharing more and engaging them in conversation about the issue, and really trying to reflect or you know, connect what they just did, even if it was just taking out boxes and breaking down produce connects why that was important to the overall mission of the organization." (KI-e)

This was further supported by another key informant stating:

"I'm very passionate about food insecurity and food access. So, I hope that whatever volunteer works with me will get the vibe that I really care. I think that's important that we care about the work that we're doing. So, I hope that it comes through to them that I think the work is terribly important, and that I care deeply about it. I care about the clients that we are providing food for, but I also care about the volunteer; even if it's just a three-hour interaction, like, I want to make sure that they get the most of their experience here." (KI-f)

Servant leaders also generate trust for followers to feel accepted and free to make a mistake and know they will not be rejected. This was demonstrated by a key informant stating, "As a leader, you must depend on your staff to tell you when they need help. It's not a failure to say, hey, I need some help" (KI-a). This leadership practice was further emphasized by a key informant stating:

"I am not one of these dictatorial leaders. I'm like okay we're in this together; let's figure this out together. And having staff that has similar mindset is very important and

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cultivating that with the team is crucial. There's a nurturing environment here for volunteers to grow.” (KI-b)

A way that a key informant upheld their development of followers during this time of crisis was by:

“Slowing everybody down and giving time to focus on the priorities. Focus on volunteers. I think that's the balance that makes it good; because when you're giving, and you don't get anything then it doesn't take long to really burn out in these kinds of roles. So, I think the book will be re-written a decade from now of the good things that came from this experience.” (KI-g)

Developing followers at a predominantly volunteer-operated organization is portrayed by servant leaders as bringing out the best in people. This is emphasized by a key informant proclaiming: “our organization is a great place for our volunteers to work, because we really focus on developing volunteers here” (KI-c).

Empowerment

Servant leadership is built upon the trust between the leader and follower. This involves entrusting followers with power and responsibility of service. Empowering leadership behavior is built upon the premise of improving the lives of those in your organization through challenging and coaching followers to reach their greatest potential. This empowerment to followers was demonstrated by one key informant stating:

“I did challenge our volunteers, sometimes having them make decisions, and they were low level decisions. When you empower somebody by asking ‘what do you think that we should put out and what would be useful?’ I try as much as possible to develop low-level empowerment with our volunteers.” (KI-a)

This level of empowerment to volunteers was accentuated by a key informant stating:

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“All our volunteers gave something back, and it was really based on their talent area. So, we really kind of let that run, because it empowered the public when folks started to join in” (KI-f).

Empowerment was addressed by another key informant as they stated:

“If you put people in an area where they have strengths and interests, and you encourage them—give them some room to be creative—they’re going to thrive in that environment, and that’s what we try to do here.” (KI-h)

A key informant addressed the empowerment demonstrated in allocating tasks based on personal strengths in their comment:

“Some folks wanted to work more in the pantry because they weren’t really people centric, but they really like working with the food. Yet, we had others that were very willing to roll up their sleeves and do the labor of packing and helping load the packages in the boxes. Whatever suited the specific volunteer is where we put them.” (KI-a)

Different levels of empowerment were discovered in the interviews with FRO leaders.

Most key informants attested their level of empowerment to be directed to their volunteers and staff, while a few leaders aligned empowerment towards FRO clients. This was initially discovered by a key informant stating:

“We don’t just leave people in the situation that they’re in. We hope to have some training opportunities and apprenticeships programs with local businesses, where we can start training people in some different skills that they’re not teaching a lot anymore.” (KI-d)

One more key informant described empowering their clients with choices in food options:

“It respects dignity—as far as human dignity—as well as it prevents food waste. Because, you know, when you give people a box, there might be stuff in the box [that] people in

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that house doesn't eat or doesn't know how to prepare and then puts in the freezer and forgets about it." (KI-e)

All these levels of empowerment that FRO leaders demonstrated during this time of crisis aided in their ability to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress. By placing decision making and external action in followers' hands, it puts a sense of accountability to the organization and allows for the followers to thrive. This is attested to by a key informant stating, "I really do ask for volunteer input, and I value it. So, I hope that they also feel as though they're a part of the decision-making process" (KI-h).

Chapter Summary

The findings described in this chapter provide an overview of two research questions for analyzing FRO leadership during a time of crisis. The first research question focused on analyzing the effectiveness of transformational leadership while under duress. This was answered by FRO leader's testament to serving as role models and mentors that delegated tasks to meet their follower's strengths with intent to inspire and motivate their team to overcome obstacles with new ideas toward accomplishing organizational goals and tasks. The second research question analyzed how servant leadership principles contributed to the effective FRO leadership during a time of crisis. During this analysis, FRO leaders found that servant leadership principles brought value to their community, which translated to their staff's willingness to stimulate creative solutions to feed more community members. This passion for service was additionally found in the development of volunteers and employees at organizations in the NRV as they were empowered to continually evolve and meet the heightened demand in free food services inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. It was found that merging all eight leadership behaviors from both theories provided FRO leaders with a multifaceted

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approach towards overcoming a time of crisis. The following chapter presents a summary of the findings and recommendations for further research and practice of adopting the eight pillars of leadership to increase FRO output in the communities they serve.

