Minimalist Approach to Leadership

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Abstract

This paper is a qualitative study of the minimalist approach to consumerism and how these same techniques can be applied to leadership. Looking at leadership, organizations, and hierarchy in a minimalist approach provides an opportunity to increase leadership tools, increase creativity, and individual employee satisfaction. Aspects of this approach can be used by everyone and can be implemented into every aspect of daily lives. When used within organizations or business, there is potential for increased profit, reduction in waste, and an increase in creativity. This paper takes a look at how workplace relationships are formed and how the formation of these relationships helps to build a foundation for creativity. This paper takes a look at how to develop the relationships. In particular looking at meeting length and frequency between supervisors and employees. This is a new approach to leadership and therefore there is plenty of room for further research and development of this approach.

*Keywords:* minimalism, creativity, leadership, leadership styles, relationships
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Chapter I: Introduction

Movements come and go often so quickly that many do not know what the movement is before it is gone again. There is a new movement taking shape within the consumerism world. This is one of less is more, also known as minimalism, creating a world and consciously choosing to have less material items. This is not to say that people are depriving themselves of items needed for a successful life, but making tough decisions about what to spend money, space, and effort on. The tiny house movement is a great example of this. People are choosing to downsize the size of their housing to in some cases 100 square feet. While for some of us that seems drastic, it does force a person to justify the value of each and every item brought into the home. Each item must be functional and in some cases have more than one function.

Applying the minimalist approach to leadership will allow team members to be more creative and allow for growth of the individuals and the organizations. For non-profit this growth will look like increased foundation/board support. For profit organizations will see increase an in revenue.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to look at how the principals on minimalism can be applied to leadership. This study seeks to determine the value of using this type of leadership strategy in the workplace.

Research Questions

How can we look and think of leadership in the same manner as the material items in our lives?
MINIMALIST APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

Is there a benefit in having to justify each leadership decision or requiring leadership tools to have more than one function?

Are there benefits to the team members involved, to the leader, and the overall organization?

Does this type of leadership create an environment that could be profitable for everyone involved?

Chapter II: Literature Review

Review of Existing Scholarly Work in Leadership

There have been a great deal of studies and discussion on the different types of leadership, transformational authentic and servant. Bennis (1989), Covey (1989), and Vroom and Yetton (1973) have each added valued insight, research, and thought to the field of leadership. Each of these styles of leadership revalue and deserving of study.

While it is always easy to define what makes a bad leader, discovering the traits of a positive leader, can be a bit trickier. Leading and being a follower is not a one-way street. Each member of the relationship plays in important role and without each member’s full participation both have the potential to fail.

The topic of servant leadership is examined by Robert Greenleaf in his 1977 book Servant Leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness.

Greenleaf (1977) wrote this study after reading the H. Hesser short novel Journey to the East the story highlighted for Greenleaf the primary purpose of the leader is to motivate
and support others. While the idea and concept of servant leadership has been used for years prior to Greenleaf, he was among the first to study it.

Based upon Greek philosophy, authentic leadership starts with the leader being true to themselves. These leaders decide to communicate and live in a way that is true to who they are. The leaders must know who they are, their beliefs and values system before becoming a leader. Avolio and Wernsing (2008) describe this as the ability to align our inner values with their actions. They are also quick to point out that authentic leadership is an exercise that leaders continually work to improve and refine.

Authentic leaders choose a path of self-discovery. They invite feedback and insights about the self, choosing to engage in practices that enhance leader self-awareness. These practices include three main types: (a) seeking feedback regularly, thereby creating trigger moments, (b) engaging in self-reflection to understand the meaning of triggers to the actual self and emotional responses, and (c) spending time in self-observation, or mindfulness mode, which makes one aware of immediate thoughts and feelings (p. 158).

As people get older and have experiences and interactions with other people, cultures, and communities, their values and beliefs will also begin to change. Values will shift over time as perspectives do.

