Healthy Leadership: Qualitative Research Towards Theory and Scale Development

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ABSTRACT: In this research, the authors detail a qualitative study where healthy leadership is presented as the antithesis of toxic leadership having been discovered through Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees in Matthew 23:1-7. Data was collected from 18 individual interviews, and the analysis rendered 67 specific coding results associated with 6 healthy leadership dimensions. A future quantitative study is proposed to develop an instrument measuring healthy leadership entitled the Healthy Leadership Scale.

KEYWORDS: healthy leadership, toxic leadership, survey development, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Creating organizational environments beneficial to leaders, followers, and the organization remains a substantial pursuit among leadership scholars. In that vein, the creation of healthy leadership environments is a worthwhile avenue of exploration. The present research is an effort to expand the foundational understanding of a healthy leadership construct via a qualitative approach. The main goal of this study is to investigate the concept of healthy leadership for the purpose of theory development leading to scale development. How the healthy leadership concept was discovered (Bell, 2019) is discussed to provide a foundation of understanding. The literature is reviewed relative to the six distinct healthy leadership dimensions Bell previously identified. The development of an interview protocol based on the results of the literature review is described. A description of the selection of interview participants, data collection, and analysis procedures is provided. The results of the thematic pattern analysis of the interview data are presented. The present work will lead to the development of a survey instrument, the Healthy Leadership Scale (HLS), measuring the six dimensions of healthy leadership. A future quantitative study will involve the implementation of the HLS as well as the various statistical procedures used to validate the instrument. This research will contribute to the overall body of knowledge related to positive leadership while specifically providing a pathway to the development of a valid survey instrument to measure healthy leadership.

CONCEPT DISCOVERY

The discovery of the healthy leadership concept is discussed as a starting point for the present research. First, the method and purpose of Bell's (2019) research is considered since the healthy leadership concept emerges from that study. Second, toxic leadership is briefly discussed, including some toxic leader exemplars identified in the New Testament because healthy leadership is noted as the antithesis of toxic leadership. Third, a brief

consideration of the distinctions between toxic and healthy leaders is provided.

Method and Purpose

The concept of healthy leadership was discovered as a result of Bell's (2019) work seeking to discover what is generally not Christian leadership. For those interested in Christian leadership, asking what is not Christian leadership is a significantly different approach than asking the more common question of what is Christian leadership. More specifically, the concept of healthy leadership was discovered by Bell as a result of examining leadership that Jesus of Nazareth did not prefer. Bell pursued this endeavor by examining Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees in Matthew 23:1-7 using a social and cultural analysis method. Bell identified the social and cultural analysis method as a "qualitative method of hermeneutical inquiry focused on ancient documents as the data source" (p. 60). Robbins (1996) more specifically describes the social and cultural analysis method as being focused on discovering the social and cultural realities in a text that were common to both the original author and original readers. The results of Bell's work included finding a specific leadership style, known as toxic leadership, that Jesus did not prefer. Healthy leadership emerged conceptually as the antithesis of toxic leadership.

Toxic Leaders in the New Testament

Schmidt (2008) defined toxic leaders as "narcissistic, self-promoters who engage in an unpredictable pattern of abusive and authoritarian supervision" (p. 57). As the definition indicates, toxic leadership is described in five dimensions, including abusive supervision, authoritarian leadership, narcissistic behavior, unpredictability, and self-promotion. Schmidt (2014) described abusive supervision as involving routine hostility demonstrated both verbally and non-verbally. Bell (2019) claimed Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees' abusive supervision in Matthew 23:4 when He noted how those leaders piled up a weighty burden and then refused to help their followers deal with the heavy challenges. Schmidt (2014) described authoritarian leadership as an extreme command/control leadership mindset where the leader required complete obedience. Bell noted how Jesus criticized the Pharisees in Matthew 23:2-3 for the dictatorial manner that did not allow the common Jew to dissent. Schmidt (2008) noted narcissism as involving a self-absorbed and arrogant personality. Bell stated Jesus opposed the Jewish leaders' narcissistic tendencies in Matthew 23:6-7, noting their sense of self-

entitlement and love of praise, attention, respect, etc. Schmidt (2008) defined the unpredictability dimension as involving the leader being unreliable and inconsistent to the point that followers could not adequately anticipate the leader's behaviors. According to Bell, Jesus clearly identified the Jewish leaders' unpredictability in Matthew 23:3, where He noted how the Pharisees would say things but would not follow through to do them. As noted by Schmidt (2014), the self-promoting aspect of a toxic leader is demonstrated by the leader who takes credit for the follower's work while blaming followers for their own mistakes. Bell claimed Jesus was rebuking the self-promoting behaviors of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:5 when He noted how they conducted themselves for the specific purpose of being seen by others. When considering what leadership style Jesus did not prefer, it becomes evident that Jesus did not prefer the toxic leadership He found in the Pharisees.