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CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to analyze the lived experience of FRO leaders and gauge their ability to demonstrate transformational and servant leadership behaviors to enhance deliverables and establish an avenue for access to free food services during a time of crisis. This chapter includes a summary and discussion of findings based on literature rooted in prior application of transformational and servant leadership theory. Also included is a discussion of the merge in theories and how the application of all eight behaviors from the four I's of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) and the dimensions of servant leadership (Liden, 2008) have potential for adoption in the nonprofit arena. This chapter concludes with recommendations for practice, discussion of the limitations in this study, future research potential, and a brief summary.

This chapter includes discussion and recommendation for practice based on the following research questions:

- RQ1. How can Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia sustain effective transformational leadership while under duress?
- RQ2. How might servant leadership principles contribute to effective leadership of Food Recovery Organizations in the New River Valley region of Virginia during a time of crisis?

The proposition for what aided in FRO leader's ability to overcome a time of crisis was multifaceted and consisted of eight themes: (a) individualized consideration, (b) idealized influence, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, (e) creating value for the community, (f) conceptual skill growth, (g) development of followers, and (h) empowerment. Each of these factors were attested to by FRO leaders as instrumental behaviors to their success

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leading teams through stress and constant change. Additionally, these were the behaviors that contributed to the effectiveness of enacting and sustaining transformational and servant leadership during a time of crisis. While each of these were declared as beneficial, not all were adopted in full by each FRO leader. Those that fully merged all eight pillars of leadership into their practice throughout 2020 to 2022 found that they were able to lead their organization to overcome the obstacles onset by the COVID-19 pandemic and feed their community in a time they needed it most. While other FRO leaders attested to utilizing some of the pillars tested for this study, they did not practice all eight. This was found as a limiting factor in leadership, which resulted in leaders having a more difficult time guiding their teams throughout a time of crisis.

Interpretation of Findings

Discussion of findings were framed through the lens of transformational leadership theory (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970). Transformational leaders stimulate organizational involvement and success (Bass, 1985) through inspiring and motivating their followers through role model behavior that takes into consideration the development of their subordinates both personally and intellectually (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders inform their followers of the importance and value their work contributes to organizational goals to reach a higher level of performance for the good of the organization (Bass, 1985). Servant leadership is a homogenous leadership concept in its practice of serving and creating value for stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization (Greenleaf, 1970). Servant leadership focuses on creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, the development of followers, and empowerment (Liden et al., 2008) to increase organizational success. Both transformational leadership and servant leadership theory provide pragmatic components that aided in FRO leaders' ability to overcome change and stress during a

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time of crisis. This was analyzed through attention to two research questions (RQ), one assistance with each theory.

Merge in Transformational and Servant Leadership Behaviors

It was found that merging all eight pillars of practices from transformational and servant leadership theories allowed for the best chance towards overcoming the increase in demand and ambiguous obstacles FRO leaders faced from 2020-2022. Leaders that attested to the application of all eight pillars found that they were able to effectively lead their followers through the increase in demand and ambiguous obstacles onset by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other key informants that verified to using only a few of the eight pillars found they lacked in certain areas of leadership. This was a core discovery found in this study as the merge in theory provided theoretical assumption that one leadership practice was superior to the other when in truth the merge of all eight behaviors allowed for the greater outcome in feeding community members during a time of crisis. The merge in theoretical behaviors is the novel proposition tested by this study. It was found that it takes a multifaceted approach to leading teams of employees, volunteers, and donors throughout a time of crisis when there is constant change to organizational structure and demand in free food services like never before.

Creating Value for the Community Through Inspirational Motivation

A major aspect of servant leadership is the ability to help subordinates grow, including personal and organizational community service. To overcome the hurdles set in place by times of crisis, community members need to take ownership in creating value for their neighbors. Liden and associates (2008) found that servant leaders create value for their community by enhancing their community citizenship behaviors to aid marginalized and underrepresented citizens ability to overcome disparities. Servant leaders influence their followers to understand the importance of a conscious, genuine concern for helping the community (De Witt, 2015). This influence for

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creating value for the community translates to the enhancement in follower performance (Ehrhart, 2004). It takes individual initiative from followers to understand what is happening in their community and how they can improve it (Vondey, 2010).

A key component of transformational leadership is the ability to inspire action and motivate a sense of purpose in followers. As noted by Barbuto (2005), “Inspirational motivation describes leaders passionately communicating a future idealistic organization that can be shared (Hater & Bass, 1988)” (p. 28). It is the internal rewards that feeds these leaders’ drive to overcome tremendous hurdles and maintain a healthy supply of food to their community. “Inspirational motivation is one of the elements of transformational leadership that helps pseudo-transformational leaders appear transformational and what inspires people to follow them” (Barling et al., 2008, p. 853). These leaders might “talk optimistically about the future” or “talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished” (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 94).

