

The Double-Edged Sword: A Study in Remote Work from the Perspectives of Leadership
and Followership on the topics of Communication, Team Design, and Productivity

Submitted by

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Abstract

There was limited peer reviewed research on the topic of Remote Work that was not more than five to ten years old. Most of the research was also predominantly from the leadership perspective. Making a narrow view of the issues of communications, productivity, and team design within remote work. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how remote team design affects communication and productivity in relation to the use of “Dream Teams” in Remote Work. The individual participants method was used via Microsoft Teams, the camera and record function in Teams, the transcript function, NVIVO, and Qualtrics in order to gather qualitative data from the followership perspective on work in remote workplaces and the effects of remote work on productivity and team design. The individual participants were divided into two categories of those in leadership roles and those in followership roles. These participants after being interviewed individually then participated in focus groups for just their category of leadership and followership to create comfort for participants to speak freely. The findings confirm that for the future of work does include remote work and there are disconnects in the perceptions of remote work. There is room for additional research and this study further proves that remote work is in fact here to stay.

Keywords: remote work, productivity, team design, communication, Apollo Effect, leadership, followership.

Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to all the working parents like me, just trying to have a work/ life balance as we work towards the future of work.

To the hard work and sacrifices of my ancestors, my mother and grandmother, as the completion of this dissertation makes me the first woman in my family to earn a DBA. To my adoptive mother figures and sisters, for their support and love, proving family is more than blood.

To my loving husband and wonderful children, for all their love and support. I could not have done it without you.

A special thanks to my dissertation committee for their advice and support.

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Chapter 1: Opening

The topic of this dissertation is an exploration of the followership of remote teams and how communication and team design may affect productivity within remote teams. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was little academic research on remote teams even though, as Streitfeld (2020) observed, the concept of remote work dates to the eighties. While researching this topic, few peer-reviewed resources about remote employment within the scope of followership were found. Many of the sources on remote employment focus on the management and leadership of remote teams, such as Cascio (2000) who focused on remote employment management.

While researching the topics of followership and remote employment as individual topics, more research was found within the time duration laid out in the dissertation's parameters. This only accounts for research in peer-reviewed periodicals. A large amount of what can be called practical research was done by reviewing business news sites and government data. Much like the pre-pandemic research Google conducted internally and published externally on remote employment (Bariso, 2019).

Many researchers have focused on the management of remote teams, on team design concerning remote employment. However, there are more recent articles and research on team design and productivity. Wang et al. (2020) defined remote productivity with consideration of four factors. Those four factors noted in, Wang et al. (2020) being; autonomy, output, responsiveness, and communication. Lulla (2021) comments on how the use of Key Performance Indicators otherwise known as KPI's are used in a different way within a remote workplace. Lulla (2021) notes how many companies are using communication apps such as Slack, Teams, and skype for business among a number of

other systems to develop quantitative analytics to show when an employee is physically at the workstation remotely. The use of only quantitative KPI metrics in the remote workplace has pit falls as detailed in, Lulla (2021) and may cause only a partial picture of overall remote productivity. This one-sided data set leaves leadership with a skewed data set of the overall remote productivity. KPI metrics that use only communication apps as noted in, Lulla (2021) if the employee travels or uses the communications apps detailed via a smart phone the app does not always report the employee as available and working. This creates a unique pitfall within the measurement of productivity of remote teams.

Sridhar et al. (2006) examined how team design in remote environments is often ignored or the organization implements a dream team made up of outstanding experts. Since the members do not have to physically interact with each other remotely as required in an onsite role allows for team dynamics to be ignored. However, more recent practical research shows that this design method has pitfalls.

Now that the business realm has been reshaped by the effects of the pandemic, and what is coined, Kerr and Fuller (2022) as the Great Resignation or otherwise known as the skilled labor shortage there is room to examine if team design in remote teams improves effectiveness or if the focus should remain on the development of the traditional 'dream teams' (Cascio, 2000).

Background of the Problem

The topic of remote teams has only been a field of study within business for the past twenty to thirty years. The U.S. Board of Labor and Statistics reported that over 20% of Americans work remotely, at least periodically. Browne (2018) reported that 70% of

global citizens work remotely. This makes for an opportunity for additional research to be conducted.

Much of the research academically within remote teams was conducted over ten years ago. In addition, Cascio (2000) noted that much of the research on remote teams was from the perspective of management and not from the lens of followership.

Hirsch (2017) also analyzed remote teams from the view of management.

Although there is limited academic research on remote teams conducted within the last five years, there has been significant practical research on remote teams. It should be noted that due to COVID-19, the number of practical research articles in remote teams has been growing exponentially. The articles are written and published in the Harvard Business Review Bakken (2019) and Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2018) conducted as practical research and written as general consumer review. Another example is Bariso's (2019) Google study.

This creates room for additional research to be done. As the business world adjusts to the new normal of COVID-19, remote teams and the analysis of the development and design regarding productivity, have become more critical than ever before. This research is vital to learning more about remote teams not just because of the worldwide pandemic's effect on business as we know it but also because followership is a viewpoint that needs to be given a voice.

Problem Statement and Significance of the Study

Research such as the statistical information provided in the news release published in 2019 by the US Department of Labor Statistics found within 2018, Browne (2018); shows that the US remote workplace has been growing in popularity. Browne

(2018) found that 20% of employees noted working in some capacity within a remote workplace. The statistic of those who work onsite, meaning in an office setting, and bring their work home with them after working in the office is also counted.

Bakken (2019) noted issues with the design of remote teams. Often when remote teams are built, companies attempt to create ‘dream teams.’ The term ‘dream team’ refers to management developing teams of the best and brightest in specific capacities without considering personality, dynamics, and cohesiveness.

Remote teams are becoming progressively more common, but few researchers have conducted studies of remote teams within the last five years. Cascio (2000) and Sridhar et al. (2009) focused on remote teams through the lens of leadership. The age of the most recent research in remote teams and that much of the research is leadership centric versus examining followership leaves out one of the most critical aspects of management. That critical aspect is the people who work within a business. However, the literary research currently done academically within the study of remote teams has focused on management. Though there has been recent research on remote teams, such as Hirsch (2017), like much of the literary research, found this article was from the vantage point of management.

In recent research on the topics of productivity, team design, and communication looking at both the lens of followership Martin (2015) and Crossman (2017), and leadership perspective. There was little academic research on followership of remote teams. Studying both leadership and followership shows the two sides of the coin. This leaves an essential opening for research of productivity, remote team design and communication within the remote modality. The business climate has drastically changed

due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the need for remote work and the lens of both followership and leadership on the topics within remote work is now more critical than ever. Business cannot function and manage without the most vital resource, the workforce. Looking at both leadership and followership in research may reveal a double edge sword of perspectives and shed more light on the topics of productivity, communication, and team design in remote working environments.

Conceptual Framework

Paradis et al. (2016) detailed an ideal data collection method for qualitative research of using interviews. The theoretical framework chosen for the dissertation topic is behavioral theory and leadership/servant theory. Based on Grant and Osanloo (2014) and Abend (2008), these two theoretical concepts can be interwoven into the framework. The reason for the two theoretical foundations is that the study of remote team followership is both a study of the behaviors of remote teams and servant theory. As detailed in the background statement and the problem statement, limited research academically has been done on remote team followership. Researching remote team followership is crucial in understanding the most vital business resource, which is the workforce, but to teach leadership, one needs to learn about followership.

The usage of the theoretical foundations of behavioral theory and servant/leadership theory is complementary to using the qualitative conceptual framework in the research of the dissertation topic. As much of the behavioral concepts from the viewpoint of followers within remote teams are based on personal perspective, qualitative research allows room for the research to blend the theoretical foundations and this conceptual framework.

Integration of practical research into academic research will help bridge the research gap as there is less recent academic research on remote teams and limited research on followership in remote teams. As remote teams are becoming progressively more normative, there is growing practical research on remote team leadership, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, researchers are still focusing on leadership. To further define practical research, examples like the *Harvard Business Review* uses articles written by students and professors and are written based on observation and research from other published articles for businesses by those in the business field and not necessarily within an academic arena.

In developing research theory, the concept of Dream Teams kept surfacing up within the research. Such as the topic in scholarly research detailed by, Salas et al (2006) and in Zhou et al. (2018); where these topics are researched in the psychological and Business Information and Technology areas. Practical research on the topic of Dream Teams as a research theory is also noted by, Colvin (2006) and Hass and Mortensen (2022); which analyze the concept through the lens of business and leadership specifically. Dream Teams are defined by Sridhar et al. (2006) as a team design concept in remote work where all team members are Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

Additionally, while developing the research theory of Dream Teams in relation with the topic of remote work and the relationship between team design and productivity an additional concept was found. The additional concept defined by Gershkov & Schweinzer (2021); is called the Apollo Effect. The Apollo Effect as defined by Gershkov & Schweinzer (2021); the Apollo Effect is the after math of the long-term use of Dream Team design in organizational team design. According to Gershkov &

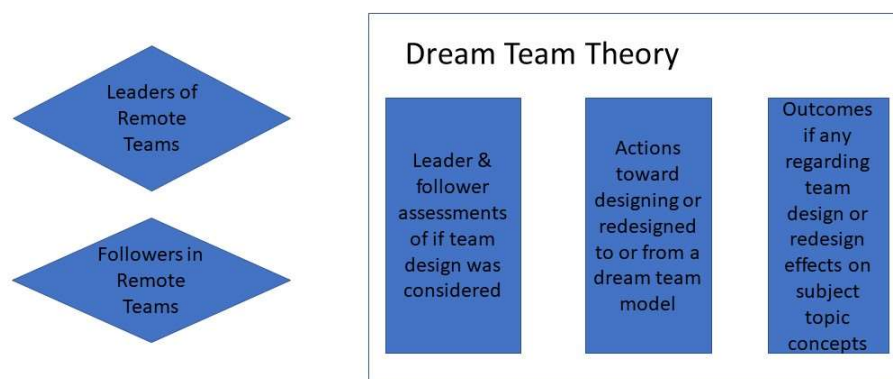
Schweinzer (2021); the use of Dream Teams in short term in project by project is a concept that works on projects. Dream Teams according to Gershkov & Schweinzer (2021); that are used in the long term or indefinitely has the tendency to implode as personality traits are not factored into the design of Dream Teams in a remote work environment. This causes the team members in these long term, Dream Teams to have break downs in communication, and need to stand out individually ignoring the long term needs of the team.

The theory researched will include the Dream Team Theory concept in relation to remote teams and how team design, effects communication and productivity through the research method lens of followership.

Figure 1

Research Model

Figure 1 Research Model



Researcher's Positionality

As a researcher, I found inspiration by working in the financial compliance sector of banking and mortgage. I have spent many years working in the nonprofit sector on the side of working full time in financial compliance and doing all this while working on an undergraduate degree and later a Master of Science in Operational Management with an emphasis in Project Management. These accomplishments only possible by primarily working remotely for the past six years. While working on a doctorate in Business Administration, the excessive work has been only manageable in concert with a work/life balance provided by working in remote and hybrid (remote and onsite mixture) positions.

Working in remote and hybrid work environments for over seven years has provided opportunities to work from both the leadership and followership standpoint within remote teams. Though COVID-19 has forced many to adapt to a remote workplace, and it has created a transition process to get used to, this has not been the case for me. In my industry, remote teams are not always welcome. Even in the current company with which I work, travel to create my current role into a semi-hybrid position was stressed. However, before COVID-19, I have worked a mostly remote lifestyle, so a level of understanding with those adjusting to this new normal personally and professionally has been humbling. While I enjoy a remote workplace, not all people do, and this may cause a bias that, when researching, I should be mindful of so as not to project a pro-remote bias onto my research.

Currently, I hold a management role gives me a unique vantage point and empathy. My position that requires me to train a large company on systems; policy and

procedures; subject matter expertise; and how to manage the transition of managing an in-person to a remote team. Empathy manifests in managers who must work harder to deal with the turbulence of working during a global pandemic. This has granted me a unique perspective and a practical and academic understanding of remote teams and remote team followership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is an exploration of followership and leadership perspectives in remote teams and how communication and team design may affect productivity. Although COVID-19 has created a new push for remote work, research is still needed to learn about remote teams. This dissertation aims to examine the concepts within remote team design and consider if team design and communication affect productivity.

It should be noted that from a research perspective, COVID-19 has created a unique opportunity for remote teams' research. Specifically, Koetsier (2020) observes a significant increase in remote employment due to the COVID-19 lockdowns during the pandemic, with 58% of Americans working remotely. This spike in remote workers creates a larger potential research pool. This is a unique opportunity for academic research to fill the lack of research currently available within the academic realm versus the practical research arena, update current research, and create academic research that looks at an underserved aspect of remote teams and followership.

As a qualitative research method is being implemented for this topic, the lockdown is an advantage as it increases the potential sample pool of those who adapted to virtual communications methods such as Microsoft Teams. This will allow for

interview methods for research to be done remotely and on a platform that has become more commonplace.

Research Question(s) and Participant Inquires

The Proposed are the following research questions for this dissertation:

RQ1: What aspects of team design have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

RQ2: What aspects of communication have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

RQ3: What effect does remote work instead of in person work have on team design and how does this affect productivity among remote teams?

The participant inquiries (PI) for this dissertation are the following:

- PI1: How do you feel team design affects the productivity and effectiveness of remote teams?
- PI2: How does a lack of communication in remote settings affect productivity?
- PI3: How does professional isolation affect remote teams?
- PI4: How is productivity being measured in a remote setting?
- PI5: How do followers and leaders go about assessing the design of the team when joining a team? What are the key factors that they consider?
- PI6: What actions do leaders take when designing or redesigning a team?
- PI7: What actions do followers take when working in a team environment?
- PI8: How do leaders evaluate the results of a team's work? How do they define and measure success? What are some key accomplishments or challenges have they have observed with leading a team?

- PI9: How do followers evaluate the results of their team's work? How do they see success? What are some key accomplishments or challenges that they have observed when working at the member of a team?
 - PI10: What are the major points of agreement and disagreement between leaders and followers in assessing, taking actions, and evaluating the results of the team's work?
 - PI11: Based on the dream team theory and the experiences of leaders and followers, are their emerging best practices for followers in a team environment?
- The interview questions for Leaders are as follows:
- PI1: What is the nature of the remote projects or remote team members? Such as what size of team? Are they employees, contractors, or volunteers?
 - PI2: What is the experience of the team members? Meaning are they subject matter experts, mid-career level members, or novice? Also, how many years of remote work experience do these team members have?
 - PI3: Does the team referenced in your answers as a leader have a need for subject matter expertise? And if so to what extent?
 - PI4: What is your personal experience as a leader of remote teams? How many years have you been leading remote teams?
 - PI5: What actions do you take in the process of designing or redesigning a remote team?
 - PI6: In your actions as a leader designing teams do these actions differ from a remote team to an onsite team?

- PI7: What steps do you take to set goals for individual team members? How are goals developed and calculated? How are those goals evaluated? When goals are met how is appreciation of the team members work expressed? What is the feedback from team members on this process?
- PI8: What methods are used by you as a leader to create clear communications with the team members?
- PI9: What steps do you take as a leader to address conflict resolution in remote teams?
- PI10: How is productivity being measured? What if any tools are used to measure productivity? How are defects in work quality addressed?
- PI11: How are miscommunications or lack of communications or directions addressed. What actions as a leader are taken in a remote workplace to correct confusion or lack of communication?
- PI12: What questions do you think I should ask that I have not already asked?