It is important to pause and reflect on the fact that everyone is a leader every day. We all have and use leadership skills. One does not need to be a president, CEO, or director to lead and influence those around us. We are also seen as leaders even if the leadership role is not one that we seek out. An example of all of this can be seen by looking at Jerry Garcia. Garcia was well known for being the lead singer of the Grateful Dead, a rock band from the 1960s that “symbolize the counterculture of the 1960s” (Barnes, Humphreys, Oyler, Pane Haden, & Novicevic, 2013, p. 742).
Barnes, et al. (2013) used Garcia as a powerful example of how one person can use several leadership styles. By looking at the words and actions of Garcia, we are able to see transformational, servant, and authentic styles in action. Transformational leaders can be thought of us being able to push followers to create an exceed higher expectations (Barnes, et al., 2013). Garcia did not see his actions as a transformational leader but does understand how the audience and band push each other to exceed greatness stating “When we get on stage we want to be transformed from ordinary players to extraordinary ones and the audience wants to be transformed whatever ordinary reality they may be into something a little wider” (Henke, 1991 p.103). While it is a leap to compare Garcia's transformational leadership to that of a more traditional leader, it is important to see the relationship that is created between the leader and the follower. The leader wants and pushes the follower to be their best, this motivates the leader to become better and a positive feedback loop is created.

Garcia is also able to show us servant leadership in action. A key aspect of servant leadership that Garcia demonstrated several times is that of ethical use of power (Henke, 1991). Garcia understood that in his position, he had people following him, and these followers were influenced by his words and actions. Garcia also placed a great deal of trust in his followers. A significant example of this was the fact that the Grateful Dead allowed fans to record concerts. Garcia and the Grateful Dead were among the first to allow this. Many believed this to be a mistake that would drive revenue down, but that was not the result. While it was within the rights of the Grateful Dead to restrict recording, Garcia trusted his
followers and wanted them to be able to share the experience of their music. As cited during a 1967 CBS interview, “We want people to feel a little better...The music that we make is an act if love, an act of joy” (Barnes, et al. 2013, p. 749).

While it is easier to see the traits of transformational and servant leaders, Garcia can also be used as an example of an authentic leader. He was true to himself, followed his beliefs and values and used these as a stepping stones to lead from. He had trust in himself that he was following the correct path and trusted in others. Without trust, one cannot be an effective leader.

This researcher is seeking to add a new approach of leadership style to the mix. This approach would focus more on the individuals included and how the individuals want to lead. This approach involves taking time to understand others including their approach to work, their values, and to understand what is important to them. In turn, this approach to leadership is successful only if all participants are open and honest.

Minimalism can only be successful if all parties are honest. This honesty must be in relation to each other but the parties must also be honest with themselves. All parties need to be honest in understanding and communication and what is important to them. While it is important to value each member’s need, it is also important that the rules and regulations of the workplace be followed and valued. Laws and mandates cannot be violated due to the values of individuals employees.

**Review of Existing Scholarly Work in Minimalism**

The use of the term minimalism in the context of lifestyles is relatively new. Having said that, there has always been, and sadly probably will always be, a segment of the population that has been forced to live with less. Minimalists welcome and embrace
this frugal way of living. There have been many books, blogs, and podcasts written about this approach to living. A couple of examples are the following blogs Minimal + ism by Namahata Naoki and Sasaki Fumio (minimalism.jp), becoming minimalist by Joshua Becker (becomingminialist.com), and the minimalist mom by Rachel Jonat (theminialistmom.com). The following podcasts allow people to connect with minimalism while remaining busy, Discovering Minimalism by Paul Ryken and Minimalism for Families: Practical Minimalism Living Strategies to Simplify your Time and Life by Zoe Kim. The research conducted for this paper found that these materials have focused on two main topics the ‘how to’ and the ‘why’.