The merge in these two behaviors is depicted by a leader’s ability to communicate an idealistic future through an optimistic outlook on the situation (Towler, 2019). FRO leaders embraced this optimism in practice by modeling behavior of giving up for others to receive. FRO leaders felt a strong responsibility to maintain volunteer and donor participation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to create value in their community through free food services. FRO leadership focused on helping others to take attention off themselves. This was enacted by leaders uplifting and motivating their followers by keeping them informed on the impact they held towards feeding those in need during this time of crisis.

Empowerment Through Idealized Influence

Servant leadership is built upon the trust between the leader and follower (Costigan et al., 1998). This involves entrusting followers with power and responsibility of service. Empowering leadership behavior is built upon the premise of improving the lives of those in your organization

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through challenging and coaching followers to reach their greatest potential. Empowerment has been defined as “the act of strengthening an individual’s beliefs in his or her sense of effectiveness . . . it is not simply a set of external actions; it is a process of changing the internal beliefs of people” (Conger, 1989, p. 18). “Empowering leadership behavior includes aspects like encouraging self-directed decision making, information sharing, and coaching for innovative performance” (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011, p. 251). Empowering followers “involves entrusting others with power and responsibility with an understanding of the accountability that goes with it. This form of service to others enables them to find their own way towards individuation that has their best interests at heart” (Greasley & Bocârnea, 2014, p. 14).

FRO leaders exemplify behavior that aligns with the organization’s goal and mission. “Leaders portraying idealized influence embrace high compliance with organizational values and encourage employees to exert their highest efforts toward positive organizational outcomes by modeling the way” (Afshari, 2022, p. 809). “Idealized influence is defined as having transformational leaders who behave in ways that result in them being role models for their followers” (Chukwu et al., 2018, p. 253). To influence followers, leaders must be willing to demonstrate that they are willing to step up and help others when needed (Bass, 1985). For followers to identify with leadership, they must want to mimic their behavior and look up to the way the leader lives their life. FRO leadership is a perfect example of this idealized influence as they are passionately serving their community. To serve as an idealized influential leader means to serve as a positive role model for your followers, clients, and community at large.

By placing decision making and external action in followers’ hands, it puts a sense of accountability to the organization. FRO leaders found that throughout this time of crisis, they were given the opportunity to empower followers at all levels by encouraging self-directed

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decision making to display the opportunities to thrive. It was found that leaders who affirmed to empowering their followers also idealized influence by demonstrating how they expected their followers to act through their own actions. If they were to give their volunteers the power to make decisions and guide their own experience at the FRO, they must enact a leadership behavior that followers are willing to mimic. This created an environment of accountability and performance at the organizations that affirmed to these pillar behaviors.

Development of Followers Through Individualized Consideration

It is important for servant leaders to create an atmosphere of trust with their followers to create a setting that brings out the best in people. Servant leaders “want their subordinates to improve for their own good, and view the development of followers as an end, in and of itself, not merely a means to reach the leader's or organization's goals” (Ehrhart, 2004, p. 69). FRO leaders found that building connections and engaging their volunteers about problems and acquiring volunteer input on solutions allowed for volunteers to engage more with the overall output of the organization. This emphasis on volunteer development was a key attribute to why servant leadership principles served to be beneficial in a time of crisis.

According to Liden and colleagues (2008):

“Servanthood” extends beyond the desires of the self-ego and builds a working climate that generates feelings of employee empowerment. In addition, servant leadership extends beyond the workplace to foster within followers a spirit of servanthood or working to create value for the community at large. (p. 163)

Servant leaders value and develop the people associated with their organization to create an environment rooted in trust (Ferch, 2005) that promotes the common good of the community it serves (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Developing followers at a predominantly volunteer-operated organization is portrayed by servant leaders as bringing out the best in people. FRO

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leaders ask for volunteer input and value it. The development of followers during the COVID-19 pandemic was not an easy task as volunteers were reduced and staff members interacted virtually, but those that attested to developing their followers during this time of crisis found that their organization was able to sustain a steady stream of freed food deliverables for their community members.

During this time of crisis, FRO leaders were pressured to meet a demand like never before, while simultaneously receiving the lowest amount of support from volunteers, donors, and supply chain partners. This stress and demand on leadership can be taxing on the ability of those in charge of making decisions and overseeing daily operations that supplement the communities' access to food during a time of crisis (American Psychological Association, 2020). This calls for individualized consideration of followers. Koveshnikov and Ehrnrooth (2018) emphasize that "individualized consideration leadership aims to attend to followers' emotional needs, to act as a support, and to listen to followers' concerns (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006)" (p. 749). FRO leaders that display individualized consideration might spend time teaching and coaching volunteers and followers to maximize their organizational involvement (Towler, 2019). In FRO leadership, individualized consideration became a crucial aspect of how leaders attended to their followers during the COVID-19 pandemic to relieve the demand on them and disperse the responsibilities upon people that could thrive in certain tasks. At the core of individualized consideration comes mentorship, coaching, and guidance to followers (Towler, 2019).