The interview questions for Followers are as follows:

- PI1: As a remote employee, do you feel more isolated or connected with management?
- PI2: Do you feel adequately considered by management and upper management for promotions and raises?
- PI3: Do you feel that your remote team is made up of all-stars, dream team, or the best of the best?
- PI4: Do you feel your team connects well and interacts well together?
- PI5: Do you feel the dynamics of your team allows for proper idea generation?

- PI6: Do you feel that there is adequate communication with teammates and managers?
- PI7: Do you feel your team communicates effectively together and with management?
- PI8: Do you feel your social needs found within a business field are met regularly working remotely?
- PI9: How is productivity being measured in your remote setting?
- PI10: Do you feel that you are productive in a remote setting?
- PI 11: Productivity being defined as a single person's output of work that positively contributes to a project or overall organizational growth within one's role in a company. With this definition in mind do you feel your productivity is helped or hindered in a remote setting?
- PI12: What questions do you think I should ask that I have not already asked?

Rationale for Methodology and Design

A qualitative research design would be the appropriate path to take in the methodology of this dissertation. Paradis et al. (2016) found qualitative research to be useful in research that is subjective based on the participants personal experiences. The usage of the theoretical foundations of behavioral theory and leadership/servant theory is compatible with the qualitative conceptual framework I will employ in researching this topic. As much of the behavioral concepts from the perspective of followers within remote teams are based on personal conception, qualitative research allows room for the research to blend the theoretical foundations and this conceptual framework. This should allow for a cohesive explanation of findings in the research process.

As explained throughout this chapter, there is now ample academic and peer-reviewed research on face-to-face teams and how communication and design influence effectiveness and productivity. There has been little academic research on remote teams on this topic recently on this topic. There is research done in the practical business arena on this topic.

Operational Definitions for the Study

The operational definitions pertinent to this study are:

Academic research: This is about peer-reviewed traditional academic dissertation research.

Apollo Effect: As coined in by, Gershkov and Schweinzer (2021); the Apollo Effect is the development of a “Dream Team”, made up of subject matter experts. In the Apollo Effect this team design concept and how the team members do not interact well with each other. This term specifically defines when Dream Teams do not function properly as a team.

Boss Ware: This term references employee monitoring software programs that are used to observe remote employees. This includes keystroke monitoring and communications software like Slack and Microsoft Teams where the availability of employees is reported.

Dream teams: Within the writing by (Bakken, 2019), there is a concept when designing remote teams. Dream Teams refers to designing teams that are the best of the best at what they do regardless of how they collaborate or blend into the team cohesively.

Effectiveness: As a business term effectiveness refers to the quality level of which a task or process is completed towards the overall higher business performance.

Face-to-face teams: This term refers to the traditional physical workplace.

Followership: This term details the role of those not in a leadership capacity who are arguably a business's most excellent resource and asset.

Leadership: This term is used to detail those in management roles.

Older research: This term references academic, peer-reviewed research that is more than five years old.

Productivity: This term is defined as a measure of output of work that contributes to an employee's role within an organization.

Professional isolation: As detailed in work by Cascio (2000), professional isolation is the feeling many remote employees and managers experience regarding how often there have regular observation by and interaction with management and upper management. Thus, there is the potential for remote employees and managers to be overlooked for promotion and raises. Also, remote teams that do not get a lot of oversight or interaction with upper management tend to seem expendable to upper management during economic downturns.

Practical research: This is research conducted by nonacademic entities, such as government statistical findings or business news outlets such as *Forbes* and *Harvard Business Review*.

Remote teams: The term refers to teams or groups of employees working from home or telecommuting as their workplace.

Subject Matter Expert: Subject Matter Experts otherwise known as SME's are specialists that are often consulted on the topic of which they specialize.

Social isolation: As detailed in work by Cascio (2000), it is a concept where it is often forgotten that business is a social industry. If an employee feels cut off from the social aspects of a business that helps with bonding, it can affect team effectiveness.

Team Design: within the process of creating teams in work environment personality types are taken into account along with skill levels and experience.

Subject Matter Expert/ SME: An expert in a particular task or field or subject. This is also referenced by the acronym of SME.

Assumptions and Limitations

Limitations are:

The study is being done as a qualitative methodology which uses a smaller sample size. Many participants may have less experience working remotely than others due to COVID-19 lockdowns causing many to abruptly convert to remote.

Assumptions are:

Participants are providing honest answers. Remote interviews via Microsoft Teams will provide more flexibility for participants to be interviewed.

Summary and Organization of the Study

The U.S. Board of Labor and Statistics reported that over 20% of Americans work remotely, at least periodically. Browne (2018) reported that 70% of global citizens work remotely. This creates an opportunity for additional research as the remote workplace environment is growing, and so is the need for additional academic research on the topic of remote teams. However, these statistics are from before the COVID-19 pandemic and how the remote workplace has been embraced through necessity—creating a need for more research looking at what academic research and practical research is available on

the topics of remote team followership design and communication affect productivity in these teams.

There is also the issue of limited academic research on remote team followership, and what academic research currently available is outdated. However, there is some more current academic research of followership and more recent practical business research done on remote teams. However, much of the more updated practical research is from the perspective of leadership. Followership is an essential concept within a business.

Followership is the yin to the yang. It creates symmetry and balance within an organization. With the rise in remote teams and the followership of said teams, there needs to be more research to fill the gaps. This study is meant to update the research and bring back some balance to the research currently available on the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Communication and team design are commonly considered when developing teams in an effort to ensure productivity. However, in remote teams Cascio (2000), team design and communication may not be factored in. Instead, the team design model for remote teams appears to favor the practice of creating, “dream teams” (Sridhar et al. 2006). Dream teams involve having the putting together a team of the best in a field. The thought behind these dream team designs is if outstanding experts within the dream team design being remote may be more efficient. However, this does not factor in collaboration skills needed to successfully communicate within a remote workplace or team to complete goals. As detailed by Sridhar et al. (2006), many experts do not necessarily collaborate well with others and may have clashing personality types.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of remote employment has become more mainstream. Although remote as a concept of remote work is a topic of study that has been researched since the 1980s, there is still limited academic research on remote work (Streitfeld, 2020). The topic of followership and remote employment within peer-reviewed, academic research yielded limited findings. Many of the findings on followership in remote work were outside the time duration required for the dissertation research detailed in the Concordia Dissertation parameters. Of the research articles found many of the articles focused on the management or leadership perspective. To ensure that there was enough peer-reviewed literature research additional subtopics were added, including COVID-19 and how productivity is measured in remote workplaces. Much of the peer-reviewed research is outside the five to seven-year time duration as detailed in the dissertation parameters. The additional subtopics added also addressed an issue found

in the initial literary research where many research items were found to be outside the five to seven-year time duration as detailed in the dissertation parameters to meet the requirements for more current peer reviewed literature. Literature that is older than the five to seven year time duration falls into the seminal literature category of the literary research.

Strategy for Identifying Applicable Research

The starting point for the research was a general Google scholarly article search. The first keywords I searched were: *virtual work; virtual teams; remote work; remote teams; followership; communication; team design; productivity; and how productivity is measured remotely.*

After gathering initial onsite work research within the duration parameters, the research evolved to combinations the above noted key terms. The research findings when the key terms were combined in the Google Scholar database brought up peer-reviewed articles more than five to seven years duration requirements. Using Google Scholar work research yielded 42 citations. Of the 20 peer-reviewed articles relevant to the dissertation topic nine of the articles were more than five to seven years old. The oldest peer-reviewed article cited is Cascio (2000), which is over twenty years old but the information within the article is important supporting research and should be included.

I gathered the practical research from trusted industry sources, such as *The Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, and *CNN Business*. This is in concert with statistical data pulled from the U.S. Department of Labor and Statics regarding remote work. I obtained a subscription to *The Harvard Business Review* in order to have access to the academic studies done by the university. However, the academic studies I found in *The*

Harvard Business Review membership within the key word search did not meet the duration requirements.

When limited research was found that met both the duration requirements and the framework of followership for peer-reviewed research additional research resources were needed. An attempt to use JSTOR and SAGE databases did not yield enough findings to get to the 50 citations within the duration parameters. To enhance research, I contacted the local city library in Santa Clara. The search within the city of Santa Clara library was only accessible remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions. This uncovered more periodicals containing practitioner research, as well as seminal and core research. This rounded out the research to 42 citations in all.

After reaching out to the resource representative at the Concordia University's Klinck Memorial Library online resources and attending a more in-depth dissertation research tutorial on the use of the library research resources more tools and databases were available. However, the databases searches using the key terms and combinations of the key terms yielded the same findings as the Google search. Many of the articles found were either too old for the dissertation parameters and most of them were within the leadership framework. The older literature is utilized as seminal literature while the more recent literature in the subtopics is used to meet the requirements of peer reviewed literature within a less than five-to-seven-year duration.

To address this shortage of research within the dissertation time frame the following key words were added: *COVID-19*, *Corona Virus*, and *lockdown*. The use of these terms combined with the key words more in line with the specific aspects of the dissertation research resulted in more current peer-reviewed research findings. Using key

words specific to the pandemic also yielded more current research to put the total research at 54 citations. Of the 56 citations, nine are relevant peer-reviewed articles that are more than the five to seven-year duration requirement. Although the use of COVID-19 as a key term has made the pandemic a more prevalent aspect of the research topic.

Reputability and Extensiveness of the Literature Review

I collected the initial 42 research citations throughout the development of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this proposal. I employed online library resources and library database both locally and within the Concordia University library for the research. The research findings were all from reliable database search engines such as Google and EBSCO within the Concordia University's Klinck Memorial Library online resources.

The initial search within the Concordia University's Klinck Memorial Library online resources did not pull up any peer-reviewed articles that were not already part of the citation list. The search within the Concordia University's Klinck Memorial Library after having a tutorial also did not yield any new sources that were peer reviewed. To assist with this lack of findings, I sought additional guidance from the Concordia Chair of the Doctoral Programs within the College of Business. Their response was that this dissertation was focused on COVID-19 and remote work so there should be ample peer-reviewed research and no wiggle room to be provided.

To ensure that the citations met the dissertation requirements, I conducted an additional Google search focusing on productivity of remote teams and how productivity is being measured in remote workplaces. This yielded an additional 15 citations that were all scholarly articles and within the five-to-seven-year requirements of the dissertation.

The research citations on this aspect of the dissertation topic most were written within the last one to two years.

The initial topic only referenced that new practical research was initially found due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 was not a focal point of the research prior to the additional guidance. The issue remained that at the time of research the bulk of the peer-reviewed articles found that fell within the actual topic did not meet the duration requirement. The search also did not produce at the time peer-reviewed articles that were within the framework of followership.

This caused the research to shift to include COVID-19 into the overall focus of the topic. The fact that I found more peer-reviewed research within Concordia University's Klinck Memorial Library online resources such as EBSCO, SAGE, and JSTOR enabled the citation requirements to be met. I exhausted all research literature avenues to meet the guidelines and ensure the use of reliable source materials.

Literature of the Theoretical Framework of the Conceptual Framework

The framework of followership is an important viewpoint in research. My research on the topic of remote teams did not include many peer-reviewed articles within the followership lens.

The utilization of the research in, Grant and Osanloo (2014) details the framework theory and research methodology. Grant and Osanloo (2014) employed literary theories in the development of dissertation research. The article, Grant and Osanloo (2014) at the time this section of the text was written the lead author was Chair of the Doctoral Programs at Concordia University Chicago.

Grant and Osanloo (2014); used was regarding the development of followership framework within a qualitative research method. This was exemplified in the concept of writing a dissertation while conceptualizing the dissertation topic as a house. This was used a core literature for the details specifically in writing the dissertation and the development of framework and methodology.

The second framework literature cited is, Crossman and Crossman (2011); which was specifically a literature review of the study of followership framework. This followership framework literature is more in the duration parameters set by the dissertation guidelines. Crossman and Crossman (2011) wrote an article about leadership. The authors of the article, Crossman and Crossman (2011); through the School of Management, University of South Australia.

Bălan's (2019) literature review on both leadership and followership framework is important to the topic research framework. It is also more recent and provides general literary research on followership.

Heise's (2018) smaller qualitative study, featuring only thirteen participants, focused on followership in general and is another source that informed my framework. I found this source through a Google search leading to the Kansas State University Kirmser Library. This peer-reviewed article won the Kansas State University Keirmser Library Award.

Paradis et al. (2016) employed a qualitative approach to examine how data is collected in the medical business arena. Sutton and Austin (2015) examined how qualitative data often may be collected and examined. Though the authors focused on the

medical industry, the information in this literature review is still applicable to the framework methodology of qualitative method.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2021) conducted a literature review of both qualitative and quantitative research literature. The authors discussed the concept of culture in leadership frameworks in relation to diversity and global businesses.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner focused on international business as a key component of remote work. The authors also emphasized the importance of organizational culture in all forms of communication works.

Malakyan (2019) focused on followership in North America, including the relationship between leaders and followers that were in remote workplaces. The author looked at diversity in remote workers and leaders along with other known pitfalls. This literature review is timely in relation to the 2020 pandemic even though it was published without noting the pandemic.

Mughal and Kamal (2019) conducted a literature review focused on followership. The purpose of the book was to influence the additional avenues for research of followership. It was strictly a literature and theory review looking at data from 1988-publication in 2019.

Bufalino (2018) is important because the author noted that the focus on research in leadership has been through the lens of management. Bufalino mirrored the other findings that there is a mimetic framework of leadership and followership. Bufalino (2018), research was a completion of literature reviews.

Review of the Seminal Literature

Seminal literature refers to early that are influential in a particular discipline. For this topic, the seminal literature is the literature that is both pivotal five to seven years duration outlined in the dissertation parameters and may be outside of the duration parameters. For example, Cascio's (2000) qualitative study of remote work, although it focused on the management perspective, is an important piece of seminal literature written twenty years ago. The qualitative data the author used for analysis was done by an internal study at IBM. The internal study showed that using multiple methods of remote including hoteling, hot desking, telework centers, and fully remote work. The author collected data from 20,000 employees. Cascio also brought up topics related to remote work regarding professional and social isolation as a pitfall for management to mitigate. The author also touched on the topic of team design and the use of dream teams in remote work.

Sankar and Oliver (2006) the authors conducted using onsite-onshore teams. The case study involved Tyson foods and their offshore vendor Satyam. This study within is important as advantages to remote project management oversight with the use of local management.

Sridhar and Paul (2007) focused on how remote teams within global companies. The authors were both American and Indian scholars. Sridhar and Paul used a controlled environment between American and Indian college students at the two schools represented in the study. The authors described the collection of qualitative data within the research design. Adya et al. (2007) concluded that communication was key to effecting productivity with remote teams in global companies.

Chang (2011) focused on organizational and team design and the effects on productivity. The case study included 72 participants in which the participants were an engineering grad school class at University at Buffalo. The objective was that remote teams are a separate structure of team design. The author observed that remote teams have structured interactions that allow for both anonymity and autonomy. This source is important to my research as it conducted the case study using the subject group of a virtual team.

Tong et al. (2013) employed a literature review to justify findings on spontaneous virtual teams. The authors noted that the research was meant to aid in future academic research. Although this source is more than five years old, the findings are applicable to the move to virtual workplaces in 2020.