Distinguishing Healthy Leadership from Toxic Leadership

Bell (2019) makes the case that healthy leadership is the clear antithesis of toxic leadership when stating the dimensions of healthy leadership are "conceived as being the polar opposites of the toxic leadership dimensions" (p. 65). This distinction is noted by Bell to start with the name itself as the word healthy is the total opposite of the word toxic. Bell states, "[U]sing the word toxic addresses the very poisonous nature of a toxic leader. A poisonous substance is deadly to a body. By contrast, healthy substances maintain the vitality of a body" (p. 65). Each dimension of healthy leadership is directly contrasted with a toxic leadership dimension. The abusive supervision dimension of a toxic leader is contrasted with the respectful oversight dimension of a healthy leader. The toxic leadership dimension of authoritarian leadership is contrasted with the volitional leadership dimension of healthy leadership. The narcissistic tendencies of a toxic leader are contrasted with the altruistic tendencies of a healthy leader. The unpredictable nature of a toxic leader is opposed by the stable consistency of a healthy leader. The self-promoting behaviors of toxic leaders are opposed by the healthy leader's desire to advocate for followers. Bell also noted how Matthew 23:1-7 is commonly understood as Jesus rebuking the Pharisees for their general hypocrisy. As such, hypocrisy is contrasted with the healthy leadership dimension of sincere integrity. Figure 1 demonstrates the six dimensions of healthy leadership, including

respectful oversight, volitional leadership, altruism, stable consistency, follower advocacy, and sincere integrity. The literature concerning these six dimensions is reviewed in the following section in order to best determine the constructs that underpin each dimension.

Figure 1: The Six Dimensions of Healthy Leadership
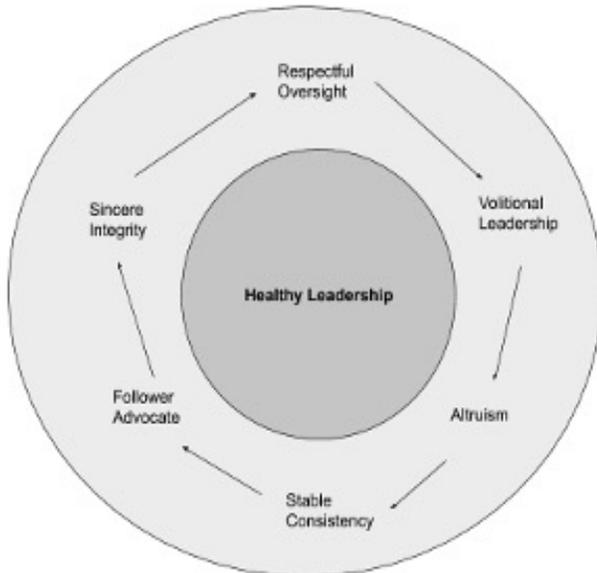
Note: Figure originally presented in Bell (2019) and is reprinted with permission from the Theology of Leadership Journal.

CONSTRUCTS DEFINED

The relevant literature concerning the six distinct healthy leadership constructs is reviewed for the purpose of more clearly describing each concept. The review is not intended to be exhaustive in nature but, rather, is a targeted review used to help define each construct. Ultimately, the results of this literature review are used to provide guidance in the development of an interview protocol that will be critical to the qualitative portion of this overall research endeavor.

Respectful Oversight

Bell (2019) identified respectful oversight as the first dimension of healthy leadership. In contrast with abusive supervision, which refers to "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178), Bell's definition of respectful oversight focuses on meeting the

subordinates' intrinsic needs. The definition includes "holding followers in high esteem while overseeing their work at appropriate levels" (Bell, 2019, p. 66). Treating subordinates with appreciation and respect is essential to creating a healthy work environment (Morvati et al., 2024). A healthy work environment fosters higher levels of mutual trust and improves the organizational identity (Chen et al., 2019). Leaders who oversee work at appropriate levels empower followers in a manner providing motivation and encouraging engagement (Heyns & Rothmann, 2018) while nurturing feelings of "safety, happiness, and satisfaction within the workplace" (Chen et al., 2019, p. 8).

The definition of respectful oversight includes "honoring the intrinsic value of the individual while supervising work without elements of hostility" (Bell, 2019, p. 65). Rather than engaging in sustained displays of hostile contact evoking feelings of skepticism, deception, animosity, frustration, and fatigue associated with abusive supervision (Thomas & Cangemi, 2021), leaders who demonstrate value and respect positively influence the organizational culture (Reyes-Cruz, 2019). Praise and recognition from leaders partially fulfill the intrinsic needs of belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Gandolfi & Stone, 2016).

Bell (2019) further defined respectful oversight as recognizing "the dignity of the person while not abdicating the important role of administration" (p. 65). Leaders who support autonomy and decision-making responsibility enable subordinates to cultivate their talents and abilities (Fry, 2003). Similar to servant leader characteristics, the leader delegates decisions about strategies to reach goals associated with vision and direction without abdication of administrative responsibilities (Russell & Stone, 2002). Recognizing the dignity of a subordinate reflects mutual trust and accountability.