At the core of both transformational and servant leadership is the development and guidance of their followers. By merging the core components of both individualized consideration and the development of followers, FRO leaders found that they created an environment rooted in mentorship and coaching for improved performance. This resulted in

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leaders' ability to build trust and support in their organization, which resulted in a stronger affiliation to the organization and the mission they aimed to serve. It also attested to followers becoming leaders themselves, which took an immense amount of pressure off the leaders who were facing an immense amount of stress and pressure to make operational decisions during a time of crisis.

Conceptual Skill Growth Through Intellectual Stimulation

Conceptual skills include thinking skills that allow organization leaders to grasp complex ideas and develop solutions to complex scenarios (Ehrhart, 2004). FRO leaders were placed in a time of crisis that propelled organization members to support and assist others throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. "These skills are valuable because they allow people to find many solutions for different challenges through deliberate thought and abstract reasoning" (Duszyński, 2022, para. 1). Servant leaders possess a strong understanding and knowledge of the organizational tasks and procedures to support their followers through complex scenarios (Liden et al., 2008). It was evident that FRO network and outside resources were two components to conceptual skill growth that FRO leaders leaned on during this time of crisis to equip their followers with the right approach to develop solutions to be able to support and assist others.

The utilization of a multi-organizational networking platform will allow for FRO leaders to communicate and discuss their practices and enhance followers' conceptual skills to reinforce the execution of overcoming the pressures of constant change and stress inflicted by times of crisis. As time moves forward from the COVID-19 pandemic, FROs still face adversity. FRO leaders must be open to new ideas and always interested in getting better. To build a followership that has a similar mindset is very important and cultivating a team approach to problem solving is key to success.

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A facet of transformational leadership that is aligned to the ability of organizations to overcome obstacles during a time of crisis is intellectual stimulation. This is the leader's role in challenging assumptions, taking risks, and utilizing the strength of followers to overcome complex scenarios. FRO leaders sustained transformational leadership practice by increasing follower's interest and awareness of the impact COVID-19 had on their organizations. This required leaders to work alongside their followers to construct creative and innovative approaches to overcoming hurdles set in place by the novel Coronavirus. The FRO leaders who attested to the application of intellectual stimulation affirmed an increased ability to conceptualize, comprehend, and analyze problems (Bass & Avolio, 1994) within their team and organization.

To demonstrate intellectual stimulation is not to act like you know all the answers. It is the utilization of resources and the ability to support and collaborate with followers as the organization tries new approaches and develops innovative ways of dealing with complex scenarios (Bass & Avolio, 1994). A way that FROs were perceived to demonstrate intellectual stimulation during a time of crisis was through educational opportunities and training.

During this time of crisis, examples abound of innovative solutions and shifts in practice to meet the needs of people. FRO leaders found that engaging their teams of employees, volunteers, and donors with critical thinking opportunities to work through the complexities of the pandemic allowed for creative approaches to reach higher levels of output of free food services for their community. Those that did not intellectually stimulate their organization's followership had to rely on networking outlets to reach solutions or failed to overcome the hurdles set in place. This promotes opportunity for leaders to understand the importance of enacting intellectual stimulation within their organization.

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The merge of these two facets of transformational and servant leadership were affirmed the least by FRO leaders during the interview process, but enhanced those that declared these behaviors as beneficial the most. This was found to be a gap in FRO leadership as leaders did not feel they engaged their followers with conceptual skill growth or intellectual stimulation throughout 2020 to 2022. Leaders that engaged their followers with this form of development found that they created a streamline approach to distributing and serving their clients with free food services. Organization leaders who merged these two concepts best found that sharing and consuming this information through social media allowed for other organizations to benefit from their efforts. This network of information was confirmed as a beneficial source that aided in FRO leadership during a time of crisis.

Implications for Theory and Research

Chapter 2 included descriptions of several behaviors associated with transformational and servant leadership theories. These behaviors included individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, creating value for the community, conceptual skill growth, development of followers, and empowerment. How these behaviors proposed in this study enhance the preexisting understanding of theory is discussed in the following sections.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has been a proven theory for its success in team leadership settings. This remained true as FRO leaders attested to the value each pillar of transformational leadership brought to their organizations. Gill and colleagues (2006) found that mitigating stress and burnout was best accomplished by transformational leaders. This concept was recently tested again by Rafique and colleagues (2022), finding transformational leaders play both a mediating and moderating role. The mitigation in stress and enhancement in performance can also be found

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in the data from this study. Transformational leaders were able to sustain effective leadership while under duress by enacting all “Four I’s of Transformational Leadership” (Bass, 1985).