Sridhar & Paul (2007); focused on how remote teams within global companies. The authors were both American and Indian scholars. The study that Sridhar & Paul (2007); using a controlled environment between American and Indian college students at the two schools represented in the study. The authors described the collection of qualitative data within the research design. The conclusion of the paper was that communication was key to effecting productivity with remote teams in global companies. I also added the topic of productivity and how it is measured in a remote work environment to my literature research. Avolio et al. (2014) discussed the transition employees and leadership have made since the end of the twentieth century. The authors went into detail about the move from the traditional workplace to a remote one along with how productivity is measured then and now.

Martin (2015) looked at the dissertation of Ricketson (2008) on followership. The thesis argued the concept of courageous followership within the construct how leadership and followership are intertwined. The argument within the topic dissertation being analyzed was that authentic leadership requires a moral authority and followers mimicking leadership behavior. This follows the memetic theory of psychology. Martin (2015) is a literature review.

Review of the Core Literature

The difference between core and seminal literature is that seminal literature tends to include major studies and present a major idea or theory. Core literature is different because these types of literature are peer-reviewed literature and fall into the five-to-seven-year duration required. These writings of core literature address key concepts within the topic and research that is essential to the development of a more global perspective on followership in remote work.

In 2020, many people converted spur the moment to work from home due to the pandemic. Baudot and Kelly (2020) also referenced the transition for both followership and leadership into a remote workplace focusing on the question of productivity.

de Vaujany et al. (2021) detailed the methods leaders used in the remote workplace to surveille employees remotely, such as communications systems that enable employers to activate employee cameras attached to workstations. De' et al. (2020) also touched on the topic of surveillance is discussed from the perspective of data management and followership. Zickuhr (2021) also detailed how followers are becoming accustomed to leadership using an array of methods to track and surveille employees.

Miele and Tirabeni (2020) argued that management surveilling employees' wearable devices such as phones, watches, and tablets creates an issue for followers to develop boundaries with work and life balance. Further, the authors asserted that the use of wearable devices in the remote and onsite workplace are being used by leadership to create a power dynamic that can be harmful to the overall labor force. Jensen et al. (2020) also commented on the methods leaders are using to spy on employees and questioned how many of these monitoring practices are violations of privacy. Much like Miele and Tirabeni (2020), Jensen et al. (2020) warned that remote spying as a method of productivity measurement on the part of management has been harmful to remote workers.

COVID-19 has become an international topic as detailed by Elshaiekh et al. (2018) wrote about remote work productivity within the Middle Eastern economy. Prasad et al. (2016) also addressed remote workplaces in the global economy focusing on effectiveness in training and productivity in agriculture.

Researchers have observed that remote work in relation to productivity brings up concerns about the psychological implications of remote work productivity. Galanti et al. (2021) focused on remote work during COVID-19 and found that levels of productivity were high and found little impact on productivity. Toscano and Zappalà (2020) looked at COVID-19-specific work-from-home scenarios focusing on how productivity is managed and how it relates to workers' overall satisfaction in the workplace. Rauch and Ansari (2022) explored how productivity is measured in remote work since COVID-19 and the false morality or remote work that leadership may be placing on followers. According to

the authors, this false moral argument hurts employees' mental health regardless of the followers' feelings about remote work.

Kniffin et al. (2021) explored COVID-19 in relation to the workplace. The authors focused on business psychology of how COVID-19 thrust many into a remote work environment, including pitfalls management was unable to foresee. This is a literary review-based research article that was peer-reviewed and published in the American Psychological Journal. Though the journal was not specifically a business academic site the article focused on business.

Demary et al. (2019) focused on health care, non-technical arena how training by leadership effected followership within remote teams. The authors also explored in depth the business psychology of remote workers from the vantage point of literature already available on the topic. This source is important as a review of seminal literature because of it touches on the concepts of followership in remote work.

Wrycza and Maślankowski (2020) examined social media and what the data analytics revealed about what users thought of remote work. The method analyzes the social media data included acquisition of data from Twitter. The next step was processing and statistically analyzing in a quantitative method. The data the authors analyzed was sparked by the shift into remote work during the pandemic. Wrycza and Maślankowski split the analytics data into three parts—pre, during and post pandemic—and how remote work prior to COVID-19 was for many optional, while during COVID-19 there was a mass transition. The third part was that post pandemic remote work for many is a dominant workplace platform. The authors found 82% of people transitioning to permanent remote work.

Young et al. (2020) looked at generational differences and followership. The authors specifically focused on Millennials and Gen Zs in relation to followership during times of emergency. This literary review and focused on the pandemic and the citations used were dated between 1982 and 2018 though the paper was published in 2020.

Lauring and Jonasson (2018) focused on management but kept to the topic of remote teams. In this pre-pandemic source, the authors looked at inclusiveness within remote teams from a management perspective. Lauring and Jonasson (2018) used a qualitative case study approach with 174 team members and 23 team leaders within a Danish manufacturing company that had global virtual teams. Based on a literary analysis, the authors also noted the growing number of remote workers and how common remote work was becoming.

Poppe et al. (2017) examined modes of communication and how they supported remote workers. In this literature review, the authors discussed case studies that were both qualitative and quantitative. Poppe et al. (2017) also focused on how modes of communications affected design of virtual teams. This source helped to combine the research of pre pandemic team design and commination to the more current post pandemic research.

Purvanova et al. (2020) did not reference or factor in COVID-19. The authors conducted a semester-long study with participants numbering in 134 teams and a sample size of 430 people for one group. The second group in the experiment was made up of 86 teams who were remote workers.

Bennett et al. (2021) employed a business psychology perspective to exam fatigue and burn because of video conferencing during the pandemic. The authors used a mixed

method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methodology and employed snowball sampling. The total number of participants was 69, which required multiple recruitment methods to find participants. Bennett et al. found that though the face-to-face communication supported through video conference was helpful, it was also emotionally tiresome.

Eubanks et al. (2016) explored team roles and design within remote teams. This source was published pre-pandemic and featured more traditional research on remote teams and design. The authors researched partially distributed teams (PDTs) or hybrid teams in which the teams worked partly in the office or not all members were completely remote. Eubanks et al. based their study on literary research and sampled a team of 28 PDT virtual workers in a qualitative study featuring a followership framework.

Silva and Merino (2017) did extensive literature research on virtual team design pre pandemic. The authors conducted a quantitative case study based on the total day-to-day experience of three remote workers to analyze the data sets of work being done. Making the sample smaller regarding the participants and the duration of the case study.

The pandemic was difficult for the economy and workforce. Min et al. (2021) noted the use of deep learning technique and aimed to examine how remote workers during COVID-19 were coping emotionally. The authors implemented quantitative method using data from Twitter. Min et al. (2021) touched on the topic of professional and social isolation in relation to remote work and the emotional business psychology.

Blanchard (2021) looked at how COVID-19 effected remote teams informed by a theoretical literature review. The authors aimed to used communication theory and organizational group theory to look at remote teams. Blanchard commented on

communication theory and how it effected of visual communications. The source was written in March of 2021 after much of the United States was in lock down for over a year.

Karl et al. (2021) explored the pitfalls and benefits of teleconferencing. The authors' research design employed comments collected from four cited articles on etiquette in video calls and resulting in 549 data points. Karl et al. converted the data to quantitative statistics using text mining.

Lowe et al. (2020) conducted a national survey in the United Kingdom focused on the dermatology service industry. The authors used qualitative methodology to measure the United Kingdom's dermatology workers confidence in their remote training. The total response rate was 15% of the total registered workers in the field and the total surveyed for the study was 31 participants. COVID-19 caused a worldwide lockdown to slow the spread of the virus.

Garro-Abarca et al. (2021) described the history of remote work and analyzed remote work in relation to productivity. Remote work has been researched in business and technology since the 1980s. The authors employed a leadership framework in a study that involved 317 participants who were all engineers with Agile and programing skills and graduated in the past ten years. The participants worked virtually in global teams. The data collection method was survey, and the methodology were quantitative. Garro-Abarca et al. noted that a drawback of the study was that most of the participants were men. The authors found that the engineers surveyed had substantial technical skills and productivity was not found to be slowed.

Wang et al. (2020) studied remote work during the pandemic with a focus on remote work design, implementation, and communication. The authors conducted a qualitative study of 39 full time remote employees who were not remote workers prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Wang et al. also commented on social and professional isolation.

Gao and Sai (2020) also addressed the topic of professional and social isolation as a pitfall of remote work. The authors specifically focused on women working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and observed that social and professional isolation issues brought up the point of a gendered framework. The research is specifically literature review and from papers that targeted women in remote work.

Klonek et al. (2021) looked specifically at both remote work and hybrid work during the pandemic. Hybrid work is meant to describe when an employee works any amount of time onsite or at home. The study featured 152 participants and 54 teams. The participants were college students between the ages of seventeen and fifty-eight.

Roberts et al. (2021) examined conducting qualitative research remotely, which is relevant to the case design for my dissertation methodology. The study was part of a larger long-term study on homelessness within the student population Houston, Texas. The pandemic exacerbated the homeless crisis and made pausing the study not possible. Roberts et al. (2021) noted communicating was difficult for connecting with the community surveyed. Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) looked at the use of remote work as an option for global business management. The authors examined 101 staffing decisions for a German global firm for a case study throughout 33 countries. Tenzer and Pudelko (2015) focused on what leaders felt were greatest hardships of working globally and how

remote teams within team management functioned in the process of overcoming issues of language barriers and expectations.

Hoegl and Muethel (2016) conducted a global study of 96 software development teams using a qualitative research methodology. The authors focused on shared leadership versus only leadership or followership instead referencing the interconnection of leadership and followership.

Review of the Practitioner Literature

Practical research is abundant on the topic of remote work and the subtopics of design and communication. I found a plethora of practical research prior to the pandemic and even more after the pandemic started. COVID-19 became an additional subtopic of my study.

Gao and Sai, (2020) and Luring & Jonasson (2018) looked specifically at inclusiveness in remote work. Senz (2020) tackled how remote work and proper team design can hinder discrimination in the workplace. The author based his work on the research of a Professor Michael Luca and his team. Senz (2020) research was based on data collected from Airbnb while the platform design was being analyzed in the study. The study consisted of 6,400 Airbnb hosts and 20 fake Airbnb profiles. The author found that mock profiles with African American- sounding names were denied lodging over 16% of the time. Senz (2020) noted that many of the 16% had not hosted an African American customer and found that remote platforms and remote work allows for data analysis that made discrimination clear.

Bakken (2018) looked at remote teams through the lens of management. The author noted the pitfalls of remote work and how management can address the issues.

Bakken (2021) found that in 2017 only 60% of American companies offered remote work, which included hybrid work. The author also cited a Stanford professor who said that remote workers were found to be more productive and less distracted. The challenges that Bakken identified were all linked to communication and the author advised management to facilitate open and consistent communication.

Bariso (2019) focused on Google and used data collected and published by Google for the subsidiary PiLab reported on their remote programs. The author noted that in the PiLab report there was no evidence of a lack of effectiveness or performance ratings of remote workers. Bariso also commented on no findings of professional isolation which was contrary to the findings of Gao and Sai (2020). In addition, Bariso (2019) proposed that management should take time to know their employees while maintaining clear boundaries.

Jesuthasan (2021) commented how, during the pandemic, many were thrust into a remote workplace and that the pandemic was a field test for the future of work. The author also credited companies that pivoted to helped in COVID-19 mask and ventilator production. Jesuthasan (2021) noted that the six-sigma concept of cross training, use of laptops and other technology tools, like automation, helped companies compete in the post pandemic world.

Knight et al. (2020) noted that communications at inappropriate times, as well as constant communication, are common in remote work due to blurred timing. Blurred timing is the feeling of remote workday contained twenty-four hours (Knight et al. 2020). The author also mentioned that incessant communications was an indication of problematic micro-management.

Koetsier (2020) observed that at that stage of lockdown it was approximated 58% of Americans worked remotely. The author went on to question why all-American workers did not work remotely. Koetsier (2020) speculated that, post pandemic, 60% of workers would work remotely.

The findings in data found on, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2020) differ from Koetsier (2020). The BLS reported that, in 2019, 20% of wage earners worked remotely and 52% of independent contractors worked remotely. The authors also noted that only 34% earned than \$1,621 a week that were remote workers.

The BLS (2020) showed that, in 2020, 23% of full-time workers worked remotely and 37% had multiple jobs. In addition, the authors reported that 33% of the 23% of remote workers had an undergraduate degree, while 41% of the 23% of remote workers have advanced degrees of master's or higher.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2021) reported qualitative data on remote work and the impact from COVID-19 collected by survey. The authors found that in July of 2020 one in four employed people worked from home during the pandemic. That stat showed that three months before 31% of employed people worked remote and by July of 2020 the total amount fell to 26%. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics also showed that women were more likely to work remotely during the pandemic. In addition, the authors reported disparities based on age and ethnicity in relation to remote work during the pandemic. For example, African Americans made up 26% of the total 26% of all remote workers during the pandemic, and Hispanics made up only 19% of the same figure.

Ludwig (2020) focused on COVID-19, remote work, and communications. The author commented on remote communications and how the stress many experienced from the pandemic tone was important. Sandberg et al. (2020) commented on the similar information found in, Knight et al. (2020) and after-hours communication. The authors touched on redefined workdays due to time zones it agreed about boundaries on communications. Sandberg et al. (2020) also considered the tracking of communication and of work hours. The authors asserted that time spent working during the pandemic became less important than quality of work completed.

Woroch (2020) noted a statistic that only one in three workers worked remotely prior to the pandemic. This differed from the data found by the BLS (2020), which collected data in 2019. Woroch focused on the management perspective regarding conversion to remote collaboration. The author argued that communication as a key skill needed for remote work and management may need to adapt to the type and level of communication needed.

Schohl (2020) used nonprofit businesses as the focus, and highlighted people who worked remote pre pandemic. The author observed that there were workers prior to COVID-19 who worked remotely and would not work in office by choice. Schohl (2020) considered nonprofit companies discussed within a leadership framework.

Application of the Literature

The purpose of the study is an exploration of followership in remote teams and how communication and team design may affect productivity. More results were found when I added the additional subtopic of COVID-19 and productivity in remote workplaces. The requirement for the literature review of the dissertation was 50 citations

that fell within a duration of five to seven- years. That task proved difficult without the subtopics of COVID-19 and productivity in remote workplaces. Once the subtopics were added to the dissertation the topic took on more dynamic concept of pre and post pandemic concepts of remote teams.

Using older sources from the seminal literature created a then and now view of the research. Remote work had become a necessity for many businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Researchers have explored the topic of remote work in peer-reviewed, and practical literature since the 1980s. Since the pandemic, researchers have focused on COVID-19 in relation to remote work and remote teams and how it affected business. This provided an opportunity for more research on aspects of remote work subtopics.

The research showed that many of the authors, of both peer-reviewed and practical research focused on a management perspective. That caused a need for onsite and remote work research to be required for the dissertation. Like a hybrid workplace the dissertation research worked on two levels onsite and remotely. The practical research that fell within the dissertation duration requirements did not all focus on COVID-19.