Volitional Leadership

In contrast to authoritarian leadership, Bell (2019) identified volitional leadership, in which leaders "inspire volitional following among organizational members" (p. 65) as the second dimension of healthy leadership. According to Ghoshal and Bruch (2003), "[V]olition is the absolute commitment to achieve something" (p. 51). McMahone (2023) notes the value of a leader serving as a leader with a willing heart. As such, volition can be understood as a voluntary action of one's own free will. Leaders who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and high moral standards positively influence their followers' level

of confidence and willingness to follow them for the benefit of the organization (Avolio et al., 2004).

Whereas authoritarian leaders rely on formal authority, legitimate power (Barbuto Jr. & Wheeler, 2006), control, and compliance from followers (Potipiroon & Chumphong, 2024), volitional leadership "does not focus on legitimate power, extreme measures of controlling, nor extreme demands for obedience" (Bell, 2019, p. 65). Bell (2019) further defined the second dimension of healthy leadership as "volitional leaders do not remind followers of their own position but do encourage free and critical thinking" (p. 65). Leaders who trust their followers refrain from excessive monitoring and control (Heyns & Rothmann, 2018). Heyns and Rothmann (2018) described volitional trust as "a voluntary, intrinsically, and autonomously motivated decision" (p. 115). Leaders demonstrate volitional trust for their followers through empowerment and autonomy (Heyns & Rothmann, 2018), consideration of their suggestions and concerns, appropriate involvement in making decisions, delegation of authority and responsibility for task completion and problem resolution (Mallén et al., 2015), and creation of a safe and supportive work environment (Wittenhagen et al., 2024). Volitional leadership would then be leadership where followers choose their leader and choose to follow that leader of their own free will.

Altruism

Bell (2019) identified altruism as the third dimension of healthy leadership. In contrast with the narcissistic leadership characteristics of self-promotion, desire for power and admiration, lack of empathy (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), grandiosity, feelings of superiority, and sense of entitlement (De Vries, 2018), altruism is "an unselfish concern for the health and well-being of followers" (Bell, 2019, p. 65). Unlike the self-centered focus of narcissism, altruism reflects the willingness to sacrifice self-interests for the betterment of others without expectation of benefits in return (Engelbrecht et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2025; Sosik et al., 2009). Altruistic leaders demonstrate genuine care and selfless concern for the welfare of others (Mallén et al., 2015).

According to Bell (2019), "[A]ltruism will often involve the leader's personal sacrifice of time, effort, or energy" (p. 65). A leader's self-sacrificial behaviors reflect a moral obligation to the collective group as well as a dutiful nature prioritizing the followers' needs (Mishra et al., 2024; Mostafa & Bottomley, 2020).

Mostafa and Bottomley (2020) posited self-sacrifice as positively contributing to the followers' perceptions about leadership. According to Mallén et al. (2015), leaders who engage in altruistic behavior help to create an organizational culture of cooperation and trust facilitating stronger performance and employee engagement.

Bell (2019) further described the third dimension of altruism as "follower-focused in a right balance as the leader demonstrates humility and meekness through caring" (p. 65). Because effective leadership requires a balance between self-sacrifice and self-interest (Mostafa & Bottomley, 2020), humble leaders hold realistic views of themselves and recognize how everyone makes mistakes (Mallén Broch et al., 2019). Seibert (2023) suggested that humility in leadership is likely the antithesis of a leader who presents a certain self-serving image to followers. Humility serves the dual purposes of self-improvement and service to others (Mallén Broch et al., 2019). Winston et al. (2024) noted the importance of the leader's ability and willingness to show that they care about their organizational members.

Stable Consistency

Bell (2019) identified the fourth dimension of stable consistency as contrasted with unpredictability. Whereas unpredictability represents one of the five dimensions associated with toxic leaders (Dorasamy, 2018; Jantjies et al., 2024), stable consistency involves the "leader providing a consistent set of predictable behaviors and responses that are calm, ordered, and thoughtful" (Bell, 2019, p. 66). Followers negatively view leaders who engage in unpredictable and inconsistent behavior because of the difficulty associated with achieving accurate interpretation and understanding (Katz-Navon et al., 2019). In contrast, leaders who engage in stable consistency positively influence their followers' confidence and trust, strengthening the leaders' credibility (Gandolfi & Stone, 2016).

Stable consistency "provides the follower a safe haven in cases of organizational turmoil and crisis" (Bell, 2019, p. 66). Bell's definition aligns with Edmondson and Lei's (2014) description of psychological safety as "perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks in a particular context such as the workplace" (p. 24). Leaders who demonstrate compassion and care during times of turmoil assist affected followers with managing emotions and anxiety (König et al., 2018). According to Bell (2019), "[S]table consistency provides followers the ability to accurately anticipate leadership decisions and then contour their work toward that end"

(p. 66). Leaders who encourage learning from mistakes and failures provide followers with the freedom to take risks, communicate trust and support, and contribute to a psychologically safe environment (Mallén et al., 2015).