This researcher was initially introduced to minimalism through a Netflix documentary by Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus. These documentaries explored the authors’ path to minimalism. Minimalism as defined by Fields Millburn and Nicodemus is “a tool we use to live a meaningful life” (2011, p. 27). This vague definition can be both frustrating and helpful at the same time. It does not provide much in the way of guidance or help, but the open-endedness allows each person to define minimalism that will work for them. There is no one answer or path to follow. As much as leadership is about the followers, minimalism is also about looking inwards and finding what is right for you.

Both Fields Millburn and Nicodemus were in their early 30s working in the corporate world making a six-figure salaries when they discovered they were truly unhappy (Fields Millburn & Nicodemus, 2011). Though they tried to correct their unhappiness through the typical American way, spending more money, working harder, earning more money this never seemed to solve their true cause of their unhappiness. A
lack of happiness within their lives changed with the influx of items they were able to accumulate. They soon discovered the world of minimalism and began to search for happiness within themselves. Living a meaningful life requires self-imposed constraints. These constraints are limits that to each individual. This will allow individuals to better see and develop areas and aspects that will have a positive influence on daily lives.

Minimalism goes against the grain of the Western consumerist lifestyle. More people are seeking satisfaction from material goods, but they are now looking for the value held within the materials they have. The ‘how to’ sections of scholarly literature reviewed here help the reader sort out their belongings and to find those that hold meaning for them - the items that bring or add value into their life.

The steps outlined are all introspective, requiring the reader to work through a process of self-inventory and establish a set of values and beliefs to live by. The Netflix new hit show Tiding Up, Maria Kondo refers to this value, as ‘sparks joy.’ The use of the term value or joy is essentially the same. Find and keep only the items, people, methods, or procedures that are essential. Once these values have been established, the reader can then begin to align material items to the newly stated belief system. After the systematic purge of unneeded items, this helps to reinforce the set of standards. The other sections of these types of literature is the why do we (as Americans) overspend on purpose and feed the national consumerism. At the heart of the why aspect of minimalism is to shed excess and maintain what is truly important Fields Millburn and Nicodemus close each of podcast episode with the following phrase, a phrase that feel highlights this ‘why’ beautifully “Love people and use things, cause the opposite never works”(2018). The people and the relationships in our lives should be the most important things we have, but
in trying to keep up with the ‘Joneses’ we have replaced people with material goods. Garcia, Fields Millburn, and Nicodemus all found creativity ways to meet needs that arose around them. The next section of this work will to further look at creativity and the important role it can play in interactions and individual success.

**Review of Existing Scholarly Work in Creativity**

There are many forms of creativity. The most common and usually first to come mind is the artistic form of creativity such as drawing, painting, music, dance and other forms of expressing feelings and emotion. Another way to think of being creative is found within the act of problem solving. It is this second area of creativity that is the focus of this section.

Runco (2004) provides a definition of creativity that the researcher feels establishes a useful way of thinking about being creative, “the development of original ideas that are useful or influential” (p. 658). Using this definition, ideas can be forward to help individuals, communities, and organizations. It is with this creative process that change is possible through influencing, reacting, and accepting change.

Everyone has the ability to be creative and exercise his or her creative process. Robert Sternberg (1999) states that while cultures and societies have been studied extensively; focusing on how creativity is developed within cultures and societies has not had the same level of attention (p.180). However, this does not mean that everyone has the same creative potential for some people possess more creative skill than others.

Rhodes (1961) offers a well-defined and often used structure for studying creativity. This structure is divided into four segments, person, process, press, and product. This
structure, while developed decades ago, still has relevance to the study of creativity today.

The first area studied relates to the characteristics of the person. The research shows that people who are more creative tend to possess common characteristics. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) defines these characteristics as being “smart”, “having a great of physical energy,” and having a “playful light attitude” (p. 58-59). The process that Rhodes (1987) is referring to relates to the behavior of the person. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) often refers to this as flow. This process includes the steps that can be taken to help enhance the creative process. Being creative is like a muscle, the more it is practiced and used, the stronger it will become.