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a timeless concept that fits the mold of FRO leaders and encompasses the servant first mentality that Greenleaf (1970) manifested in his literature. Greenleaf emphasizes “a servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. The servant-leader shares power puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible” (Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2016, p. 1). Greenleaf’s (1970) “The Institution as Servant” summarized the implications servant leadership holds to the improvement of society as:

Caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built. If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to serve and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them. (p. 3)

The servant leader’s emphasis on followers was supported throughout this study, as four of the nine dimensions of servant leadership (Liden, 2008) were tested and proven as key components to effectively leading FRO during a time of crisis.

Merging Transformational & Servant Leadership Behaviors

Analyzing FRO leadership through the merge of transformational and servant leadership theories’ principal behaviors proved to enhance the understanding of these theories in practice. Framing this analysis through multiple perspectives proved to stimulate new and interesting ways each theory can be applied in nonprofit leadership during a time of crisis. The merge of theories in this study unveiled the opportunity to develop FRO leadership to utilize these pillars

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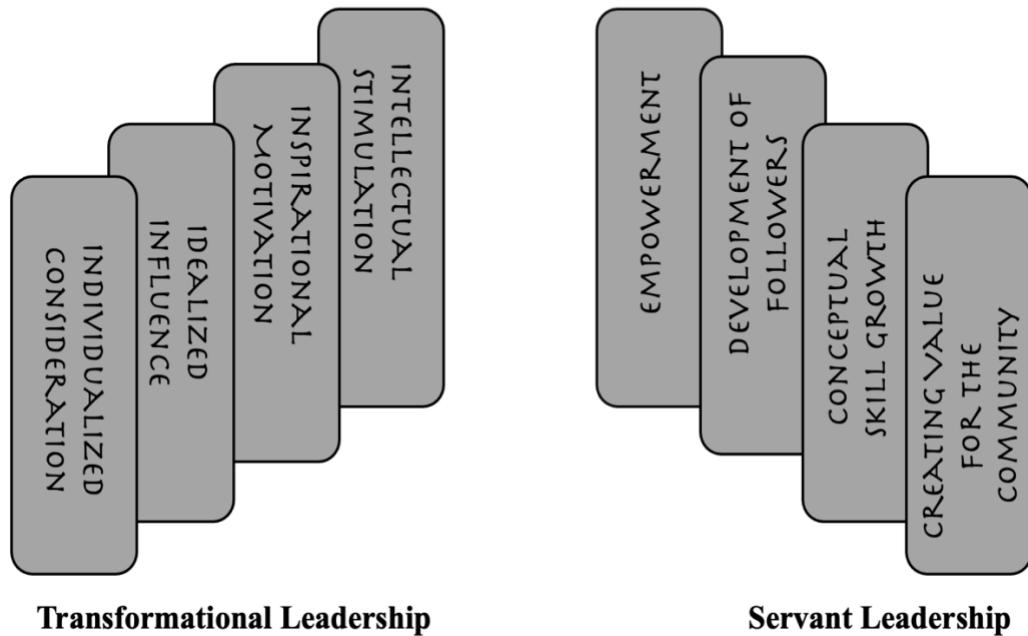
in preparing their staff and volunteers for future increase in demand and overcome the supply chain issues. The data collected for this study further informs the understanding of each theory in practice. In understanding the phenomenon of FRO leadership competencies through a time of crisis, transformational and servant leadership pillars served to be eight suitable behaviors that aided leader's ability to overcome the stress and demand onset by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Eight Pillars of Leadership Demonstrated by Food Recovery Organizations During a Time of Crisis (Figure 5-1) utilized the four pillars of both transformational and servant leadership to analyze the leadership practices displayed over the previous two years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5-1

The Eight Pillars of Leadership Demonstrated by Food Recovery Organizations During a Time of Crisis

The Eight Pillars of Leadership Demonstrated by Food Recovery Organizations During a Time of Crisis



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The merge of these two theories allowed for an exploration of practice and offer a means of reflection on the activity of leadership. In nonprofit entities, leadership is the cornerstone of success. As Harris (2017) observed: “Without good leadership, regardless of how impressive the individual components may be, productivity is far from maximized, and employees themselves may become marginalized” (para. 1).

While not all key informants attested to utilizing each of the Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership, those that did found that their experience leading during a time of crisis was more effective and efficient than those that did not utilize all eight. This implies that the merge of each of the four pillars from both theories gives leaders a better chance at overcoming the stress and demand of leading a team through a time of crisis. In discussing the findings, transformational leadership afforded the insight of individualized consideration and idealized influence (Bass, 1985) as the most formative practices that aided in FROs ability to overcome a time of crisis. Regarding servant leadership, findings attested to creating value for the community (Liden et al., 2008) and development of followers (Ehrhart, 2004) as the instrumental principles that aided in leadership's ability to overcome the stress and demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. Another leadership activity—empowerment and conceptual skill growth—provided the means to explore this leadership phenomenon from within the Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership developed for this study.