Follower Advocate

In contrast with self-promotion, Bell (2019) identified follower advocacy as the fifth dimension of healthy leadership. Whereas narcissistic leaders commonly engage in self-promoting behaviors as an impression management strategy (Den Hartog et al., 2018) and exploit followers for personal gain (Schmid et al., 2018), Bell's definition of follower advocacy involves "a leader promoting the interests of their followers in conjunction with the organizational goals" (p. 66). Bell posited that the follower advocate prioritizes the needs of subordinates over self-interests through "encouraging followers to pursue professional interests that correspond to long term goals" (p. 67). The focus on follower development provides motivation toward personal growth and career advancement (Yasin et al., 2024), the pursuit of collective interests over individual interests (Walsh et al., 2018), and a shared commitment to employee growth that contributes to positive organizational outcomes (Barbuto Jr. & Wheeler, 2006).

According to Bell (2019), "[A] follower advocate will both defend their followers and tout their accomplishments up the hierarchical ladder in the organization" (p. 67). In contrast, exploitative and narcissistic leaders shift the blame to others (Gauglitz et al., 2023) and take credit for followers' work (Schmid et al., 2018). Organizational members are much more likely to trust their leaders when they believe their leader will behave in ways conducive to the followers' best interests (Kuvshinikov, 2022). A follower advocate inspires reliance-based trust, as evidenced by "dependence on the leader to back up subordinates in difficult situations, handle important issues on their behalf, and represent their work accurately to others" (Heyns & Rothmann, 2018, p. 116). Follower advocates engage in behaviors demonstrating value and support for subordinates, such as listening to concerns, defending an employee's point of view (Heichler, 2025), and promoting appropriate workplace conduct (Walsh et al., 2018).

Sincere Integrity

Bell (2019) identified sincere integrity as the final dimension of healthy leadership. Bell contrasted sincere integrity with hypocrisy in leaders who disguise self-serving intentions by "violating and only pretending to care about the company's values" (Kipfelsberger & Kark, 2018, p. 7). Commonly referred to as "failing to practice what one preaches reflecting behavioral inconsistency, which stems from perceptions of disingenuousness" (Hale Jr. & Pillow, 2015, p. 89), hypocrisy represents the inconsistency between talk, decisions, and actions (Kılıçoğlu et al., 2019). In comparison, Bell posited that sincere integrity "would include the willing demonstration of various virtuous behaviors such as truthfulness, incorruptibility, and general honorableness" (p. 67). Integrity incorporates honesty, moral principles, credibility, sincerity, and trustworthiness (Engelbrecht et al., 2018; Russell & Stone, 2002). Trustworthy behaviors, such as openly communicating and exhibiting concern for employees, influencing the level of trust in leaders (Gardner et al., 2021), and consistently engaging in ethical behavior may directly influence employees' perceptions about the value and expectation of respect in the organizational setting (Walsh et al., 2018).

Bell (2019) expanded on the definition of sincere integrity to include a focus on the inherent desire to be truthful with followers. Rather than engaging in truthfulness because it is an expected behavior of moral leaders, Bell suggested that "to be truthful with followers is always important, but to want to be truthful with followers is meaningful at a higher level" (p. 67). According to Russell and Stone (2002), employees want leaders with integrity and courage to remain honest during challenging circumstances. Honesty requires transparent behavior, adherence to facts, and an understanding of the difference between moral right and wrong (Watts et al., 2025).

DETERMINING HEALTHY LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS

Having discussed how the healthy leadership concept was discovered and how each dimension is described, the focus shifts to the portion of this research that is concerned with determining healthy leadership behaviors. Identifying healthy leadership behaviors will facilitate the ability to eventually measure those behaviors. First, the steps taken to develop the interview protocol are described. Second, the process by which participants were selected for the study is explained. Third, the process for data collection is detailed, and fourth, the process used to analyze the data is noted. Fifth, the results of the data analysis process are discussed. Those results will be used in

a future study to help inform the development of a survey instrument measuring the healthy leadership constructs.

Interview Protocol Development

Most qualitative studies will require the use of an interview protocol, and, oftentimes, the interview protocol must be fully developed. Such is the case with the present study. According to Patton (2002), the questions developed for an interview should be directly related to concepts clearly derived from the available literature. Following Patton's guidance, the interview questions were derived as a result of the definitions and descriptions of each concept as described in the previous literature review section. Padgett (2008) notes an iterative process is most often required to transform concept definitions into questions that could potentially produce answers where identifiable behaviors are discovered. Such a process was used in the present study as the researchers initially completed the literature review then developed the initial set of interview questions based on the literature. Then the researchers independently refined the questions, compared results, and refined again for a final set of interview questions. Some examples of the final result of this iterative process are provided in Table 1, where the original concept description is provided adjacent to the final version of the corresponding interview question.

The style and format of the interview protocol is also an important element of consideration. According to Creswell (2014), solid interview questions must not be bundled so that they only ask about one thing at one time. Additionally, Creswell notes good interview questions are open-ended and use easily understood language. The researchers strongly considered those three aspects when developing the questions. To that end, a brief section toward the beginning of the interview protocol was included to define the two most commonly used terms throughout the questions—leaders and followers. The final set of interview questions were reviewed once more to ensure they were both open-ended and unbundled.