Rhodes (1987) defines “the press” as the pressure applied to the person during the process. What are the internal and external pressures applied in the process? Are there deadlines or cost restrictions that must be applied? Press can be both positive and negative. Another way of thinking about press is influence. What during the process can influence the creative process? Product refers to the outcome of the creative process or person. The product is the thing or the result of the process. These steps are easy to write about, but the actual time and energy in doing these steps can be quite difficult. Depending on each person and then problem trying to be solved, the segments can vary. Having the steps outlined can help people develop and strengthen their creative muscle.

Searching for a problem can range from how to express one’s feelings and emotions through music or as simple has how to park in the garage so that both cars are able to fit. In either Runco (2004) or Rhodes (1987) description of the process, the first step in being able to find a solution is to understand the problem at hand. It is only after
the problem is named that the problem can be understood and the search for solutions can begin. Often times the act of searching for a problem is not a problem, problems have a way of seeking solutions. However, the work of fully identifying the problem is the first step in being able to solve it.

When looking at a problem, all aspects and sides of the problem need to be examined. Seeing the problems from all sides can change perspective and provide a new solution. This is the time to remove all preconceived notions about how the problem could be solved. Understanding the problem completely creates a strong foundation for finding a solution.

The third step in Rhodes (1987) process is the investigation stage. Studying and research are the major drivers in this stage of the process. This stage is where information will be gathered and studied to better understand the problem. What might be causing it? What the cause and effect of potential solutions might be? Investigation by definition is to explore, inspect and examine. This is what is required during this overall process. All aspects of the problem need to be examined. In our garage example, this means the cars, the layout, other items in the garage, uses of the space and other aspects of the problem. This investigation phase allows the problem to be viewed from many angels. The researching aspect of the creative process allows the researcher to become an expert on the problem.

Investigation can also take the shape of taking things apart. While writing this paper, the researcher's daughter is taking apart a paper airplane gun, trying to understand why the trigger is no longer working. To better understand her problem, she needed to explore and investigate how the pieces fits together and how they worked together.
Unfortunately, her investigation lead to finding that pieces inside were broken and that is why the toy was no longer functioning.

The last stage of the process is the production of ideas. Once the problem has been identified and researched, the pieces can be put together and potential solutions formed. Another term that is often used to describe this stage is brainstorming. The major aspect of brainstorming is not to pass judgment on any of the ideas. Weather as an individual or in a group setting, no idea is out of the question or undoable. Creativity is a valuable skill to have for several reasons. Creativity helps to drive empowerment and ownership within the workplace and thus allows employees to be more invested within the workplace and motivated to preform good work.

Chapter III: Research Method and Design

Rationale for study

The researcher is seeking to add a new aspect of leadership, minimalism, to the conversation. This approach focuses more on the individual and how individuals are involved in workplace processes and determining how best to lead. This approach to leadership takes time to understand each individuals approach to work, their values, and what is important to them.

In turn, this approach to leadership can only be successful if all participants are open and honest with each other. This honesty is in relation to each other, but the parties must also be honest with themselves. Each party needs to be honest how they communicate as well as the values that are being communicated. While it is important to value each team members need, it is also important to value the rules and regulations of
the workplace. Laws and mandates cannot be violated due to trying to meet the needs of an individual.

Minimalism leadership is a different approach to leadership. This approach takes into account the values of each party and works to meet these values. This method works to find the most effective and productive approach to the supervisor and employee relationship. The minimalist approach to leadership can be utilized by anyone in almost all situations. Applying minimalism to all aspect of our lives will increase creativity and innovation. An increase in creativity will drive different factors, such as a potential reduction in costs, an increase in employee buy-in, and an increase in production. The research would be of interest to small startup companies. This is a new way of doing business and thinking of how to run an organization.