Analysis allowed for exploration in merging transformational and servant leadership practices. Servant leaders support the development of individuals within the organization, while transformational leaders promote common goals and vision for individuals to reach those goals. There is difference in these two theories that distinguish each as an effective leadership practice for nonprofit leaders. This study provides novel concept of merging the four key behaviors of

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each theory as a supportive construct in overcoming a time of crisis. FRO leaders do not need to be rigid in their leadership styles; they can mold their leadership style to demonstrate behaviors of each concept to develop a well-rounded approach to leading followers to reach goals and overcome obstacles. This is important as leaders move forward from the structural shift onset by the pandemic. There are development opportunities in the adoption of all eight pillars of leadership demonstrated by FRO leaders during a time of crisis.

Implications for Practice

Based on the analysis and discussion of data provided by key informants in leadership roles associated with FROs, recommendations emerge for leaders to adopt the practice of the eight pillars of leadership demonstrated during a time of crisis tested for this study. These eight pillars are comprised of the merge between transformational and servant leadership theories' pillar practices. Each of the eight pillars of practice was attested to by FRO leaders interviewed in this study as a fundamental practice that aided in overcoming the stress and demand in free food resources in the NRV region of Virginia during the global pandemic from March 2020 to August 2022.

While all eight pillars were noted as beneficial in FRO leadership practice, not all leaders adopted each of the eight pillars at their organization during the pandemic. That prompts practical development opportunities for FRO leaders to adopt each of the eight pillars to enact a well-rounded approach to leading a team through a time of crisis. Each pillar is articulated in Table 5-1 to showcase the proposition, key informant input on using the practice, and recommendation for practice of each pillar. FROs and other nonprofit organizations that struggled in overcoming the stress and impact of COVID-19 can reshape their organization's

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leadership to embody each of these practices to better prepare for future times of crisis and disruption to the daily operations of their organization.

Table 5-1

Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership in Practice

Pillar of FRO Leadership	Proposition	Key Informant's Input	Pillar in Practice
Individualized Consideration	FRO leadership demonstrates individualized consideration to followers during a time of crisis.	“I am a mentor and thrive from bringing out the best in people and build on other’s strengths.” KI-c	Develop rapport with staff and volunteers to discover personal strengths to allocate tasks and responsibilities they can thrive in.
Idealized Influence	FRO leadership idealized influence on their followers during a time of crisis.	“I am open to lead through my actions and passions, with hope to inspire others to do the same.” KI-a	Communicate the organization’s vision, values, and goals to each follower through demonstrating a strong work ethic and role model behavior.
Inspirational Motivation	FRO leadership inspired motivation to followers to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	“My whole purpose is to help people and be a part of making a difference in my community. It’s not difficult to motivate people when that is your purpose.” KI-b	Demonstrate confidence, maintain and optimistic outlook on the situation, and show genuine interest and appreciation for followers.

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Pillar of FRO Leadership	Proposition	Key Informant's Input	Pillar in Practice
Intellectual Stimulation	To overcome a time of crisis, FRO leaders intellectually stimulate followers to improve their quality of solutions.	“Being a leader that’s open to new ideas and always interested in getting better is important.” KI-e	Encourage followers to brainstorm innovative solutions that pioneer new approaches to accomplishing tasks and organizational goals.
Creating Value for the Community	FRO leadership creates value for their community through food to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	“I hope the work we do is shared with the community, so people know we care and that we’re working behind the scenes to make life better for people that are struggling.” KI-g	Develop social capital by influencing followers to commit their time and energy to create resources for community members in need.
Conceptual Skill Growth	FRO leadership develops their follower’s conceptual skills to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	“Being a leader that’s open to new ideas and always interested in getting better is very important and having staff that has a similar mindset is very important and cultivating that with the team is key to our success.” (KI-b)	Be observant, listen to community member input, and expose followers to new concepts by communicating effectively and building trust within your organization.
Development of Followers	FRO leadership develops their followers to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	“I care about the volunteers even if it’s just a three-hour interaction I want to make sure they get the most of their experience.” KI-f	Delegate tasks strategically, listen to follower input, give recognition, and build a clear vision of the goals you are trying to accomplish.

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Pillar of FRO Leadership	Proposition	Key Informant's Input	Pillar in Practice
Empowerment	FRO leadership empowers their followers to overcome the pressure of constant change and stress during a time of crisis.	"If you put people in an area where they have strengths and interests, and you encourage them, they are going to thrive in that environment." KI-h	Give followers meaningful tasks and ask for their input on ideas to improve organizational operations to create a culture of self-reliance.