Participants Selection

Selecting suitable participants for the interview portion of this study was critical to the overall success of the research. As such, careful consideration was given to the selection of participants. Both Patton (2002) and Padgett (2008) note there are two critical steps involved in participant selection, and these steps include 1) correctly identifying and describing the participants needed and 2) determining whether realistic access to those type participants exists for the researchers involved. The following paragraphs describe how those two criteria were addressed for the current study.

First, the identification and description of the participants needed for this study was relatively straightforward. Participants selected needed to have held the role of a follower and have had some experience with a good leader while in the follower role. As noted by both Chaleff (2009) and Kelley (1992), anyone ever involved

Table 1: Literature Concepts and Corresponding Interview Questions

Literature Concept	Interview Question
According to (Fry, 2003), respect for followers includes leadership behaviors honoring persons as individuals.	How did your leader honor you as a person?
Avolio et al. (2004) claims followers are more apt to willingly follow leaders who do not routinely rely on legitimate or position power.	How did your leader divert focus from the legitimate power of his/her position?
Mallén et al. (2015) states altruistic leaders diminish self-concern while embracing concern for followers.	How did your leader demonstrate unselfish concern for the health and well-being of followers?
According to Gandolfi and Stone (2016), followers tend to view their leader as highly stable when the followers themselves are able to accurately predict the leader's behaviors.	How well can a follower anticipate your leader's behaviors?
As is noted by Heyns and Rothmann (2018), followers trust a leader when that leader brags on the follower's performance to his/her own leader.	How did your leader advocate for the follower "up" the chain of command?
Sosik et al. (2019) claims most followers believe they often possess the ability to determine when their leader is telling the truth.	How did you know your leader's communications were honest and truthful?

in a group of any type has been in the role of follower. Additionally, both Chaleff and Kelley also note how even leaders are almost always in the role of follower while simultaneously in their leadership role. Based on those criteria, participants were relatively easily selected since everyone has been or is currently in the role of a follower. However, it was possible that individual followers may not have been able to state they have experience with a good leader. To screen those participants out, potential participants were asked if they have had experience following a good leader before an interview is scheduled and then this same type question is included in the interview protocol as a general question asked before the study-specific questions were delivered. Since this study was broadly directed toward the leadership and followership paradigms, the researchers also choose to carefully select a broad range of participants considering the various demographics of gender, ethnicity, education level, and profession. Providing this broad range will make the subsequently developed survey instrument more broadly usable.

Second, the issue of determining whether realistic access to the identified types of participants exists for the researchers involved must be addressed. All researchers involved in this study had a broad range of professional and personal contacts. There was no anticipated challenge by the researchers that availability of the desired participants would exist. The broad nature of the type of participants to be included in this study was most favorable in providing the researchers plenty of available access. As such, there was no perceived challenge to realistic access to the desired participant type, and, therefore, no adjustment to the desired participant type was needed.

Data Collection

The data collection process is another critical element in the success of any research endeavor. Qualitative studies are often subject to an iterative data collection process as per the nature and purpose of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, the data collection process delineated here was followed, but the researchers were also prepared to allow the collection process to develop further if needed.

Conducting interviews with study participants is the final goal of the collection effort. All the researchers had a broad range of personal and professional connections across many industries. These connections were exploited initially in order to begin the process. The researchers also implemented a purposeful chain sampling approach.

Creswell (2016) describes the purposeful sampling strategy as selecting participants with purposeful intent. Purposeful sampling can snowball into the chain method by simply asking participants to recommend additional contributors. The perceived value in this approach was to bring in participants who were not already familiar with the researchers as a way to reduce any potential biases. Padgett (2008) notes the need to limit researcher bias in the collection stage of the interview process.

The general consensus in qualitative interviewing is that interviewing continues until data saturation occurs (Creswell, 2016). Since the saturation point is not known in advance and because data collection must be planned in advance, there is a need to determine a beginning estimate of how many interviews may need to be conducted. According to Guest et al. (2006), the saturation point will often occur at around 12 interview participants. Latham (2013) reported achieving saturation with 11 interviews. Other authors seem to indicate saturation is often reached at 6-12 interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 1994). However, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) claim participants in qualitative studies should be limited to 20 or fewer in order to retain a close relationship between researcher and participant. Considering these various sources, the researchers elected to plan for six interviews each for each team of interviewers. Three teams of interviewers with two interviewers per team was the plan. As such, a total of 18 interviews occurred with each pair of interviewers conducting six total interviews or three interviews per researcher.

According to Creswell (2016), participants often yield better interview data when they are interviewed in the comfort of their personal setting. As such, the researchers interviewed participants at their locations whenever feasible. Additionally, interviewers conducted interviews using online meeting applications when warranted and when conducive to the needs of the interviewee. The interviewees consisted of both males and females from three ethnic groups (Caucasians, African-Americans, and Hispanics), all of whom had professional working experience with someone they deemed to be a good leader. The participants' professions included the military, higher education, banking, insurance, hospitality, and manufacturing while their education levels ranged from high school graduate to doctorate degree. Creswell (2014) recommends the actual interview data should be collected both by transcribing answers in real time and by making an audio recording of the interview. The researchers followed this guidance and transcribed the main points of interview

responses, recorded any relevant information concerning the body language of participants and the contextual setting of the interview, and made an audio recording of each interview. The three teams of interviewers all worked independently and conducted their interviews and collected their data over a 9-month period.