The researcher also sees the value in this type of leadership style being used at small non-profit organizations. These types of organizations have smaller teams and need to work as efficiently as possible. This new approach can also be used within existing companies or companies that are stuck in a rut and looking to create a change. We are always in a constant state of flux and change, “archaeology in Europe, Asia, and American shows, however, which as general cultural traits are in a constant state of flux” (Mead, 1966). Using an approach such as minimalism could be the driver to understand a new creative way of doing business, interacting with people, or finding different solutions to a problem. There is no one person, style, or organization that can alone benefit from applying this approach. This style of leadership or interactions with people can benefit everyone. The minimalist approach can be used in the workplace and other relationships. Minimalism is something that can be used to shape and develop individual needs. When
individuals potential and goals are met, the momentum forward ultimately pushes communities, organizations, and societies forward.

**Qualitative Research Design**

This study explores how the relationship between the leader and employee can influence the creativity within the workplace. A qualitative study looks to answer questions about a group of people based upon personal explanations experiences, “It attempts to understand the whole picture of the social context under study” (Janesick, 2016, p.11). It is through the person's experience that researchers gather information and form a better understanding of the world, people, communities, and societies (Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman, 2014). This approach allows the participants to fully explain and explore what leadership and minimalism means to them. Each of these are subjective and therefore have a wide range of meaning. Since hearing from employees in their own words provides a better and stronger case, the researcher developed a survey and encouraged participants to provide their own narrative. The major form of interaction with participants took place via email and survey. This allowed the researcher to reach a wider number of people. The data was collected via an electronic interview survey tool (SNAP Professional 11).

The first part of the questionnaire is demographic including age, education, and gender. Several different types of organizations (profit and non-profit) and different industries were contacted to try to and understand if the type of organization was a factor in the survey responses. Specifically, if the for profit work world attracts a different type of employee or leader. Will more creative and minimalistic leaning supervisors lean toward working in a non-profit or for profit organization? The second part consists of
open-ended questions, which allows the participant time to think about them and freely answer. These questions are related to the working style and creativity of the employee and leadership style of the supervisor.

The sample consisted of employees from the University of Maine System. The link for the survey was sent directly to employees. The researcher did try to involve more organizations, but failed to receive approval by for this project in time to include results.

Sample

This study is the result of sampling subordinates (non-leaders) within companies in the Southern Maine region. Samples were taken the University of Maine System, which includes seven campuses and a System office. All employees who elected to participate in the study did so voluntarily. Within the survey, there was language to let participants know that at any point that had the ability to remove themselves from the study. Participants were provided with the details of how survey responses and information were protected. For the ease of getting people to participate in the study and to gather results, an online survey was developed and emailed using the software SNAP. This provided the researcher with a wide range of understanding in the relationship between leadership and minimalism. The researcher sought out employees who were not at the top of the hierarchical organizational chart, but rather those employees who located in the middle to bottom of the organization. The researcher intentionally did not include faculty members within the sample. Faculty do have a supervisor, but the relationship between faculty members and departments is unique and the researcher wanted to focus on a more traditional work environment.
Other company and organizations were contacted and invited to participate in the study but failed to connect in time to complete the survey. The researcher was trying to evaluate leadership style at different types of organizations (non-profit vs for profit). The researcher wanted to discover if different levels of creativity were more used or accepted at these different types of organizations.

**Data Collection**

Anonymous surveys were sent to 3,349 number of employees at the following organizations. The surveys were open for two weeks. The survey was completed via online software SNAP and respondents entered data themselves. Participants acknowledge that they were at least 18 years or older. Respondents had the opportunity to review, edit, and change responses prior to submissions. Respondents had the opportunity to print the informed consent language provided.

Responses were loaded into NVIVO and SPSS to help the researcher analyze the data. This provided the researcher the tools to show trends between the responses.