The practical research found developed the peer-reviewed research and all statistical data found as practical data together provided a more global perspective. The statistical data allowed for all the different literature types noted to relate to each other and support the premise of the dissertation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the study is an exploration of followership and leadership perspectives in remote work and how communication and team design may affect productivity. The subtopic of the dissertation is the analysis of COVID-19 effects pre and post pandemic on remote teams and how design and communication within a followership framework. I also added an additional subtopic of how productivity is being measured remotely since the pandemic to increase the number of peer-reviewed articles for the literary research.

Qualitative research design would be the appropriate methodology for this dissertation. Paradis et al. (2016) found a qualitative approach to be useful in research that is subjective or based on the sample group's personal experiences. The usage of the theoretical foundations of behavioral theory and leadership/servant theory is compatible with using a qualitative conceptual framework in the research of the dissertation topic. As much of the behavioral concepts from the viewpoint of followers within remote teams are based on personal perceptions, qualitative research allows room for the research to blend the theoretical foundations and this conceptual framework. This should allow for a cohesive explanation of findings in the research process.

Statement of the Business Problem, Research Question(s) and Participant Inquires

COVID-19 has created a new push in remote research; research is still needed to learn about remote teams. This dissertation aims to examine the concepts within remote team design and if team design and communication affect productivity and how productivity is measured in a remote workplace. As a control to balance the findings

there is a separate set of questions for participants in leadership roles to observe if there is a disconnect between leadership and followership.

The research questions for all of these dissertation participants are the following:

RQ1: What aspects of team design have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

RQ2: What aspects of communication have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

RQ3: What effect does remote work instead of in person work have on team design and how does this affect productivity among remote teams?

The participant questions were divided into categories for Followership and Leadership within the one-on-one interviews and the focus group interviews. The Participant Inquiries for these dissertation participants who followers are the following:

- PI1: How does team design affect the productivity and effectiveness of remote teams?
- PI2: How does a lack of communication in remote settings affect productivity?
- PI3: How does professional isolation affect remote teams?
- PI4: How is productivity being measured in a remote setting?
- PI5: Is personal productivity being measured in a way that reflects accurately the output and quality of the work being completed?
- PI6: Do you feel your team is an even blend of subject matter experts and practitioners?

- PI7: How do you observe leaders and how team design is assessed towards building a well-functioning team? What key factors are leaders observed using to evaluate team design?
- PI8: What actions are observed when leaders design or redesign teams?
- PI9: How do you observe leaders evaluating the results of team's work? How do they define and measure success? Are these defined parameters of success transparent and shared with team members?
- PI10: What are major agreements and disagreements between leadership and followers in assessing, taking actions, and evaluating the results of teamwork?
- PI11: Based on the Dream Team theory and the experiences of both leaders and followers, are their emerging best practices for followers in a team environment?

The Participant Inquiries for these dissertation participants who are leaders, are the following:

- PI1: How does team design affect the productivity and effectiveness of remote teams?
- PI2: Is there a lack of communication in a remote workplace?
- PI3: How does professional isolation affect remote teams?
- PI4: How is productivity being measured in a remote setting?
- PI5: Is the productivity metric measurement showing that the level of productivity meets set productivity goals?
- PI6: Do you feel your team is an even blend of subject matter experts and practitioners?

- PI7: Based on the Dream Team theory and the experiences of both leaders and followers, are their emerging best practices for followers in a team environment?
- PI 8: How as leaders do you go about assessing the team design for building a well- functioning team? What are the key factors that are considered?
- PI 9: How do followers go about assessing the design of the team when joining a team? What are the key factors considered?
- PI10: What actions as leaders are being taken when designing or redesigning a team?
- PI11: How as leaders are results of a team's work evaluated? How as leaders is success measured? What are the key accomplishments or challenges that have been observed while leading a team?
- PI12: What are major agreements and disagreements between leadership and followers in assessing, taking actions, and evaluating the results of teamwork?

Research Methodology

When originally researching the topic of the dissertation there were no peer-reviewed articles on remote work from a followership was found. Also, COVID-19 is a once in generation plague and it is a difficult to replicate a similar situation in a relativistic manor. The purpose of the study is an exploration of followership and leadership perspectives in remote work and how communication and team design may affect productivity. The subtopic of the paper is the analysis of COVID-19 effects pre and post pandemic on remote teams and how design and communication within a followership framework, and how productivity is being measured remotely.

In further research adding in the additional subtopics research there was still little research on the subtopics from a follower's perspective found. Since there is no way to predict the outcome of the study qualitative will help develop later studies within a quantitative research method.

Research Design

The research design to be employed is a qualitative methodology to research followership and leadership perspectives in remote teams prior to and post pandemic with an emphasis on measuring followership productivity and team design while factoring in stresses found in remote workplaces. I will interview individual participants method via Microsoft Teams to gather qualitative data from the followership perspective on work in remote workplaces and the effects of remote work on productivity and team design.

Research Setting

I am employing multiple methods to obtain participants for this study. Such as the use of social media for finding and vetting participants I have posted to social media, including reaching out to schools of which I am an alumnus. I have also contacted the Business department chair at California State University East Bay to see if there are policies in place for me to ask fellow instructors and students to participate. This also includes reaching out to Southern New Hampshire University's alumni community via LinkedIn to obtain additional participants.

Concordia University Chicago also has a grad student email system that can also be used to find participants within the university. Once the research department approves chapters one through three of the dissertations, permission can be requested to use the graduate student email system to obtain participants.

There are also additional services to obtain participants for the study such as the use of Qualtrics or similar participant resource system forms. With the use of Qualtrics as a consent form and survey tool the link will be submitted through listserv to be published on the Concordia University Grad Student email and published using social media to obtain participants.

Sample Selection

For selecting a sample group for this research, the software system Qualtrics will be used to obtain participants. Qualtrics provides its services towards finding research participants for free use for research being conducted by faculty members at California State University Stanislaus of which I teach. The software system will not be engaged towards finding participants until IRB approval is granted. Selected participants from Qualtrics will be remote workers and remote leaders.

Data Sources

The conclusion of this study will present based on qualitative data analysis of remote followership perspectives on productivity and team design in remote work. The parameter for the dissertation requires at least 25 participants or a subject company for observation for the interview process of collecting data. The data sources are participant interviews, focus group, and documentation.

Within the individual interviews Microsoft Teams to record the interview with live transcription. The cameras will be on and the interview will be done one on one with the participants and the Principal Investigator.

The focus group procedure will be to have each person meet via Microsoft Teams in a group chat call. Within this part of the process the cameras will be off, and all

participants will be asked ahead of time to set their names in Microsoft Teams as their initials to protect anonymity. Video recording with closed captioning/ live transcription will be used to document the findings and allow for proper coding into NVIVO The first focus group will be followers, and the second group will be leaders.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In the case of this design of interviewing participant transcripts and member checking as far as validating participants will be conducted. Also, as interviews will be done via Microsoft Teams with the initial interviews with the camera on will help provide a visual of each person is helpful for verification of participants.

Data Collection Procedures

The steps for collecting the data thus far are:

- Interview via Microsoft Teams
- Take notes and video the interviews so I can take notes and verify the notes I made during the interview.
- Use coding software to save data findings. Since this is a qualitative research topic the coding software would be NVivo.
- Compare findings and see if focus grouping would be needed.

Data Analysis Procedures

I need to look up any additional statistical citations that may be needed to note data analysis process in case there are additional steps to be added. This section there needs to be a breakdown of how the data will be analyzed.

Ethical Considerations and Procedures

To diminish any ethical issues in recruiting people to participate I am only looking for in passing acquaintance and removed participants who do not work in my field or with me regularly. Using coding software NVivo instead of coding by hand will help to lessen any breach in data. This section will need to be expanded on.

Summary of Research

In 2020, the world came to a standstill because COVID-19 was ravaging the planet. To slow the spread social distancing and lockdowns were put in place. This caused many workers who did not work remotely prior to suddenly become remote workers. This proposed dissertation seeks to measure how remote work pre, during, and post pandemic have changed workplace culture through a followership and leadership frameworks and to see the effects within remote work on team design and communication. This is a rare opportunity to not only study remote work academically in a followership lens and a leadership lens. This also provides an opportunity to get the qualitative findings of people who have lived through one of the worst pandemics since the Spanish flu.

Chapter 4: Data Results and Analysis

The topic of this dissertation was an exploration of the followership and leadership perspectives of remote work and how communication and team design may affect productivity within remote teams. The research design employed was a qualitative methodology, which included interviewing participants to research followership in remote teams prior to and post-pandemic, with an emphasis on measuring followership productivity and team design while factoring in stresses found in remote workplaces. In this research I focused on followership and leadership perspectives of remote work derived from the collected data, as well as used the experiences of participants in leadership roles in remote teams as a control group for comparison with followers' experiences. The only modification made was time duration for the interview process; a total of 13 of participants were interviewed and took part in the focus groups.

Where the Qualtrics survey was used to obtain participants, it showed that over 42% of participants agreed to participate but never connected. This figure is normal for qualitative research. The communications software Microsoft Teams was used to conduct the one-on-one interviews and focus groups. Using the functions on Microsoft Teams to record the one-on-one participant interviews and the focus groups also afforded the use of the transcription function. The transcription function created detailed transcripts for all participant one-on-one interviews and for both focus groups. The transcripts enabled detailed and accurate coding in the Nvivo software and allowed for imputing the coded data into Excel and thus its graphing.

I split the findings into four categories. This was done to organize and focus the research on the experiences of those in the followership demographic. The data collected

from those in the leadership demographic were used as a control. I organized the dissertation in this way also to observe any potential disconnections between the views of those in both demographics.

The four participant and data categories were labelled as follows:

1. Individual participant interviews with those who identified themselves as being in the followership demographic. This defined those participants who did not have any managerial duties or did not oversee any employee's performance other than their own.
2. Individual participant interviews with those who identified themselves as being in the leadership demographic. This demographic was defined as those who had people-management responsibilities.
3. Focus group participant interviews with those who identified themselves as being in the followership demographic. These focus groups were made up of participants from the individual participant interviews with those who identified as being in the followership demographic.
4. Focus group participant interviews with those who identified themselves as being in the leadership demographic. These focus groups were made up of participants from the individual participant interviews with those who identified as being in the leadership demographic.

Data Results

The focus of the research was the qualitative experience of followers and leaders in remote work and their experience with productivity, communication, and team design in a COVID-19 and endemic phase. The control was the inclusion of leadership and

followership perspectives in the data-collection process and the use of focus groups divided by the role of follower and leader. The initial Qualtrics survey used to obtain participants through the listserv system at Concordia University Chicago yielded 41 participants who agreed to be interviewed. The initial survey was meant to help collect extra data and determine the qualifications of the participants for the interview process. The data obtained in the initial survey showed the following information:

To Question 7 that asked “Have you or do you currently work remotely in a non-leadership role?,” 69.7% of the 33 respondents stated that they were still working remotely. Of those who answered the survey question, “Are you a manager that has led remote teams prior to or since 2020,” only 48.5% stated that they were still managing a remote team prior to or since the pandemic’s onset. Those who managed teams reported having at least six direct remote reports where the participants who identified as followers noted being in remote teams made up of up to twelve participants.

From those participants who consented through Qualtrics to the organizing and interviewing process, only eight identified as being in leadership category roles, and five identified as being in the followership category. The total number of participants interviewed was 13, which is a common figure in qualitative data research. Fewer participants wanted to take part in the focus group, with only three from the leadership group and two from the followership group being able to take part. The questions and results for each interview group and the focus group follow below.

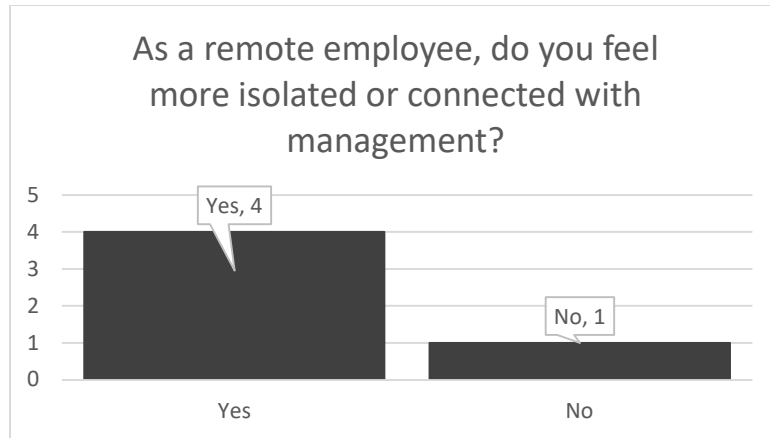
Followership Group

For the question, “As a remote employee, do you feel more isolated or connected with management?,” 80% of participants answered they felt more connected, and 20% of

those in the followership group felt that they were more disconnected from management and more isolated (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

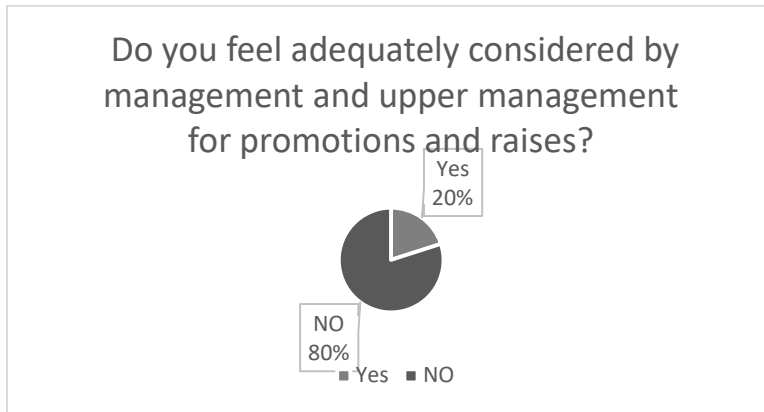
As a Remote Employee, Do You Feel More Isolated or More Connected to Management?



For the second question, “Do you feel adequately considered by management and upper management for promotions and raises?” which I posed to those participants who identified as being in the followership group, the data showed that only 20% felt adequately considered by management for promotions and raises (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

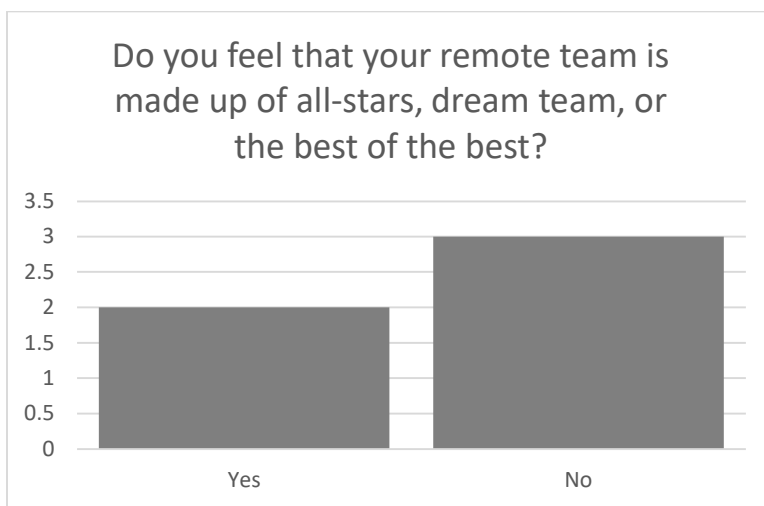
Do You Feel Adequately Considered by Management and Upper Management for Promotions and Raises?