Training & Development of FRO and Nonprofit Leaders for Future Times of Crisis

The results of this study prove that transformational and servant leadership's Eight Pillars of FRO Leadership is an incredibly useful tool for analyzing FRO leadership amidst a time of crisis, and the framework highlights potential for training and development opportunities. This novel merge of theory brings value to FRO and nonprofit leaders to develop in practice by intentionally developing in each of the eight behaviors tested for this study. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is widespread agreement among researchers to further study how to maintain and strengthen community resiliency. At a broad level, South et al. (2020) observed: "As the long-term social, health, and economic impacts of COVID-19 are felt..., communities and community-based organizations will have a critical role to play in the recovery process" (p. 305). During the pandemic, FROs were major contributors to food security for marginalized and underrepresented population's access to food throughout the pandemic (Global Food Banking Network, 2020). By enhancing FRO capabilities, small grassroots organizations can demonstrate a transformation in food recovery and food rescue for their communities (Chetkovich & Kunreuther, 2006). Further attention should be directed to the training and development of FRO and nonprofit leaders for future times of crisis and increase in demand.

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This can be accomplished by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), as they provide community viability efforts by working with organizational partners, community networks, and individuals to further build capacities in leadership and emergency community issues. The VCE can educate and empower FROs across the state with these eight pillars of practice. The eight practical applications discovered in this study can translate into a tool for agents to use when analyzing local leader's ability to guide their teams through obstacles in feeding their community. VCE agents can ask how community leaders are utilizing the pillars in practice found in Table 5-1 to analyze and recommend areas for improvement if necessary.

Limitations & Recommendations for Future Research

While interpreting the research findings, it helps to note a study's limitations. The boundaries and limitations of this study fall on the population size and lack of contrasting examples of the eight propositional pillars that served as the conceptual framework to analyze FRO leaders during a time of crisis. The study analyzed eight leaders in the NRV region of Appalachia in Virginia. A more robust sample of FRO leaders may have stimulated more input on the use of the eight pillars of practice being tested for this study.

Additionally, there was a limiting factor in contrasting examples that FRO leaders utilized to overcome the stress and demand of free food services. The study's semi-structured interview protocol limited the discovery of other practices outside of the eight pillars in leaders' ability to lead throughout 2020 to 2022. The deductive coding process used for this study only focused on the adoption and application of the eight pillars of leadership developed from transformational and servant leadership theories. This limited the study from sourcing other leadership practices or principles from other theories that might have aided in FRO leaders' abilities to lead their organization during a time of crisis.

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Areas for future research could be directed to FRO performance and success supported by the qualitative discoveries in this study. A quantitative study could be developed to understand the level of performance each FRO interviewed for this study had towards feeding community members throughout 2020 to 2022. This could provide statistical data that could support or negate the benefit of each pillar of leadership tested in this study. By having a performance analysis conducted alongside the evidence discovered from this study, FROs could be gauged on leadership behaviors versus performance. While some FRO leaders attested to utilizing all eight pillars of leadership tested in this study, there is lacking quantitative evidence of the outcome those behaviors stimulated in free food deliverables.

Further research potential also remains in utilizing the eight pillars of leadership demonstrated during a time of crisis in other geographical regions outside of Appalachia to review its generalizability. This qualitative study could be an analysis used by extension agents as a tool for reviewing and constructing FRO leadership structure, if found to be applicable in regions outside of the NRV. As time progresses, this tool could be an analysis platform taken on by extension agents across the country as a development standard used to assess FRO leaders and organizational output.

Conclusion

The findings from this study, organized by the research questions and pillars of leadership, have been presented in this chapter. The findings were summarized, making connections to transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) and servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1970), acknowledging the benefit in merging both leadership concepts' behavioral approach. The implications for theory and research were discussed and the limitations for study were described. The implications for practice and recommendations for future research were

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provided. All in all, this study gathered data from FRO leaders in the New River Valley Region in Virginia to provide those involved in FRO leadership an opportunity to discuss their lived experience leading through a time of crisis at their respective organization. As a part of the local food system, FRO leadership served their communities in a transformative manner to overcome the stress and demand inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis in leadership is an appreciation of the labor input by countless leaders to mitigate food insecurity and develop a stronger outlet of free food deliverables for their community. Through this collection of data, the discovery that merging the eight pillars of transformational and servant leadership theories provided FRO leaders the greatest chance to overcome the obstacles onset by the COVID-19 pandemic. Key informants attested to the value each pillar brought to leading a team through a time of crisis, which promotes the novel concept of merging these leadership theories into a behavioral approach adopted by FRO leaders.