**Data Analysis and Verification**

The data was loaded into the NVIVO and SPSS. The qualitative software NVIVO was used to help provide assistance in analyzing the data. Using this software allowed the researcher to code and categorize each of the survey responses. This allowed the researcher to highlight themes within the data and provide a higher level of analysis. The researcher was the only person who coded the data. As the analysis began by developing, several general themes (creativity, positive, servant), and the list of codes (themes) grew and developed as the researcher began to read the responses. A full list of the codes is provide in the appendix. Each response was read several times and was placed into the
appropriate code(s). There are several questions where the participants responded to a yes or no question but were also asked to describe their answer. The researcher read these responses, and coded them into a yes, no, or neutral code. Items were placed in the neutral code when it was not a clear yes or no response. On the occasion that responses were left blank, the research placed a 99 in the field as a place holder. This was to allow for the entire case to be counted in the analytic software.

**Ethical Considerations**

Since the participants sent in comments about their supervisors, the researcher ensured that the results were kept secure and confidential. The researcher encouraged participants to be as honest as possible.

**Results**

The survey was sent out via google mail with a link to the survey. The survey was sent out to 3,349 employees of the University of Maine System. 129 people completed the survey and submitted results. There was a rate of return of 3.85%. While this is not a large percentage back, this still did provide some interesting data to start a larger conversation. Of the 129 responses, ninety-two were from females, thirty-five from male employees, and one person choose not to identify with a gender.

The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 65 or older, with one person not responding. The breakdown of age and gender is as follows. Fifty-five females in the age range of 45 – 64; twenty-nine females in the age range of 25 -44; five females in the age range of 65 or older, and two females in the age range of 18 – 24. Nineteen males in the age range 45 – 64; eleven males in the age range of 25 – 44; five males 65 or older; and
one person in the age range of 45 – 64 preferred not to identify with a gender, as reflected in Figure A below.

The researcher wanted to get a sense of the relationship that participants had with the supervisor and how the working environment helped to strengthen that. One way to measure, is to look at the number of meetings between the employee and supervisor. Building a relationship and an understanding of a person takes time and needs to be developed. The researcher asked if they meet on an individual basis and if so how long the meeting was and how often.
The breakdown of how often these 129 employees are meeting with their supervisor is as follows; five people choose not to respond, thirteen reported to meeting daily, nineteen reported bi-weekly meetings, and forty-five reported weekly meetings; twenty reported monthly, and twenty-six meet bi-monthly with their supervisor. The largest percentage of individual meetings are weekly meetings at 35%. This regular meeting schedule allows for the employee and supervisor to develop a relationship, build trust, and confidence in each other, as reflected in Figure B below.

Figure B

Chapter IV: Discussion

Minimalism depends on knowing personal values and what items or process are of values to the supervisor and employee. Knowing what values are important to each member is key to the success of this method. Having said that, the values must be first
known by the participants themselves. The results from the survey show that employees who meet on a more regular basis with their supervisors feel that they are more understood by their supervisors. This seemingly meaningless act of meeting with employees on a regular basis builds trust and confidence in the relationship.

Relationships are, at the basic level a social exchange, as describe by Julia Wood. In this exchange the parties calculate the costs and benefits of being in the relationship. The outcome of this equation determines if the relationship is rewarding or not (Wood, 2004, p. 192).

Developing the relationship allow the supervisor and employee to communicate values and different working style. The researcher feels that being able to create, support, and appreciated this working relationship is valuable to developing a minimalist relationship. The basis of minimalism in any aspect is understanding and recognizing values. These values must be communicated to ensure that the values can be respected and executed.

Employees who stated that they felt their supervisor understood their working style expressed more room for creativity in the workplace. 91% (n=104) respondents expressed that they were able to be creative with in the work place. Respondent four expressed their working relationship in this way “Yes! He gives me free rein to do whatever I see best! If it is a drastic change in procedures or operations, I supply him with a plan with pros and cons and explain why the change is a good idea and how I intend to implement and monitor the results. If my plan sounds reasonable, he lets me do it!” Respondent 17 expressed this as, “Yes. He doesn't micromanage us. He allows us to come up with solutions on our own and relies on our expertise.” From these responses we
can see that having the relationship and being able to communicate values and working style helps to promote an environment to change and update process and how work is done.