(see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Do You Feel That Your Remote Team Is Made Up of All-Stars, Dream Team, or the Best of the Best?



(see Figure 5).

Figure 5

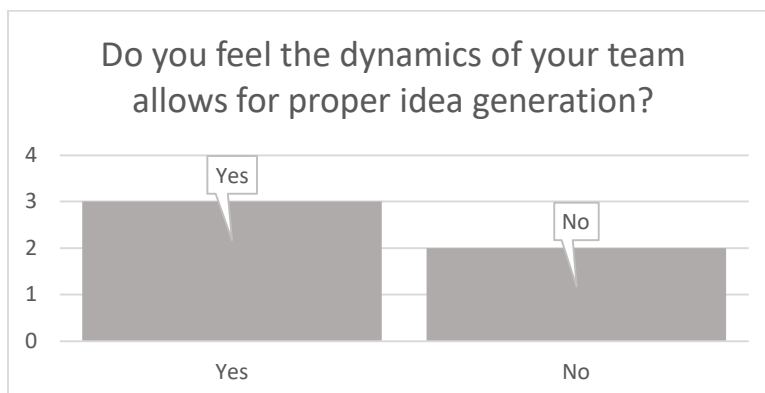
Do You Feel Your Team Connects Well and Interacts Well Together?



(see Figure 6).

Figure 6

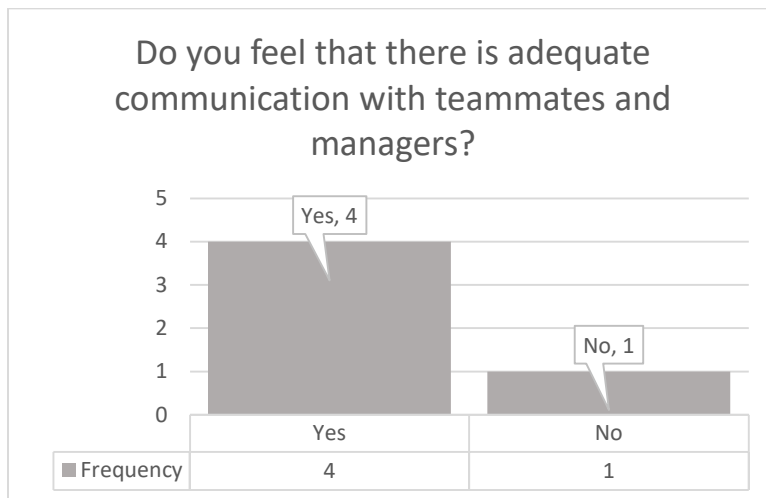
Do You Feel the Dynamics of Your Team Allows for Proper Idea Generation?



(see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Do You Feel That There Is Adequate Communication With Teammates and Managers?



(see Figure 8).

Figure 8

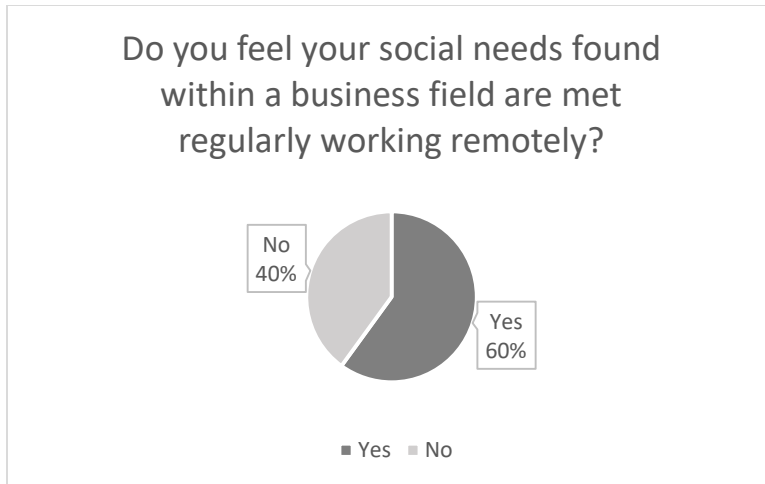
Do You Feel Your Team Communicates Effectively Together and With Management?



(see Figure 9).

Figure 9

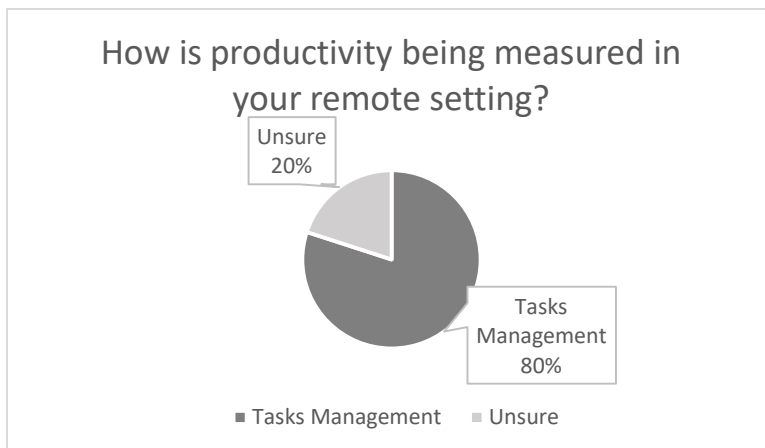
Do You Feel Your Social Needs Found Within a Business Field Are Met Regularly When Working Remotely?



(see Figure 10).

Figure 10

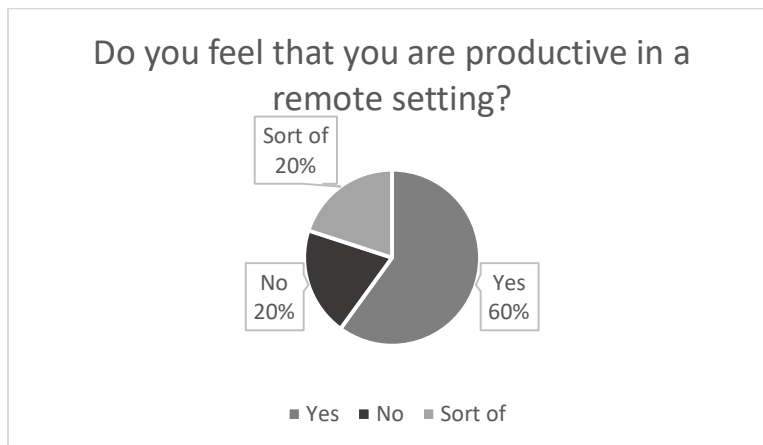
How Is Productivity Being Measured in Your Remote Setting?



(see Figure 11).

Figure 11

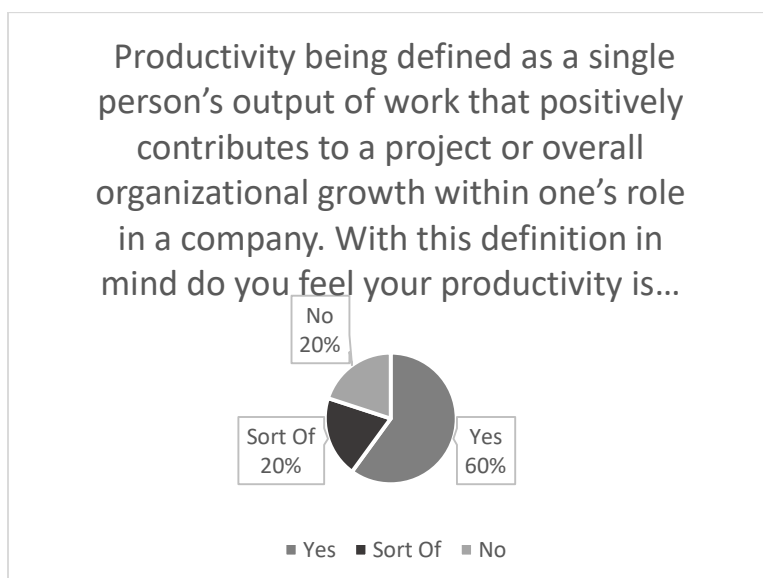
Do You Feel That You Are Productive in a Remote Setting?



(see Figure 12)

Figure 12

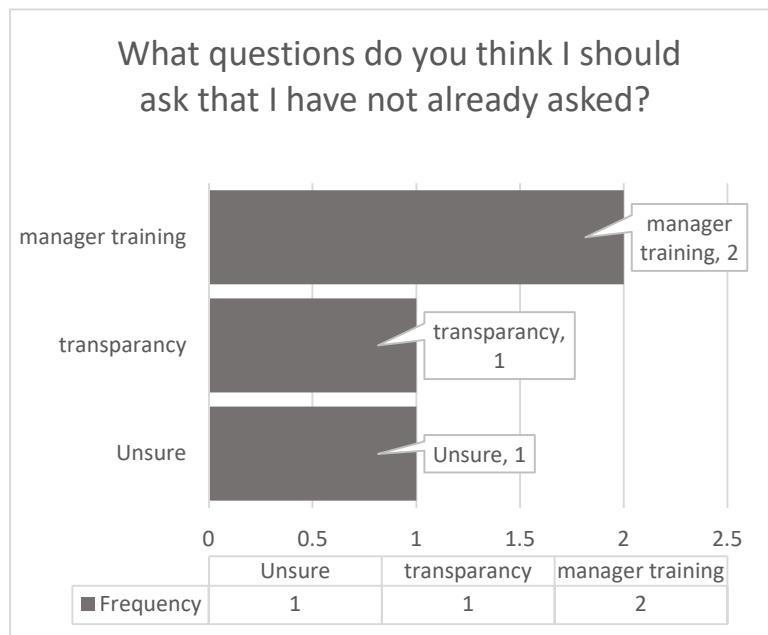
Do You Feel Your Productivity Is Helped or Hindered in a Remote Setting?



(see Figure 13).

Figure 13

What Questions Do You Think I Should Ask That I Have not Already Asked?



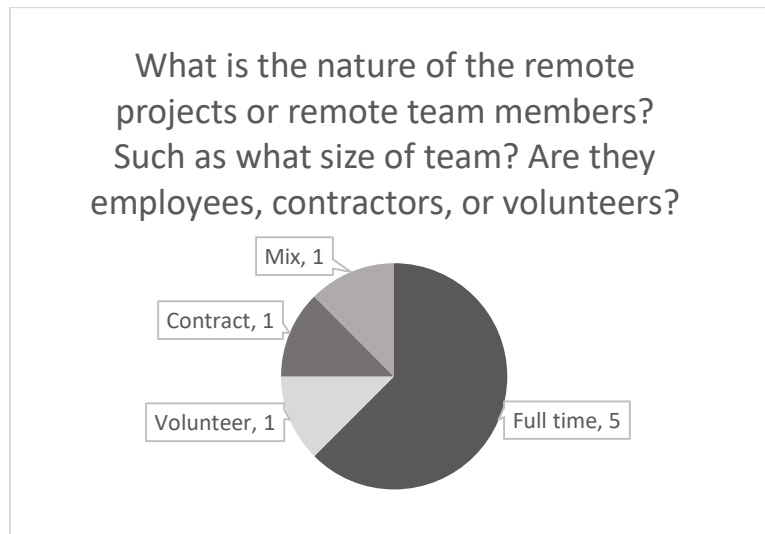
For this last question, used in the individual interviews, one of the participants asked, “why is it that managers are not considered part of followership, since all managers have managers above them?” Additionally, another participant noted that, “Management has lost touch with the needs and humanity of team members”

Leadership Group

Figures 14–24 give visual representation for the distribution of participant answers to the interview questions asked.

Figure 14

What Is the Nature of Remote Projects or Remote Team Members?

**Figure 15**

What Is the Experience of the Team Members?

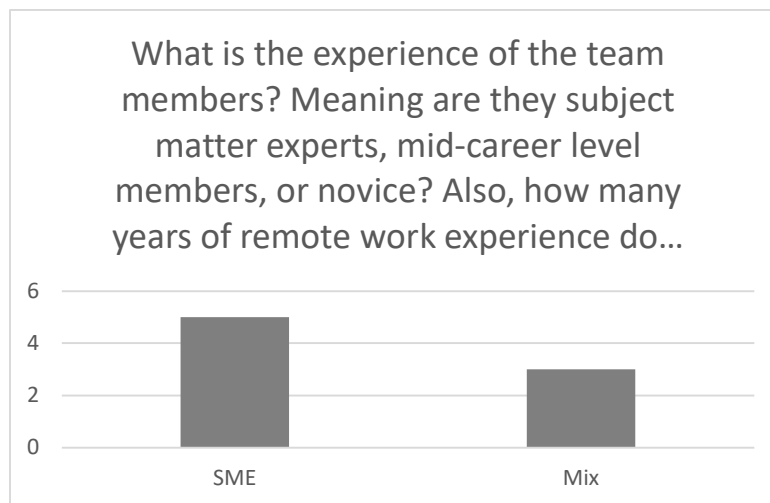


Figure 16

Does the Team Referenced in Your Answers as a Leader Have a Need for Subject Matter Expertise? And if so, to What Extent?

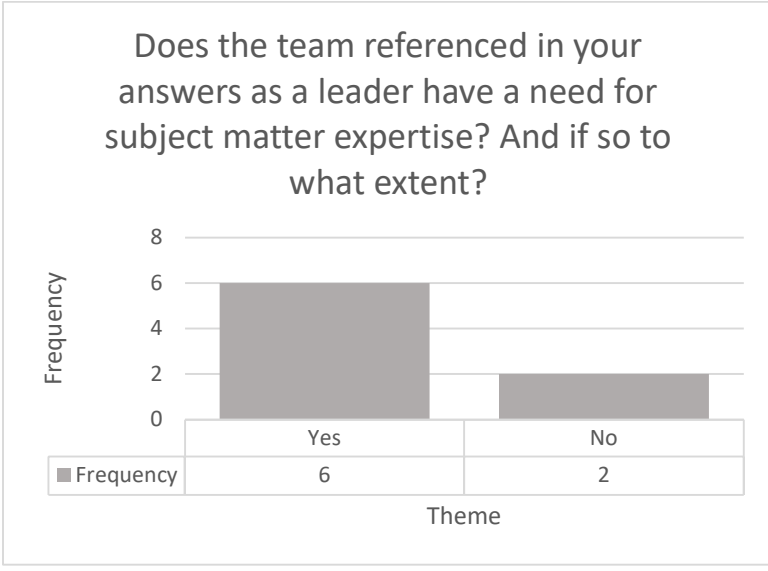


Figure 17

What Is Your Personal Experience as a Leader of Remote Teams?

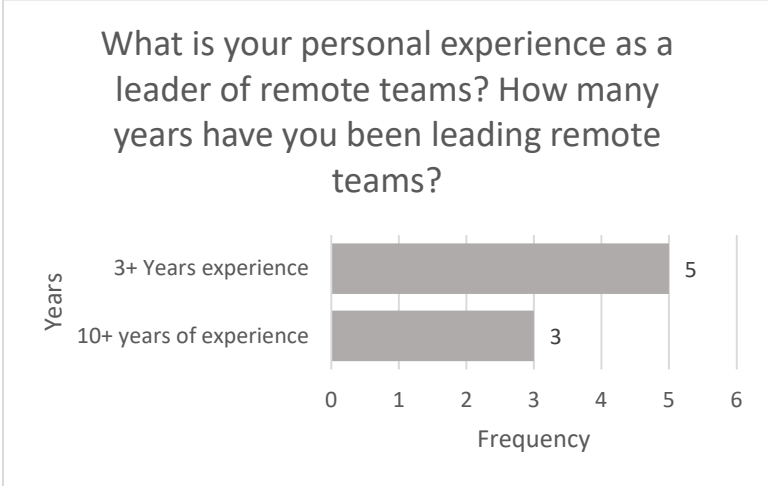


Figure 18

What Actions Do You Take in the Process of Designing or Redesigning a Remote Team?