Data Analysis

As per Creswell's (2014) recommendation, interviews were recorded, and full transcription of the recorded interviews was the initial step in the analysis process. According to Saldana (2013), much of the credibility or validity of the analysis process for qualitative data hinges on the data coding process. As such, Saldana recommends a minimum of two rounds of independent coding. Therefore, each researcher within each research team conducted one round of independent coding followed by a second round of independent coding before sharing coding results. Saldana further notes the importance of ensuring researcher triangulation by conducting a coding verification process in order to establish interrater reliability. To accomplish this, the lead researcher, who was not included in any of the three research teams, reviewed each research team's coding results noting similarities and differences. In instances where similar coding terms are used, one term was chosen to represent both. In instances where very different coding terms are used, and consensus was not reached, the code was dropped. Analysis of the data and coding results was focused on the development of patterns or themes. Pattern or thematic analysis is a common qualitative data analysis method used by researchers to both identify and to interpret the themes and patterns existing in the data (Patton, 2002). The resulting themes discovered for each of the six dimensions will be used in a future study in the development of a survey instrument.

Initial Coding Results. The research teams completed a total of 18 individual interviews. Cumulatively, these 18 interviews produced 102 pages of transcribed interview data. The initial coding process was conducted by each individual research team. Each research team of two researchers coded three of their interview sets and then switched the interview sets and coded to ensure inter-rater reliability. Each research team then met together and reviewed their codes in order to combine similar codes into one code and to drop codes that did not appear often or did not appear as a result of the inter-rater process. The results of this process produced a total of 185 codes. The 185 codes developed in this initial coding process were associated with the six healthy leadership dimensions as follows: 1) respectful oversight—28 codes, 2) volitional leadership—32 codes, 3) altruism—33 codes, 4) stable consistency—25 codes, 5) follower advocate—33 codes, 6) sincere integrity—34 codes.

Second Round Coding Results. The second round of coding involved research team members coding the other research team's interviews in order to establish another layer of inter-rater reliability. As with the initial round of coding, the second round of coding allowed reviewers to combine similar codes into one code and to drop codes that did not appear often across the interview sets. Additionally, the lead researcher was involved in this round of coding in order to provide another layer of reviewing to the process. The results of the second round of coding led to keeping 74 of the original 185 codes. The reviewers agreed that many, many duplications existed across the interview sets that could and should be condensed together into one code. The reduction from 185 codes in round one to 74 remaining codes in round two was primarily a result of this combining process although some of the original codes were also dropped due to relative lack of representation across the interview sets. The 74 codes developed in the second round of coding were associated with the six healthy leadership dimensions as follows: 1) respectful oversight—10 codes, 2) volitional leadership—10 codes, 3) altruism—13 codes, 4) stable consistency—11 codes, 5) follower advocate—14 codes, 6) sincere integrity—16 codes.

Final Coding Results. A third and final review of the codes produced from round two was conducted by the lead researcher. Looking forward to an eventual survey instrument, the lead researcher recognized that the final codes would form the basis of the initial round of questions for the instrument. As such, a third review was conducted to ensure that the remaining codes would be representative of the literature review of the six healthy leadership dimensions and of the interview protocol developed from that literature review. No codes were dropped in this round of coding, but the overall number of codes was reduced to 67 based on the ability to again combine some similar results together. The 67 codes refined in this final stage of coding were associated with the six healthy leadership dimensions as follows: 1) respectful oversight—8 codes, 2) volitional leadership—10 codes, 3) altruism—12 codes, 4) stable consistency–11 codes, 5) follower advocate—12 codes, 6) sincere integrity—14 codes. Table 2 demonstrates the numeric coding results for each dimension of healthy leadership during each round of coding.

Table 2: Cumulative Numeric Coding Results

Dimension	# Codes Round 1	# Codes Round 2	# Codes Round 3
Respectful Oversight	28	10	8
Volitional Leadership	32	10	10
Altruism	33	13	12
Stable Consistency	25	11	11
Follower Advocate	33	14	12
Sincere Integrity	34	16	14
Total	185	74	67

Two important limitations exist related to the present study, including limited generalizability and potential researcher bias. Qualitative data analysis is known to have limited generalizability (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). However, even with the generalization limitation, qualitative research is useful to examine specific aspects of human behavior especially when developed theory regarding such behavior is limited (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). Researcher bias can occur during the participant selection stage, the data collection stage, or during the coding/data analysis stage (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2013). In order to mitigate potential researcher bias, snowball sampling was used during the participant selection stage so that the researchers did not only interview persons with whom they were already acquainted. The research group met on several occasions during the development of the interview protocol to discuss the interview questions and the methods to ask those questions in a neutral manner rather than leading the interviewees to any specific response. Finally, the coding and analysis process involved multiple rounds of coding and analysis utilizing researcher triangulation to ensure reliability of results while limiting potential researcher bias.

Some examples of codes developed in the final round of coding are presented in the following sections, which are organized by the six healthy leadership dimensions.