8% (n=10) of the respondents do not feel that they have the ability or support to be creative in the workplace. A review of the responses, reveals that relationships which are not as developed or perceived, by either party, as valuable lack the ability or desire to be creative. Respondent 99 expressed this type of working relationship as “My supervisor wants control over the project, but isn't around to provide direction nor does this person answer project related emails regularly. It is very challenging.” This same respondent also expressed the lack of relationship and creativity in this way,

Not especially. Not much of a call for it, I suppose. Management is also afraid of taking even minor risks; they all quickly jump on the "scared" bandwagon. They are also apt to follow in the footsteps of our collective boss, who is severely entrenched in the old ways; and, although he's a good guy, no one seems courageous enough to speak truth to power. I am, but it has not gotten me/us anywhere.”

Where there is a lack of a relationship and communication, there is a sense of frustration within the workplace. The frustration in the relationship has the potential to carry over to work production and quality.

Chapter V: Conclusion

In each relationship there will be costs and benefits, but these will not define the entire relationship, but help to set the foundation. By building this foundation of a relationship, employees are able to expand and develop
within the workplace. Relationships take energy and effort and require active participation in them.

The researcher understands that there is no one correct way to positively interact with employees. This research is meant to provide a different way of thinking and approaching workplace relationships. In addition, determining the most successful method of leadership depends on a number of factors, including the people involved.

The researcher hopes that this survey and paper will be used as a starting point to view and exam the importance of relationship building in the workplace. The researcher feels that the best way to be a successful leader or follower and have a productive work environment is to work at building stronger relationships. Along with providing a foundation for creativity, this relationship building will foster trust. Trusting relationships improve workplace production by allowing individuals to experiment, work independently, and increase confidence. Creativity is one of the aspects that help to push the organization and people forward, “creativity and innovation drive progress and allow organizations to maintain a competitive advantage” (Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman, Legood, 2018, p. 1). The one take away that the researcher seeks to emphasize is the value in creating and maintain strong relationships with people. When relationships are built on a strong foundation then anything is possible. The researcher complete this thesis as the final project to complete a Master’s degree. The relationship built throughout her years of education contributed to the successful complete this project.
Appendix

A: Survey Questions

1. What gender do you identify with?
2. What is your age?
3. What type of organization do you work for?
4. How long have you worked for your current company?
5. Estimated number of employees at the organization?
6. How often do you meet, individually, with your supervisor?
7. How long are the meetings?
8. Please describe your supervisors leadership style?
9. Please describe your working style?
10. How do you explain your workplace values to your supervisor? How do you convey what is important to your supervisor?
11. Do you notice a change in your productivity after explaining these values? Please explain the changes?
12. Do you see parts of your jobs that do not add value to the overall process of completing your work? Why do you think these steps are part of the work? Have you shared these thoughts with your supervisor? What was the response?
13. How would removing these non-value steps improve your work life? Do you feel that your supervisor helps to make you a better employee? How or how not?
14. Please provide an example of when a leader presented you with a task and you were allowed to compete the tasks as saw fit. Explain your thought process during the time you completed the task? How did you feel after the project was complete?
15. Do you think that your supervisor has an understanding of your working style?
16. Does your supervisor allow you to be creative on the job? Please explain.
B: Informed Consent Language

What will I be asked to do?

You will be invited to take an anonymous, online survey.

The survey is made up of 17 questions and should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. You are encouraged to complete the survey in one sitting, but it can be saved and returned to for completion.

The majority of the survey questions are open-ended question to allow you to share your thoughts.

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

How will my privacy be protected?

This survey is designed to be anonymous, please do not include any information that may individually identify you or anyone else.

Data will be encrypted using industry standards.

Research records will be stored on secure Snap Survey servers housed at the University of Southern Maine and in the University of Maine provided, password-protected, Box digital storage.