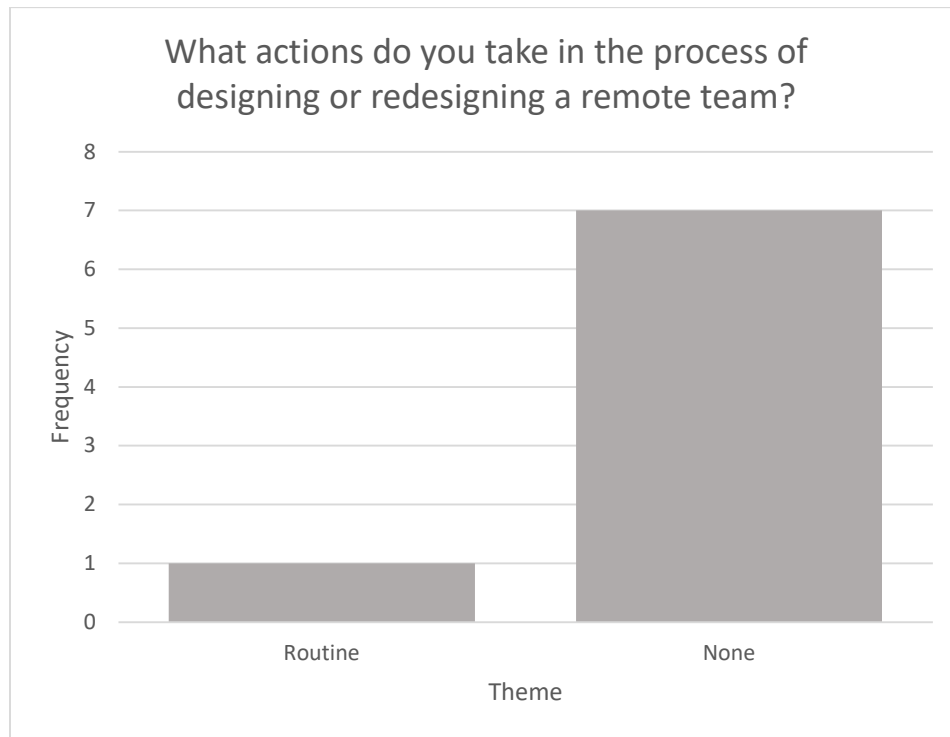


Figure 19

In Your Actions as a Leader Designing Teams, Do These Actions Differ From a Remote Team to an Onsite Team?



Figure 20

What Steps Do You Take to set Goals for Individual Team Members?

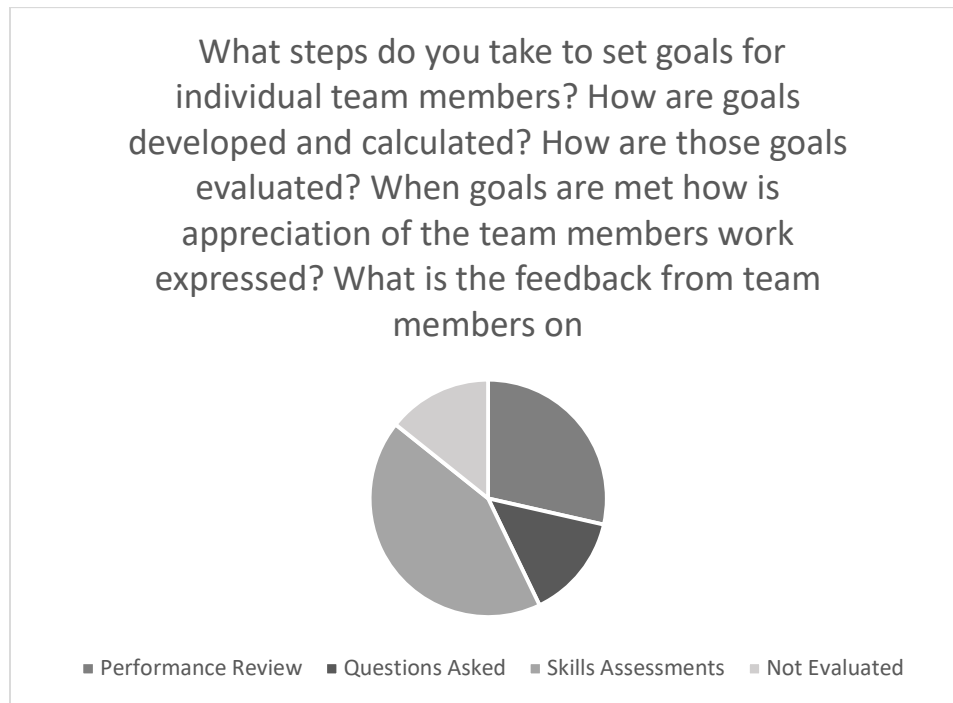


Figure 21

What Methods Do You Use as a Leader to Create Clear Communications With Team Members?

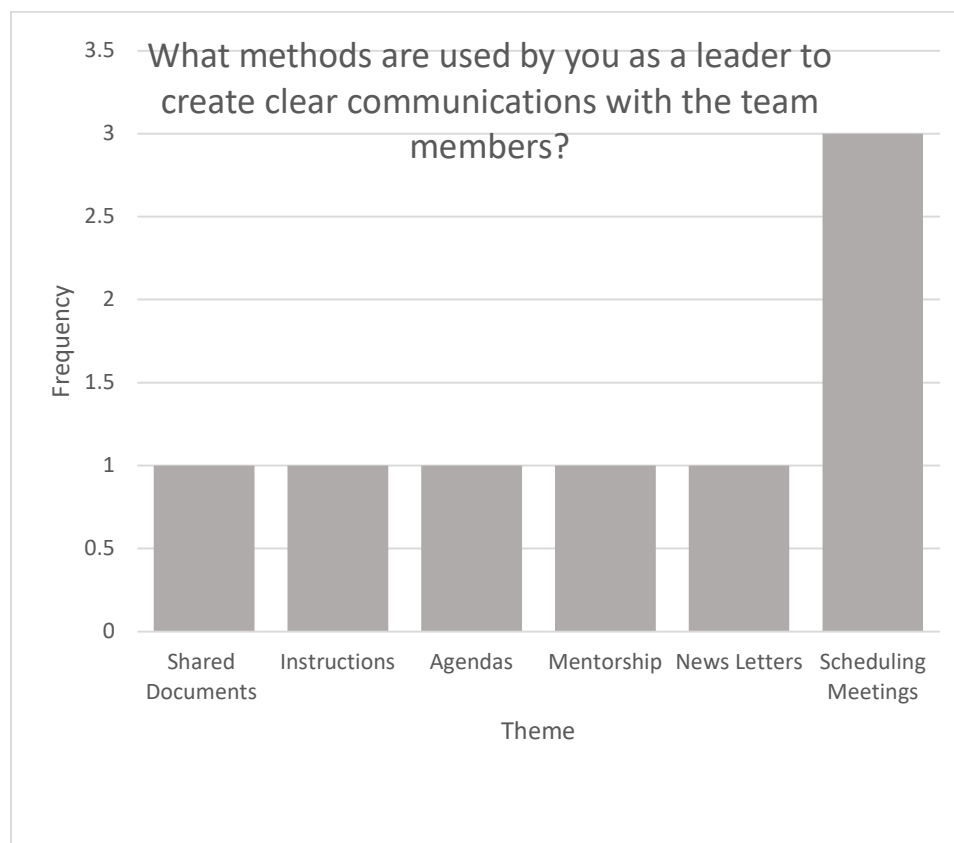


Figure 22

What Steps Do You Take as a Leader to Address Conflict Resolution in Remote Teams?

**Figure 23**

How Is Productivity Being Measured?

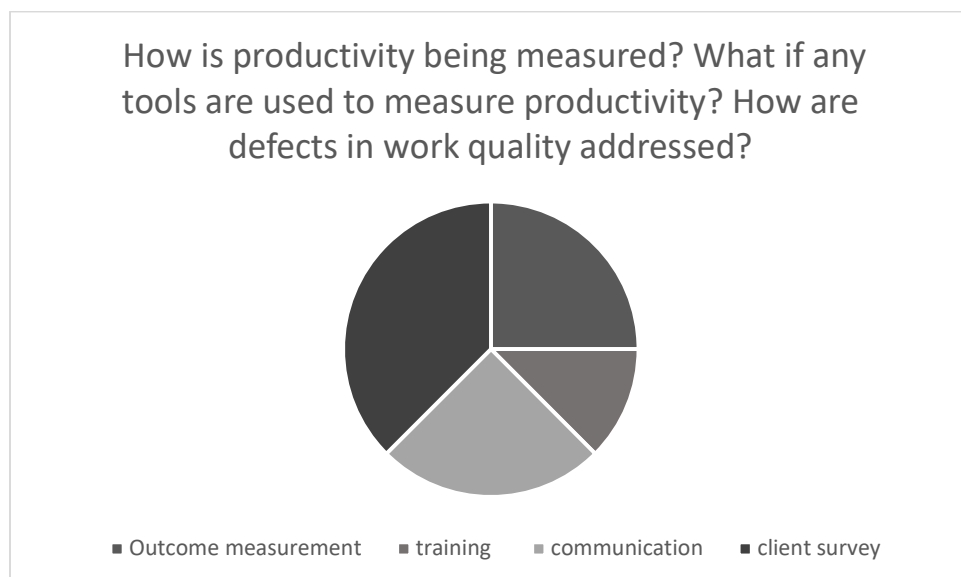
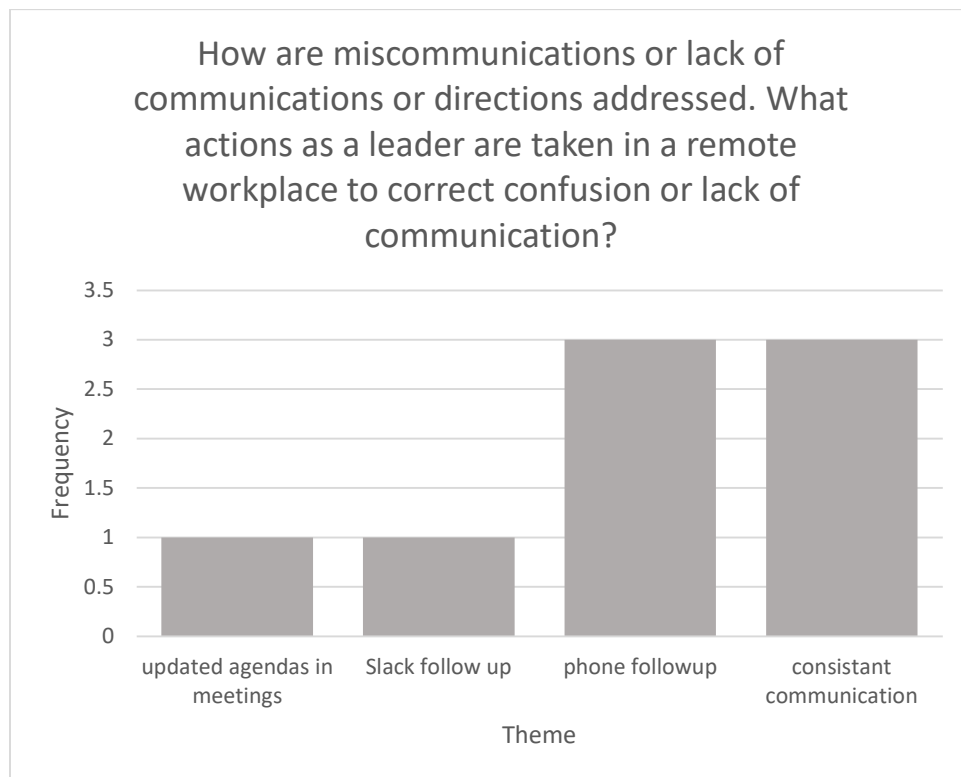


Figure 24

How Are Miscommunications or Lack of Communications or Directions Addressed?



The participants in the leadership category noted the following additional questions that they wanted to be asked about:

- Did remote work slow your career advancement in the long or short term?
- Why are managers not considered part of followership?
- One of the participants, who had disclosed working remotely for IBM since 1998 in a leadership role, commented that leadership is about developing trust to become effective leaders and letting go of the concepts of total control. He asked why leadership and control issues were not topics being asked about in the interview.

- One of the participants asked why the question of preference was for in-person work and whether followers and leadership wanted to Return To Office or RTO was not on the list of concerns in my questions. This person strongly expressed that as a leader, they were opposed to all forms of remote work.
- A leadership group participant who disclosed working remotely as a school principal during COVID-19 and continuing to have to work in a hybrid modality noted that additional questions should be asked about training for remote followers and leaders, especially due to changes in legal parameters in remote work.

Followership Focus Group

The questions for both focus groups were derived from the questions not asked in the initial individual interviews and were the same for both the followership focus groups and the leadership focus groups. Due to scheduling conflicts, only two of the participants who identified as being in the followership group attended the followership focus group.

In the first focus-group question, “Did any followers make suggestions on addressing team design, collaboration, or socializing?” neither participant said that any suggestions were made regarding team design. However, both participants commented—in their initial interviews as well as in the focus group—that they had worked remotely for years prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant specifically commented on working over six years in a remote modality. The other participant commented, “... my organization is always like, hey, we’re looking for people to join the extracurricular activity committee.”

The second question posed to the followership focus group was, “Followership questions regarding if leaders having someone to lead them if they are actively supporting leaders? And if so, is that trickling down to followers?” The participant with substantial remote modality experience said they felt very supported by management and that management discussed the support they have received. This participant commented further on how leadership calls or contacts them just to say “hi”.

The second participant commented on how, during COVID-19, specifically in that duration of remote work period, they observed a lot of confusion. They further commented that once leadership returned to being in person, corporate culture and support resumed for those in followership roles at the organization they worked at, as this participant was one of the people who remained in a remote modality.

The third focus-group question was worded as, “How are managers being measured in productivity?” Both participants mentioned that they were not privy to the measurement of leadership, and voiced aversion to leadership’s productivity or other variables of measurement in the quality of leadership. Both had also said that more transparency was needed in how leadership was measured.

Within the fourth question “How is the flow of communication from leaders to their leaders?” one of the focus group participants said,

That’s an excellent question, Stephanie, because you know, sometimes, you know, I communicate things to my supervisor, and I hope they’ll get to the higher management. But there’s honestly no way I can track it. You know, I can communicate my perspective like I’m frustrated with this, but I don’t know.

The second participant noted that as a SME, they communicate with all lines within the chain of command and can easily see that they had communicated with those people and there is evidence that they either followed the participant's advice or not. This participant went on to comment that there are fewer barriers to leadership within that organization due to the hiring of so many SMEs.