As time progresses from the impacts and societal structures that were created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to understand how to better train and prepare FRO leadership for future rise in demands created by upheaval in society. As food insecurity escalates and the chance of another time of crisis is inevitable, it is pertinent to continually develop the nonprofit leadership structure that supports communities across the country (Thompson, 2021). These eight leadership behaviors analyzed in this study provided FRO and nonprofit leaders with a multifaceted approach to leading their teams and organizations to overcome barriers and focus on the development of their followers as the core proponent to succeeding in times of crisis. While each of the eight pillars of FRO leadership bring value to leaders, it is the merge and adoption of all eight that sets leaders apart and gives their organization the best chance to support and aid their community with free food resources and care. It is important that this information is

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shared with FRO leaders in the NRV and surrounding Appalachian Counties as they strengthen their leadership and develop their followers to feed community members in need and support their local food system.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB-22-275-The-Analysis of FRO Leadership - Interview Recruitment Email

Subject: [Organization's Name] Role in Feeding the New River Valley

Dear [insert FRO point of contact name],

COVID-19 has spiked the demand for emergency food assistance across Virginia. According to the New River Valley Food Assistance Directory, you serve in some capacity at [insert organization's name]. I am conducting a research study on the leadership demonstrated at Food Recovery Organizations throughout the pandemic and would like to hear about your experience!

An information sheet regarding this study is attached in this email. Participation will take 60 minutes through a semi-structured interview. If you are interested, I would be glad to answer any questions you may have. Please reply to indicate what times might work for a conversation in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

Dalton Nelson | Graduate Teaching Assistant

Virginia Tech | Agriculture Leadership & Community Education

175 West Campus Drive Blacksburg, VA 24061, Room 1570

(256)-295-6452 | dgn@vt.edu

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Appendix B: Informed Consent Sheet

Information Sheet for Participation in a Research Study

Title of Study (IRB # 22-275): The Analysis of Food Recovery Organization Leadership: How Transformational and Servant Leaders Overcame a Time of Crisis

Principal Investigator: Dr. Eric Kaufman, 540-231-6258 or ekaufman@vt.edu

Other Study Contact: Mr. Dalton Nelson, 256-295-6452 or dgn@vt.edu

You are invited to participate in a research study. This form includes information about the study and contact information if you have any questions.

The study is part of Dalton Nelson's thesis research, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree at Virginia Tech.

- WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will join a 45–60-minute interview that will include questions regarding your leadership and involvement in feeding the local community during a pandemic. The session will be facilitated via Zoom (or in-person or by phone, if desired) and recorded so we can compare direct quotes across interview sessions with different participants. You will answer questions regarding leadership styles and strategies demonstrated over the past two years.

We do not anticipate any risks from completing this study.

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. There is no compensation or course credit for participation. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- CONFIDENTIALITY

We will do our best to protect the confidentiality of the information we gather from you, but we cannot guarantee 100% confidentiality.

Any data collected during this research study will be kept confidential by the researchers. Your interview will be digitally audio-recorded and then transcribed. The researcher will code the

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transcripts using a pseudonym (false name). The recordings will be uploaded to a secure, password-protected file folder. The researcher will maintain a list that includes a key to the code. The master key and the recordings may be stored for 3 years after the study has been completed and then destroyed.

- WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mr. Dalton Nelson at dgn@vt.edu or (256)-295-6452. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact the Virginia Tech HRPP Office at 540-231-3732 (irb@vt.edu).

Please print out a copy of this information sheet for your records.

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Appendix C: Interview Protocol

The Analysis of Food Recovery Organization Leadership: How Transformational and Servant Leaders Overcame a Time of Crisis

Preparation:

- The interviewer summarizes the purpose of the study.
- Ask - “Do you acknowledge your questions have been answered and you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, including being recorded?”
- Participant must acknowledge verbal consent, which the interviewer documents.
- Begin recording (zoom/recording on/transcriptions requested).

Introduction:

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Dalton Nelson, and I am a graduate student at Virginia Tech conducting my Thesis Research Study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science. This interview will take 45-60 minutes and will include questions regarding your involvement in feeding your community during a time of crisis. I would like your permission to record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the recording or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. All your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used to develop a better understanding of how food recovery organization leadership overcame change and stress during a time of crisis.

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Question #1: What is the leadership structure at your food recovery organization?

-How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the leadership structure at your organization?

Question #2: How did leadership at your organization adapt to the change and stress inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

- How did you or your organization inspire and motivate volunteers during a time of crisis?
- How did your organization's leadership serve as a role model during a time of crisis?
- How did your organization's leadership consider individuals during a time of crisis?
- How did your organization's leadership challenge volunteers during a time of crisis?

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Question #3: What are the personal values, convictions, and ethical positions that drive life and leadership for you?

- What are your beliefs about motivating, influencing, serving, and leading others?
- How did your organization's leadership create value for the community it served?
- How did your organization's leadership develop creative solutions and better understand complex scenarios during a time of crisis?
- How did your organization's leadership empower its volunteers during a time of crisis?

Summary & Closing Questions

- “Now I would like to summarize the main points you presented. First, you mentioned...”
(present summary of main points here)
- “Does this capture what we have discussed?”
- “Is there anything we haven’t talked about that you believe is important to add?”

**Close the interview and thank the participant for their participation.