Only the principal researcher will have access to the original data. Statistics will be reported out in the aggregate, and will be used by the principal researcher in fulfillment of the academic requirements for a Leadership & Organizational Studies masters degree. Data will be analyzed by the principal researcher for presentation during the annual Thinking Matters event held at USM.

Please note that the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with any University of Maine System campus.

You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.

You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Southern Maine has reviewed the use of human subjects in this research. The IRB is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of people involved in research.
What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?

There is a possible risk of experiencing discomfort when discussing your workplace environment and supervisor.

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

There are no direct benefits from taking part in the study. Participants may see this as an opportunity to explore and understanding workplace relationships differently.

What will it cost me?

There are no direct costs for you to participate in this research.

Mobile data rates may apply for participants not using WiFi to access the survey.

What other options do I have?

You may choose not to participate.

Whom may I contact with questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Amy Blaisdell. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at amypm@maine.edu or (207) 228-8306 or her faculty advisor, Sharon Timberlake at sharon.timberlake@maine.edu or (207) 838-0066.

Student researchers are required to have the faculty mentor(s) listed. The faculty mentor is expected to take an active role in students’ research activities and provide supervision throughout the duration of their research study. The faculty mentor is legally responsible for all research activities.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call the USM Human Protections Administrator at (207) 228-8434 and/or email usmorio@maine.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

You may print/keep a copy of this consent form.

I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.
C: Letter to Participants.

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study, which focuses on minimalism, leadership style, and the work environment. Participation in this study is voluntary. This study is being conducted to complete a Capstone project for a Master of Leadership Studies at the University of Southern Maine under the supervision of Professor Sharon Timberlake. Thus, the consideration to participate in this study is appreciated.

The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete and is designed to be anonymous - you will not be asked any directly identifying questions. Statistics generated by this survey data will be reported in the aggregate and individuals will not be identifiable. All salaried and hourly paid staff within the University Maine System are invited to participate.

Below is a link that will lead you to a consent form. Please be sure to fully read the consent information. The Institutional Review Board may review the research records and the results of this project may be published at the Thinking Matters presentation in May 2019. The results will also be shared with the professor and possibly the classmates of the researcher. Sharing this research will be for learning purposes only. Identifying information will not be collected or shared.

The main benefit of participating is being a part of developing a foundation of research for the importance of a minimalist approach to leadership. The cost of your participation will be your time involved in the study (approximate 30 mins). The study is designed to be anonymous and information provided will not be connected with participants. At any time, you may decline to answer any question.

This study has been approved by the University of Southern Maine Institutional Review Board (ORE# 18-10-1168). If you have questions for the Committee contact the Office of Research Integrity and Outreach, at 1-207-780-4517 or USMORIO@maine.edu. For all other questions, or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to contact Professor Sharon Timberlake at sharon.timberlake@maine.edu.

Please click on the link below to be taken to the survey portal where additional Informed Consent information will be available.

Minimalist Approach to Leadership survey
https://snapsurvey.usm.maine.edu/snapwebhost/s.asp?k=155198861030
D: Nodes used to Code results

Aggressive
Authentic
Creative(creativity)
Dedicated
Easy
Email
Google/zoom
Hands-off
Increased productivity
Independent
Open
In person
Manger
Micromanage
Minimalism
Motivate
Multi-task
Negative
Neutral
No
Organized
Positive
Reduced stress
Relaxed
Respect
Servant
Team building
Transactional
Transformational
Written
Yes
FINAL APPROVAL FORM

The University of Southern Maine

Master's in Leadership Studies

May 10, 2019

We hereby recommend that the thesis of Amy Blaisdell entitled Minimalist Approach to in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's in Leadership Studies.

[Signature]
Thesis Advisor (Dr. Sharon Timberlake, Ph.D.)

[Signature]
Second Reader (Dr. Elizabeth Goryunova, Ph.D.)

[Signature]
Chair (Dr. Dan Jenkins, Ph. D.)

Chair Leadership Studies Program
References