Question 5 was, "What creative ways was Microsoft Teams, Slack, or Zoom to enhance communication, productivity?" One participant answered that there were a lot of off-putting interactions, though all teams got used to utilizing video calling technology. Examples given were of team members' pets and family members interrupting meetings. That same participant went on to note that one way their organization addressed social isolation was the use of Zoom to have the entire team on the same Zoom call just to have social interaction while working.

The second participant noted that sharing screens during video calls was a big help but that this had been a feature that their workplace had used for many years to enhance communication. The second participant also went on to describe the use of Microsoft Teams as a replacement for a telephone. This participant also commented that since the use of video chat had become so popular it saved a lot of travel expenses for that participant and their company. The topic also shifted to background noise, singing, and music in the remote workplace. Both participants agreed that having music or the TV on during the workday in the background was helpful to their mental health and productivity to not feel so isolated.

However, both participants noted that leaving the news on caused them anxiety and hurt their mental health during the workday, so it was no longer the selected background noise. One participant noted that,

So, if you're not engaging with someone you know at work or something like that, you know, like, like the news could just be something in the background, you know, just fill in that that silence, you know, or, you know, like I said, you know, I just want, hey, I want to listen to some nice tunes and stuff.

This brought up the topic of using Microsoft Teams and how the system has flaws in showing a true reflection of a user's availability. Participants noted that the inconsistency of correctly showing availability was an issue and created friction between leadership and followership.

Question 6 was, "Has remote work had any effects on your mental health?" One participant noted that there were no noticeable effects to their own mental health but that the flexibility of remote work enabled them to have a greater bandwidth for managing parental responsibilities. This participant went on to describe the peace of mind and financial savings that were afforded them due to this work setting. The second participant noted that the video chat feature in communication usage of Zoom and Microsoft Teams had helped prevent social isolation for that participant and helped maintain mental health in the workplace during the stress of COVID-19. Both participants commented especially that following a particularly difficult task, getting up and doing anything not work-related, from sitting outside to doing a load of laundry, helped them focus and recharge to reengage in work activities. Both found doing other mundane tasks such as these, emotionally therapeutic.

Regarding the question of “What are your feelings about the use of cameras in remote work modality and is there a time when it is acceptable to not have cameras on?” both participants did not agree that cameras should be on mandatorily, but nevertheless noted the merits of having the cameras on. The participants nevertheless commented on management demands to have cameras on even when not speaking in a meeting. The participants found these demands a bit invasive, but were unaware of the capabilities that management had within Bossware (software used by management to spy on employees) or if it was used in the workplace.

One of the participants admitted to having at one point a temporary part-time job as an Amazon delivery driver, and that the use of cameras and Bossware tracking systems was invasive:

Like, yeah, they’re monitoring you through your whole shift. Like you get out of the truck. Their timing it you know the time it takes you to get the box. Take it to the house and come back to the truck and you know, go to your next delivery. So, it’s, it’s that intense. For what we do, I just feel like it’s unnecessary and it’s a waste of time.

In answer to Question 7, “How long have you worked remotely?” one participant noted that they had only worked remotely since COVID-19 and continue to work in a hybrid modality. The other participant noted they had been working remotely in a followership capacity for the past six years and continue to work remotely. Both participants, in recalling how long they had been working remotely, noted that it felt longer and indicated a feeling of time moving differently in remote work.

Question 8 was, “What are [your] feelings about remote workers working outside of their home, such as a vacation?” In the focus group of those who had worked remotely for less than two years, participants noted that taking work laptops while traveling is viewed as a conflict of interest. However, the focus-group member who had more experience working remotely commented on how traveling or having the ability to travel was beneficial for instances such as when the Wi-Fi or power goes down. Furthermore, this participant commented on how changing location, such as taking work to a coffeeshop or into the garden of their home, is relaxing and helps coping with the stress of remote work.

For Question 9, “What is being done for leadership to be more accountable in remote work and provide more perspective of the process?” both participants indicated accountability and transparency as the leadership traits that they were looking for in management. They both also commented on a needed balance between blame and open communication on the part of those in leadership.

Leadership Focus Group

The same questions were posed to the leadership focus group, derived from the last individual interview question, which was “What do you think I should have asked?” There were only three participants in the leadership focus group.

The first question for the focus group was, “Did any followers make suggestions on addressing team design, collaboration, or socializing?” One participant responded ‘yes,’ but noted the details of moving forward with suggestions, given the idea conveyed was not transparent as a process. Another participant responded ‘no,’ namely, that no one made any suggestions. The third participant specified that no one sought to make

suggestions; however, they deemed using ice-breakers in meetings to solicit suggestions to address team design, collaboration, and communication as beneficial.

The second question for the focus group was, “How are managers being measured in [terms of] productivity?” The first participant noted that the organization that they worked for uses a qualitative method of measurement. The second participant specified that the organization they work at uses milestone setting methods for measuring productivity. The third participant noted their organization uses Microsoft Teams to monitor availability as a productivity metric, and that productivity is measured by number of complaints: fewer complaints indicate a positive measure of a leader’s productivity and effectiveness.

The third question for the focus group was, “How is the flow of communication for leaders to their leaders?” The first participant noted that communication became more consistent and structured during the COVID-19 pandemic and that for them this change ameliorated effective communication within the organization. The second participant noted that regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with direct managers had been installed as a regular function of day-to-day activities. The third participant commented that all of the above had been happening; however, this participant noted that the flow of communication beyond direct supervisors was stunted in their organization as the move to entirely remote work became the new normal.

The fourth question for the focus group was, “What creative ways did Microsoft Teams, Slack, or Zoom provide to enhance communication, productivity?” The first participant commented on how Zoom and other telecommunication systems were used often to support communication. This participant also commented on the use of memes,

Zoom events such as lunches, and ice-breaker comments to help enhance team bonding. Participant 3 also commented on similar functions, such as remote cocktail hours with leadership to enhance bonding. The second participant did not recall any uses outside of regularly scheduled meetings.

The fifth question for the focus group was, “Has remote work had any effects on your mental health?” All three participants noted that there was not a lot of support regarding mental health during remote work from higher leadership. The third participant noted that, “It is assumed that as a leader you are social already to have this job, so you are able to address your own social needs.” All three participants commented on how during COVID-19 their mental health took a hit, especially during lockdowns.

The topic of Question 6 was, “Cameras in remote. What are your feelings about it and is there a time that cameras are acceptable to not have cameras on?” Participant 1 noted that, “When not speaking or interacting in meetings cameras are not needed, however, when presenting, or asking questions cameras should be on. In one-on-one meetings there should not be an option camera should be mandatory.” Participant 2 agreed with Participant 1. However, Participant 3 commented on working as a remote leader for over 30 years and clearly noted that, “leadership needs to set a tone and agree on communication expectations for their team. Some leaders may not want cameras on for a quick conversation and have agreed communication preferences with their team.” This made the conversation shift to comments such as from Participant 2, “some people do not belong [in] working remotely.” Participant 3 further commented that,

The problem with leadership [who] are now working remotely is that they are trying to transplant the in-person office to remote and remote work is a totally

different beast. You can't operate remote work like it is in person and we can't manage our team that way either.

Question 7 for leadership focus group was, "How long have you worked remotely?" Participant 1 noted working remotely since the onset of COVID-19. Participant 2 stated that they have worked remotely for four years. Lastly, Participant 3 stated that they have been a remotely-working leader for over 27 years.

Question 8 posed to the focus group was, "What are [your] feelings about remote workers working outside of their home, such as a vacation?" Participants 1 and 2 both agreed that disconnection from work is important. Both also commented on disapproving of employees/followers working in places other than their designated workspace, which leadership needed to be alerted of. Participant 3 said, "It's a matter of trust and based on the work output."

Question 9 for the focus group was, "What is being done to have leadership be more accountable in remote work and provide more perspective of the process?" Participant 1 stated that nothing was being done to increase leadership accountability. Participant 2 said that "top-down review process to create[s] accountability with the mantra that 'remote work is work' and just like being in office translation." Participant 3 said that their organization was, "Using the tools to communicate and constant collaboration and gauge attitudes."

Descriptive Analysis

Two participants took part in individual interviews: one was in a leadership role and the other in the followership groups, who spoke positively and passionately about their experiences in remote work. Both these participants also had a substantial number of

years working in a remote modality. The participant in the leadership group commented on working remotely while working at IBM since the late 1990s within a leadership capacity and having remote teams that spanned throughout the world. However, this participant also expressed their previous work experience that also involved in-person and remote work while serving in the United States. armed forces. They went into detail on their leadership during Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s and having to address death in the workplace as a consequence of the war. The participant became visibly emotional when describing the consequences of poor leadership in those circumstances. Once the participant recovered, they went on to discuss how understanding that people want to work and how treating employees with more empathy yielded better results in leadership, especially in remote work communications.

The participant who has been in a followership role in a remote modality for less than a decade noted that remote work places a lot of communication responsibilities on those in a followership role. The example they gave was that reaching out to management and taking initiative falls on the follower to make changes and keep communication open. However, this participant also commented on open communication being one of the aspects of leadership they sought in remote employment. Conversely, there was also a very passionate person in the leadership group that was very vocal about being against remote work. This participant argued in the leadership focus group with the leadership participant who had worked remotely for IBM since the late 1990s on views of leadership communications and merits of mindfulness in leadership.

Despite all participants in the followership individual interviews and focus groups commenting on a positive long-term preference for remote work, there was one

participant who was consistently opposed to remote work and tended to disagree with all followership participants' views. This participant had also voiced that although there has been discomfort and dislike of the work from home modality, they did not want to return to an entirely in-person work modality.

Themes

This dissertation was designed to look at both followership and leadership perspectives in remote work within the relationship to team design, productivity, and communications. The individual interviews and focus groups had participants divided into leadership and followership groups. In each individual and focus groups meeting cameras were on, and participant identities were set to initials as labeled on the video screen to further protect participants' identities. Furthermore, participants within the focus groups were only those in followership or leadership roles with no overlap. As the participant recruitment method was via my Concordia University student email, none of the participants were at risk of seeing anyone that they worked with. There was nothing for any participant to gain by being in any way untruthful. Based on the information each participant gave, none of the participants worked or interacted with each other. The responses from each participant in the interviews and the focus group were consistent.

The themes of questions asked in the initial interviews were developed with my dissertation committee members. This included an initial interview question of, "what questions do you wish I would ask?" The focus group questions were developed based on the questions that the participants wished were on the list of questions being asked during the initial interview.

One theme that popped up in the focus groups of both leadership and followership groups was regarding whether participants wanted to go through the process of returning to office. The leaders who responded to the question “what question do you wish I would ask?” during the individual interview process spoke about being opposed to all forms of remote work. During the focus group for those identified as being in the leadership category, participants specified that although they were opposed to all forms of remote work, they would not give up remote work. One participant claimed they enjoyed the benefits of remote work and all those in the leadership focus group agreed on that concept. The follower focus group also voiced their preference of remote work and not wanting to go through the process of returning to office.

There was also a theme of remote workers in both the followership and leadership groups who have worked remotely prior to the pandemic, commenting on their preference for and enjoyment of remote work. Those who only began working remotely since the pandemic’s onset expressed issues with the transition from in-person to remote work.

Also of note was that most participants in the leadership group had three or more years of experience leading in a remote work modality, although a close second had ten or more years’ experience leading remotely. In the followership focus group, Question 7 was, “How long have you worked remotely?” One participant noted that they had only worked remotely since COVID-19 and continued to work in a hybrid modality. The other participant noted working remotely in a followership capacity for the last six years and continues to work remotely. Both participants noted that in recalling the length of time

that they had worked remotely it felt longer and noted a feeling of time moving differently in remote work.

Regarding the Apollo Effect, questions were asked both of followership and leadership. Specifically, the question was whether either group felt that their teams were made up of SMEs. Participants in the followership category said they did not feel their teams were made up of SMEs, while those in the leadership category answered that their teams were made up of SMEs or a mix of experience levels. Most of those in the leadership category also commented that they needed SMEs whereas only two in the leadership group said they did not need more of them.

Another emerging theme concerned the topic of productivity measurement and Bossware usage. Eighty percent of those in the followership group answered that task management was the method used by management to evaluate their productivity, with 20% being unsure of how their managers measured productivity in a remote modality. Those in the leadership category cited outcome measurements, communication, client surveys and training as the methods of measuring productivity for their teams. Of those in the followership group, 40% also felt their productivity was slightly or not at all hindered by remote modality, and 60% answered that remote modality hindered productivity.

When participants in the leadership category were asked, during the focus group interview, “How are managers being measured in productivity?” the first participant noted that the organization they worked for uses a qualitative method of measurement. The second participant specified that their organization uses milestone setting methods of measuring productivity. The third participant noted their organization uses both Microsoft Teams, to monitor availability as a productivity metric, and that productivity is

measured by number of complaints: fewer complaints meant a positive measure of a leader's productivity and effectiveness. None of the participants classified as leadership commented that they did not know how their productivity was measured.

A similar theme regarding communication was observed; whereas only 20% of those in the followership group felt they were adequately considered by leadership for promotions and raises, the majority of those in the followership group expressed they had adequate communications with teammates and managers. Those same participants who worked remotely 100% of the time, felt communication with management was effective. This differs from the leadership group commenting on the only way that the efforts to enhance communication revolved around the use of software such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom to schedule meetings, and that the focus was geared towards conflict resolution.

On the topic of team design, participants in the leadership category indicated nothing was being done regarding team design or redesign during remote work. This was consistent with comments by those in the followership category regarding team design or redesign and not observing any changes towards that goal. However, those in the followership category commented on feeling communication was effective, which may have factored into this theme.

Findings of the Study

The research questions and the findings for this dissertation were:

RQ1: What aspects of team design have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

The finding was that team design was not a consideration on the part of leadership in remote work. However, regarding the concept of the Apollo Effect, it was found that those in leadership felt their teams were either made up of primarily SMEs or a mixture of SMEs and midlevel experience. This differed from the perspective of those in followership, who felt there were no teams with a predominantly SME component or a mix of skills.

RQ2: What aspects of communication have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

Most of those in the followership category of participants felt that remote work did not hinder their communication, productivity, and ability to be seen by leadership. However, leadership debated on topics of communication and productivity in remote modalities. This led to further discussions on X and Y theory leadership styles in remote modalities. There were also specifications of video communication tools, such as Zoom and Teams, as assets to enhancing communications. It was also found that participants in both the followership and leadership categories voiced enjoyment of the freedoms of remote work and not wanting to return to in-person work, regardless of any perceived difficulties in communication or productivity.

RQ3: What effect does remote work, instead of in-person work, have on team design and how does this affect productivity among remote teams?

The literature review found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no measurable decrease in productivity in remote work. The participants in the followership category did not voice concerns regarding their productivity in the remote work modality. Those participants in the leadership category differed in opinion, as well as mixed

opinions from participants in the leadership category during the focus group. This evolved into further discussion of the relative merits of X and Y theory leadership styles. Overwhelmingly, participants in the leadership category commented that no concern was placed on team design in remote working environments.