While not all codes from each dimension are presented here, two examples are provided for each dimension. It should not be misunderstood that the two examples from each dimension that are provided here are somehow more important than the other codes for each dimension.

Respectful Oversight. Nearly all interviewees talked about being aware of their leader's level of respect for them. Common themes related to this demonstration of respect included addressing people by name, respecting their time, and displaying professionalism when interacting with them. For example, one interviewee stated, "He would always address everyone by their name and show respect." Another interviewee said, "She respected my time and the need to balance work with family." A final example is when one interviewee stated, "Showing me respect, he was fair and equitable…." As such, one of the codes developed for the Respectful Oversight dimension was "respect for the employee."

Another very common theme that emerged was expressed by interviewees who felt appreciated by their leader. This appreciation was considered to be genuine, personal, and valuable to the person. For example, one interviewee said, "[J]ust knowing it wasn't just an attagirl or attaboy, it was we really appreciate you…." Another interviewee mentioned, "[W]hen it came to showing appreciation, so anything they did for me was based on my personal life not just cookie cutter type recognition, it was personal." Yet another interviewee mentioned "[I]nstead of a team meeting, it was a surprise party…. I wasn't expecting it…. She wanted to show me how appreciative [she was] of what I had done and how hard I had worked for it." Therefore, another one of the codes developed for the Respectful Oversight dimension was "appreciation of the employee."

Volitional Leadership. Many of the interviewees talked about their willingness to follow their leader based on their ability to inspire them. Some of the common themes that emerged related to this inspirational effect were not only inspiration itself but also encouragement, positive culture creation, and being more convinced of their own ability to succeed. For example, one interviewee said, "[H]e inspires followers to engage in self-improvement and also structures the organization for excellence." While another interviewee mentioned how his leader "created a culture and environment of fruitfulness and encouragement. I think she had the perfect balance which inspired me to be that kind of leader." Another example is when an interviewee stated, "[S]he just inspired you to want to do better. She was one

of the people that convinced me that I would do well." Therefore, one of the codes developed for the Volitional Leadership dimension was "inspires employees."

Another common theme which materialized from the interviewees was that they recognized the leader's position power, but that the leader avoided demanding their obedience to their directives. How the leader avoided demanding obedience was noted when the leader was not an authoritarian nor a micro-manager and was relationship-orientated versus the exercise of position power in a demanding way. One example of this is when an interviewee noted plainly: "He never demanded obedience. It wasn't do as I say or else." Another example is when an interviewee described their leader as follows: "He is not authoritative, not a dictator, or a micro-manager. He just expects people to do their job." A final example is where the interviewee noted how "[my leader] corrects from relationship rather than from position." As such, another one of the codes developed for the Volitional Leadership dimension was "avoids demanding obedience."

Altruism. A large majority of the interviewees spoke about their leader's lack of self-concern as compared to the concerns of others. The common themes that exhibited this lack of self-concern included making personal sacrifices, making time for others, and stepping in to help others all while the leader was heavily burdened with their own responsibilities. An initial example of this is where an interviewee stated, "[S]he would always fill in the gaps when we were falling short…. Sometimes the demands were high and she would step on a [metaphorical] grenade for us." Another example includes an interviewee stating, "He sacrificed his time. He worked incredibly long hours, but if you needed him, he would put his work aside and look at you and answer and help you with any question or concern." A final example is when an interviewee mentioned how "he always took the time no matter what it was to take care of the mission and his people." As such, one of the codes developed for the Altruism dimension was "willing to sacrifice self-concerns."

Another common theme that emerged was conveyed by interviewees who also noted how their leader had a direct interest in the personal concerns of the organizational members. The focus on others' concerns was experienced by people who had lived through major life events or financial loss and the general benevolent nature of the leader. One example of this is when an interviewee said, "He actually stood by my husband as our house was burned." A second example of this is where an interviewee mentioned, "She actually picked up employees who were

not able to drive in winter weather." A third example of this is noted when an interviewee described how her leader "preferred others over himself. He has a soft heart for people." Therefore, another one of the codes developed for the Altruism dimension was "focuses on the concerns of others."

Stable Consistency. Most of the interviewees discussed at length the importance of a stable, consistent, and predictable leader. This concern of the interviewees was often expressed by the ability to be consistent during challenges, a general consistency in attitude or demeanor, and the recognition that the leader's consistency was true to the leader's nature. One example is where an interviewee said, "When in tough situations, he would always carry himself the same." Another example of this is when an interviewee stated, "She was consistent [with] her attitude." Lastly, an example of this is when an interviewee noted, "He was very consistent because no matter who was around, he was the same person." Therefore, one of the codes developed for the Stable Consistency dimension was "consistent in attitude."