While studying the responses of the participants in both the followership and leadership categories, themes emerged based on the findings of the study, as follows:

1. Regardless whether participants were in the followership or leadership category and their opinions on whether they preferred remote work, both groups commented on never wanting to return to in-person work under the circumstances that they would have to give up the benefits of remote work.
2. There was also a theme of remote workers in both the followership and leadership groups who have worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, commenting on their enjoyment of and preference for remote work, whereas those who only began working remotely since the pandemic's onset expressed having issues with the transition from in-person to remote work.
3. There were more participants in the leadership category than those in the followership category that have worked remotely prior to COVID-19. With this fact a leadership approach became apparent for those in leadership and followership roles that differed from those with less remote work experience and those who preferred in-person work.
4. There was a clear opinion among those in the leadership focus group that favored in-person modality only preferred in person for those in followership roles versus for themselves as leaders.

5. Participants in the followership category showed a clear lack of knowledge on how their company was measuring their productivity. Those in the leadership category, in contrast, clearly understood the ways in which as a leader in their company was tracking productivity.
6. Although remote workers who participated in this study voiced a high comfort level with the communication and the ability to collaborate with leadership, few felt that leadership was not really seeing their potential towards raises and promotions.
7. There was also a measurable disconnect between leadership and followership over the perception that remote modalities hurt their productivity. Of those in the followership group, 40% commented that their productivity was slightly or not hindered at all by remote modality, and 60% answered that remote modality hindered their productivity.
8. Another emergent theme was that those in followership roles underestimated their roles as potential or full-fledged SMEs. Regarding the topic of the Apollo Effect, I asked questions of both the followership and leadership categories, specifically, whether either group felt that their teams were made up of SMEs. Participants in the followership category said they did not feel their teams were made up of SMEs, whereas those in the leadership category answered that their teams were made up of SMEs or a mix of experience levels. Those in the leadership category also commented that they needed SMEs where only two said they did not need more subject matter expertise.

9. Those in the leadership category who participated in the leadership focus group also had a clear divide regarding leadership styles for remote work. The divide seems to be rooted in experience and duration of experience leading in remote work settings. Specifically, one participant who had worked remotely since the 1990s versus those who had only begun to lead remotely since the COVID-19 pandemic disagreed with using Y theory as a leadership plan in remote work. This focus group conversation clearly highlights the issue of leadership leading remote workers as if they are in-person workers and not understanding the difference in challenges for remote team's versus in-person workers, including the social isolation that these teams have to deal with in this modality.

Chapter 5: Implications and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was an exploration of the perspectives of both followership and leadership within remote work, and how communication and team design may affect productivity. Although COVID-19 has created a new push for remote work, research is still needed to learn about remote teams. In this dissertation I aimed to examine the concepts within remote team design and consider whether team design and communication affect productivity.

The research design I employed was a qualitative methodology of interviewing participants to research followership and leadership perspectives in remote work prior to and post-COVID-19 pandemic, with an emphasis on measuring followership productivity and team design while factoring in stresses found in remote workplaces. The focus of the research was to examine the followership perspective of remote teams and use the participants in leadership roles as a control group to compare their experiences to those of followers in remote teams. The only modification made to the study was time duration for the interview process. A total of 13 participants were interviewed and took part in the focus groups. A Qualtrics survey was used to obtain participants, which showed that over 42% of potential participants agreed to participate but never connected. This is a normative figure for qualitative research.

Browne (2018) showed that the United States remote workplace has been growing in popularity, and found that, based on United States Department of Labor statistics, that 20% of employees noted working in some capacity within a remote workplace. This statistic also includes those who work onsite, meaning in an office setting, and bring their work home with them. Bakken (2018) noted issues with the design of remote teams to the

extent that when remote teams are built, companies often attempt to create ‘dream teams.’ This term refers to management developing teams of the best and brightest in specific capacities without considering personality, dynamics, and cohesiveness.

Despite the growing ubiquity of remote teams, relatively little research has been conducted about them within the last five years. Cascio (2000) and Sridhar et al. (2009) focused on remote teams through the lens of leadership. Given that most research concerning remote teams is not recent as well as leadership-centric rather than examining followership, leaves out one of the most critical aspects of management, namely, the people who work within a business. Although there has been some recent research on remote teams, such as Hirsch (2017), like much of the literary research noted in chapter two of this dissertation, this article was conducted from the vantage point of management.

In recent research on followership, Martin (2015) and Crossman (2017) included little research on followership of remote teams. This dissertation thus provides an essential opening for research of remote followership team design and communication and the effect this may have on productivity. The business climate has drastically changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the need for remote work, and the lens of followership in remote teams is now more critical than ever. In light of the adage that one must learn to follow before one can lead, business cannot function and be managed without the most vital resource, the workforce.

Within the findings of this study, nine specific themes emerged that show pivotal concepts that have not been previously explored from either the followership or leadership perspective of managing followership in remote modalities. These themes

included inequities in information distribution regarding how work quality and productivity are being measured in an organization, and that both followers and leaders within this study do not want to give up remote work. Also, the interview data produced heated discussions of X and Y-theory leadership usage in remote modalities between those leaders who have worked remotely only since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, on the one hand, and those who had been working remotely for decades, on the other.

Fulfillment of Research Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore followership and leadership perspectives in remote work and how communication and team design may affect productivity. Although COVID-19 has created a new push for remote work, research is still needed to learn about remote teams. In this dissertation, I aimed to examine the concepts within remote team design and consider whether team design and communication affect productivity in remote modalities.

It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a unique opportunity for research on remote teams. Specifically, Koetsier (2020) observed a significant increase in remote employment due to the COVID-19 lockdowns during the pandemic, with 58% of Americans working remotely. This spike in remote workers created a larger potential research pool. This is a unique opportunity to fill the gap in currently available academic research versus the practical research arena, update current research, and create academic research that looks at an underserved aspect of remote teams and followership.

The lockdown situation during the COVID-19 pandemic was an advantage for the qualitative research method implemented in this study, as it increased the potential

sample pool of workers who adapted to virtual communications methods, such as Microsoft Teams. This allowed for interview methods for research to be done remotely and on a platform that has become more commonplace.

The research questions and aligned findings for this dissertation were:

RQ1: What aspects of team design have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

The finding was that team design was not a consideration on part of leadership in remote work. However, regarding the Apollo Effect, it was found that those in leadership felt their teams were either made up of primarily SMEs or a mix of SMEs and midlevel experience. This differed from the perspective of those in followership, who felt there were no teams with predominantly SMEs or a mix of skills in their respective organizations.

RQ2: What aspects of communication have the greatest effect on productivity among remote teams?

Most of those in the followership category of participants felt that remote work did not hinder their communication, productivity, and ability to be seen by leadership. However, leadership debated on topics of communication and productivity in remote modalities. This led to further discussions on X and Y-theory leadership styles in remote modalities. There were also specifications of video communication tools, such as Zoom and Teams, which were an asset to enhancing communications. It was also found that participants in both the followership and leadership categories expressed enjoyment of the freedoms of remote work and not wanting to return to in-person work, regardless of any perceived difficulties in communication or productivity.

RQ3: What effect does remote work, rather than in-person work, have on team design and how does this affect productivity among remote teams?

The literature review found no measurable decrease in productivity in remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants in the followership category did not voice concerns regarding their productivity in the remote work modality, in contrast to participants in the leadership category, who did. There were mixed opinions from participants in the leadership category during the focus group interviews, which evolved into further discussion of the respective merits of X and Y-theory leadership styles. Overwhelmingly, however, participants in the leadership category commented that no concern was placed on team design in remote working environments.

This study fulfilled the initial purpose of the dissertation as detailed. The study of followership using one-on-one interviews and focus groups with leadership, as well as one-on-one interviews and focus group as the control, yielded obvious evidence of disconnect in perspective between leadership and followership regarding communication, productivity, Apollo Effect/SME usage in team design, and the overall use of team design concepts in the business sphere.

The findings from leaders' perspectives within the one-on-one and focus group responses mirrored the attitudes and findings of the research on remote work that focused primarily on leadership perspectives. However, the followership perspectives yielded significant disconnect from the leadership perspectives on all concepts researched in this study, such as the finding that those in followership roles underestimated their status as potential SMEs, as this topic related to the Apollo Effect. Those participants in the followership category said they did not feel their teams were made up of SMEs. Those in

the leadership category, in contrast, answered that their teams were made up of SMEs or a mix of experience levels. Those in the leadership category also commented that they needed SMEs, but only two said they did not need more subject matter expertise.

Another finding indicated that those in the followership category showed a clear lack of knowledge on how their company was measuring their productivity, whereas those in the leadership category clearly understood the ways in which their company was tracking their productivity as a leader. Team design, according to both leadership and followership, was nonexistent.

The study further revealed some unexpected findings that further support the need for more research on the concepts of followership and leadership in remote work modalities. Regardless of participants being in the followership or leadership category, or of participants' opinions whether they preferred remote work or not, both groups commented on never wanting to return to in-person work if this meant that they would have to give up the benefits of remote work. This finding was consistent even within the findings of newly-made remote workers, who needed a transition period for adjusting to remote work, versus those who had worked remotely prior to the pandemic's onset in both the followership and leadership categories, and who voiced preference for the remote work modality.

There were also heated debates in the leadership focus group on whether X or Y-theory leadership style was more effective in a remote modality. Both leadership methods use different communication styles. This debate in the focus group was also significant to the findings as the participant arguing for use of the X theory had only worked remotely since the pandemic's onset, whereas the leader who argued that Y theory leadership was

more effective in a remote modality, had worked remotely as a leader since the 1990s. Although both leaders had extensive years of experience in a leadership role the leader who argued Y theory leadership's effectiveness had substantially more years of experience in a leadership role.

Implications for Business Practice

The implications of this research for business practice are valuable in that there are concepts within the followership and leadership perspectives that are not being examined within the current research of remote work in team development. Thus, there is room for additional research and implementation of the findings of this research.

Examples of ties to and deviations from the seminal literature findings include Cascio's (2000) qualitative study of remote work, which involved an internal study by IBM on the perspective of leadership and detailed concepts of professional isolation. In this dissertation's research findings, one of the participants, who had worked remotely at IBM since the 1990s and detailed their experience working with remote teams internationally as well as in the military, argued with other leaders in the focus group on the merits of implementation of Y-theory leadership and the benefits for both in-person and remote leadership. This participant was one of the longest-working remote leaders who had a starkly different opinion on leadership compared to those who have not led a team remotely for as long, or primarily only had experience in a leadership role during the COVID-19 pandemic, or for less than ten years.

The study participants' comments on their experience further ties into the seminal literature findings of Sridhar and Paul (2007), which focused on remote teams within

global companies. This also links in with the seminal research of Chang (2011), which focused on organizational and team design and their effects on productivity.

Further findings from this dissertation also were highlighted, regarding the views on productivity. Avolio et al. (2014) discussed the transition that employees and leadership have made since the end of the twentieth century, specifically detailing the move from the traditional workplace to a remote one, along with the changes in measurement of productivity. However, the findings of this dissertation among participants in the followership category showed a clear lack of knowledge on how their respective companies measured their productivity, whereas those in the leadership category clearly understood the ways in which as a leader's productivity in their company was being tracked. This brings to light the need for further transparency from leadership towards those in followership roles who work in remote modalities. There was also a measurable disconnect between leadership and followership participants in the study over the perception that remote modalities negatively impacted their productivity. Of those in the followership group, 40% commented that they felt their productivity was slightly or not hindered by remote modality, and 60% answered that remote modality hindered their productivity.

Another theme that materialized in the research concerned the concept of remote teams having an issue with SMEs. Regarding the topic of the Apollo Effect, as thematized by Gershkov and Schweinzer (2021), when asked both followership and leadership participants if either group felt that their teams were made up of SMEs. Those participants in the followership category said no they did not feel their teams were made up of subject matter experts. While those in the leadership category answered that their

teams were made up of SMEs or a mix of experience levels. Those in the leadership category also commented that they needed SMEs, whereas only two in this group said they did not need more subject matter expertise.

The preference of modalities came up as a theme as well. There was also a theme of remote workers in both the followership and leadership groups who have worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic commenting on their enjoyment preference of remote work, whereas those who only began working remotely since the pandemic's onset expressed having issues with the transition from in-person to remote work. Regardless of the participants being in the followership or leadership category, and the opinions of the participants whether they preferred remote work, both groups commented on never wanting to return to in-person work if this meant that they would have to give up the benefits of remote work. This implied a potential future divide between leadership and followership if leadership did not evolve to lead in a diverse modality.

Implications for Research

The topic of this dissertation was an exploration of the followership and leadership perspectives within remote work and how communication and team design may affect productivity within remote teams. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was little academic research on remote teams even though, as Streitfeld (2020) observed, the concept of remote work dates back to the 1980s. While researching this topic, few peer-reviewed resources about remote employment within the scope of followership were found. Many of the sources on remote employment, such as Cascio (2000), focused on the management and leadership of remote teams.

The lack of research on remote work since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted, however. Much of the updated research, both peer-reviewed and practical literature in remote work, is not from the perspective of those in followership roles. This dissertation used a qualitative methodology and designed a research study to look at the followership and leadership perspective on remote work, team design, ‘dream team’ (otherwise known as the Apollo Effect), productivity, and communication, while focusing on those who are in a leadership role as a control. This yielded information showing a disconnect between the views of those in leadership roles and those in followership. The study also highlighted skill sets that need to be developed by those in leadership to be more effective in a remote modality. Although the number of participants in this qualitative research project was limited due to time constraints, there is room for additional research regarding remote modality as it relates to both followership and leadership. The participants were gathered using the Concordia University Grad school email service, social media, and the use of Qualtrics, for surveying potential participants and obtaining signed consent. No participants had affiliations with each other in the focus groups, or in cross-participant pools. This allowed for participants to speak their mind and give more detailed information for this study.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to explore the concepts of followership and leadership perspectives in remote work and how communication and team design may affect productivity. The dissertation also factored in concepts of team design, such as having a team of all SMEs referred to as ‘dream teams,’ and the potential relationship to this team design method in remote work towards behaviors detailed as the Apollo Effect.

Although COVID-19 has created a new push for remote work, research is still needed to learn more about remote teams. This dissertation aimed to examine the concepts within remote team design and consider whether team design and communication affect productivity.

The age of the most recent research on remote teams, and the fact that much of the research is leadership-centric versus examining followership, leaves out one of the most critical aspects of management. This critical aspect are the people who work within a business. However, the academic research currently done within the study of remote teams has focused on the perspective of management.

This study uncovered critical disconnects between leadership and followership, which culminated in nine distinct themes within the findings. These themes showed that neither those in leadership or followership groups were willing to give up their benefits of remote work even if they had negative opinions about remote work and their effectiveness in their roles in that modality. The study also highlighted a disconnect within leadership on effectiveness of X versus Y-theory leadership style in the remote modality. I uncovered a further disconnect between those in followership and leadership groups, based on duration of remote modality, namely, those who have been in either leadership or followership who have worked remotely prior to the COVID-19 pandemic showed more of a comfort level and an easier transition to remote work than those who joined this modality during and post-pandemic period.

Based on the data answering the research questions, this dissertation met the study's purpose and uncovered additional significant findings showing a disconnect between leadership and followership, compounded with a debate on the respective merits

of X and Y-theory leadership styles. The significance of this study also includes the finding of room for more research to gain a better understanding overall with remote modality as the future of work and changes needed in both followership and leadership development. The findings also highlighted that there is a double-edged sword in considering the discussion of perspectives of leadership and followership. This further highlights the importance of researching the remote work modality, and that remote work is in fact here to stay.

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