Another very regular theme that developed from the interviews was how the interviewees appreciated the predictability of their leaders. This appreciation was noted in the reliability of the leader, the general stability of the leader, the confidence that the leader's actions would remain the same, and the ability to rely on the predictability of the leader to develop a certain symmetry in the work. For example, one interviewee stated, "He always did what he said and always followed through." A second example of this is when an interviewee claimed, "It is easy for any one of his staff to anticipate what decisions are going to be made. So, I think there's stability in that." A final example is when one interviewee noted, "What leads to stability is consistency of behavior so that the team could get on a certain battle rhythm… you could count on her." As such, another one of the codes developed for the Stable Consistency dimension was "predictable in behaviors."

Follower Advocate. Nearly all of the interviewees discussed being very aware when their leader represented them well to their own leader. Common themes related to this feeling of being championed up the chain of command included when the leader advocated for the group to the top levels of leadership, bragging upwards on employees when deserving and passing on credit for accomplishments of the team. One example involves the interviewee stating, "She made sure the team was recognized… and she advocated to the top." A second

example includes an interviewee who mentioned, "He had our backs…. He would promote you accordingly…. He went to the top." A third example is seen when an interviewee said, "[H]e would not take full credit on accomplishments…. He always deferred to my team did this [or] my team did that…. So he didn't self-promote as much as he did team-promote." As such, one of the codes developed for the Follower Advocate dimension was "brags about employees to their boss."

Another regular theme emerging from the interviews was the real value that the interviewees saw in leaders who did not promote themselves nor their personal accomplishments. This value people recognized was expressed by their noting the leader's inclusive language, refusal to talk about themselves, and the leader's ability to refocus the conversation on the organizational member when the leader was receiving praise. For example, one interviewee said, "He would encourage others and say we did it!" Another interviewee said, "He refuses to talk about [his] own successes." Lastly, an example is when an interviewee said, "[E]ven when he got that promotion and left our office… when I would say congrats to him, he would say no…. He would always turn it away from himself and he would focus on you." Therefore, another one of the codes developed for the Follower Advocate dimension was "avoids self-promotion."

Sincere Integrity. Many interviewees discussed their recognition of their leader's commitment to firmly held moral beliefs. Some of the various themes that commonly emerged related to this personal commitment included how the leader was guided in decision-making by personal principles, how the leader made a conscious choice to be steadfast in conviction, and the how the leader was willing to address ethical situations. For example, one interviewee noted the importance of "the way that his decisions are guided by his moral compass." A second interviewee noted how the leader "refuses to lie, even in jest… chooses to always do the right thing." A third example is when an interviewee said of the leader, "[S]e could have just turned her head…. She didn't. She… addressed it immediately; she stood on those morals and principles every time." Therefore, one of the codes developed for the Sincere Integrity dimension was "steadfast conviction about principles."

Another common theme that existed in the interviews was that the interviewees had very strong appreciation of a leader who was authentic. This appreciation was recognized in leaders having positive behaviors even in private, leaders modeling genuineness for others, and

leaders demonstrating a real symmetry between words and deeds. For example, one interviewee stated, "He also did good things when no one was watching. He was genuine in countless ways…." Another example is when an interviewee mentioned how the leader "models authenticity and transparency…. What you saw is what you got." Yet another example is when an interviewee stated of the leader, "I think her actions always spoke; she always did what she preached." As such, another one of the codes developed for the Sincere Integrity dimension was "genuine/real/authentic."

As previously mentioned, the selected example codes are not considered more relevant than the other codes which emerged within each healthy leadership dimension. A select set of examples were provided considering the space afforded here and the desire to protect the research results for the future quantitative study. Table 3 presents the example codes for each healthy leadership dimension and some of the corresponding interview quotes that led to the development of the code.

Future Research Objective

Analyzing the data for the purpose of identifying existing themes was the ultimate purpose of this qualitative study as the themes discovered in the data will, in the forthcoming quantitative study, be used to develop the HLS. Initially, the codes, patterns, and themes discovered in the data were grouped based on the categories presented in the interview protocol. Those categories represent the six dimensions of healthy leadership as derived from prior research and the review of the relevant literature. With the analysis results categorized into the six dimensions, the results must then be translated into questions that would be used to help measure each dimension. The lead researcher will work to develop the questions in each of the six categories. Once the initial survey, questions are developed then a survey instrument development process can be followed leading to the creation of the Health Leadership Scale.

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CONCLUSION

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In the present research, the authors have outlined the basic steps toward completion of a qualitative study designed to identify healthy leadership behaviors. The concept of healthy leadership has been discussed, including the discovery of the concept and the relevant literature related to its six dimensions. The procedures for the development

and implementation of the interview protocol have been discussed, followed by the methods utilized for analyzing the collected interview data. Simply stated, the goal of the present research is to chronicle a rigorous qualitative effort for the purpose of developing and validating a new leadership theory—healthy leadership. The ultimate purpose behind this effort is to not only discover a healthy leadership theory but to also develop a scale by which this potential theory can be measured. Toxic leadership is both poisonous to organizations and, unfortunately, widespread. Upper-echelon leaders, mid-level leaders, and the so-called rank-and-file members of organizations need tools and measures by which the opposite approach, a healthy leader versus a toxic leader, can be both discovered and promoted within the organization. Toxic leaders are poisonous to the organization while healthy leaders are able to promote the advancement of the organization by leading into an environment where organizational followers will flourish.

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