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MOSES AS AN AGENT OF ADAPTABILITY: AN INNER TEXTURE ANALYSIS OF NUMBERS 11

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This paper explores the adaptive leadership style of Moses from the eleventh chapter of the Book of Numbers. Specifically, an inner texture analysis of the pericope from the socio-rhetorical criticism realm is presented to highlight repetitive and progressive patterns, narrational and opening-middle-closing structures, as well as argumentative and sensory-aesthetic effects. The analysis reveals that Moses follows five adaptive leadership behaviors theorized on Govindarajan's (2016) article, suggesting that in the passage – he is attuned to weak signals, recognizes and utilizes others who think differently, practices planned opportunism, manifests courage in many ways, and views challenges as great opportunities. These findings classify Moses as an agent of adaptability as he leads the people in the March to Canaan, which also applies in an organizational context for Christian leaders.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the world around us continues to change and confront us with challenges not always anticipated, how do we respond to these trials? How can Christian leaders assist others in addressing these difficult situations in an organizational context? According to Yukl (2013), a combination of contingency theories provides the perfect formula for leaders to succeed in changing environments based on behavior variations (p. 177). This is also known as adaptive leadership, a style that is follower centered, and known for its emphasis on helping others adapt to certain situations (Northouse, 2016, p. 257). Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) noted that adaptive leadership allows individuals to make progress on some of the most critical challenges anyone can face in their

professional or personal life, and "move toward some collective purpose, a purpose that exists beyond …[one's] ambition" (p. 3). The Bible provides excellent examples of leadership, but Moses, in particular, embodies many of the characteristics and behaviors related to adaptive leadership. In this article, an inner textural analysis from the socio-rhetorical criticism discipline is applied to the eleventh chapter of the book of Numbers in the Bible, to explore Moses's role in adapting to change, seeing the future in weak signals, practicing courage, instilling an opportunistic demeanor, and using conscious coordination to motivate followers in the March of Canaan.

II. BACKGROUND ON NUMBERS 11

At first glance, in the book of Exodus Moses returns to Egypt determined to free the Hebrews and bring them to Canaan where God initially speaks to him (Carmichael, 2012). Following God's commands, Moses takes thousands of men by foot in hopes to find the promised land, a quest that takes nearly forty years. The central theme throughout this lengthly and trying journey involves the act of prophesying, where Moses instills an environment of acceptability among the mixed multitudes. Proof of such diversified populations exists based on several archeological records hinting that other than Israelites, Moses led the march with Egyptians, Philistines and those newly considered Canaanites (Killebrew, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, a combination of different beliefs, mostly those with varied origins including slaves, stir spiritual disorder and complaints among the people. Despite all the turmoil and sin surrounding Moses, he still graciously treats all Yahweh's people equally the same and anticipates they become prophets (Hymes, 2010, p. 281). His human obligation symbolizes devotion to divine ways and also shows that "humans who are faithful followers and supporters of people…play a special role in revealing the ways of God to humans" (Robbins, 1996, p. 126). Cotton (2001) further noted that Numbers 11 depicts some of the earliest evidence in the Bible that "support the empowering of a believer to fulfill God's purpose… as a witness for the Lord" (p. 3). Needless to say, this particular chapter of the Bible elucidates Moses's admirable discipleship, where he characterizes the leader of the group, and through humility and selflessness, overcomes challenges in the midst of resistance.

Another central theme in Numbers 11 involves Moses's relationship with God, where he seeks and receives help from the Lord regarding a series of conflicts. These conflicts, ignited by sin, also signify ungratefulness, or as Hymes (2010) metaphorically summarizes, "a strong current that is flowing toward the grave sin of unbelief" (p. 262). A close examination of the conversations between Moses and God appear under the argumentative texture analysis section of this article, which denote the depth of the prophetic utterances. The biggest takeaway from this passage, though, includes Moses' premise of prayer, overcoming resistance and sharing the burden through revelation. Furthermore, not only can Moses be considered a holy person, but also an agent of adaptability as he finds refuge in God all-powerful to help others explore and change their values, learn new ways of living and grow both, spiritually and morally. In summary, Numbers 11 highlights the manifestation of the Lord's first answer to Moses and "describes a very significant interconnectedness of the Spirit of God and leadership/ministry of God's people and prophetic activity" (Cotton, 2001, p. 3).

III. INNER TEXTURE ANALYSIS

The process of inner texture analysis refers to the systematic evaluation of words in a pericope associated with rhetography and rhetology (Robbins, 1996, p. 36). Interpreters typically engage in this multidimensional approach before extracting the real meaning of a passage, since words symbolize how the scripture employs language to communicate (p. 7). As a challenging endeavor, this type of methodological framework looks at various textures of the text from different perspectives to get a closer insight into a single discourse. Robbins (1996) identified six specific kinds of inner texture including repetitive and progressive patterns, narrational and opening-middle-closing structures, and argumentative and sensory-aesthetic influences (p. 7). Given the complexity of Numbers 11 (New International Version), this paper focuses on each dimension of inner texture for better interpretation purposes, and this also enhances the essence of the meaning in adaptive leadership discussed in the conclusion section.

Repetitive-Progressive Texture

The first step in inner texture analysis requires one to look for repetitive and progressive patterns. According to Robbins (1996), repetitive texture "resides in the occurrence of words and phrases more than once in a unit" (p. 8). A progressive pattern is similar, but it emphasizes sequences rather than just the number of occurrences in a pericope (p. 8). For Numbers 11, this complex analysis of thirty-five verses combines the two kinds of inner texture. Table 1 below shows the textual data highlighting a clear repetitive-progressive pattern with central characters like the Lord, Moses, and the people, as well as adjectives, nouns and verbs. A total of eighteen systematic patterns were identified, which are critical in understanding the nature of the discourse. These patterns can be grouped into different topics to show the development of Moses's resistance and strength as he led the march. Lastly, six different concepts exist in Numbers 11 which are separated by a line and discussed in detail.

Table 1
Repetitive Progression in Numbers 11 – Words and Concepts

Verse	Word													
1	Lord	anger	heard	people	fire	burned	camp							
2	Lord			people	fire			cry	Moses			prayed		
3	Lord				fire	burned								
4				we		craved		wailing		meat				
5				we										
6				we						manna				
7										manna				
8				people										
9							camp			manna				
10	Lord	angry	heard	people			tents	wailing	Moses		trouble	asked		
11	Lord			people					me		trouble	burden		
12				people					me					
13				people				wailing	me	meat				
14				people					me			burden		
15									me					
16	Lord			people			tent		Moses			burden	elders	
17				people										Spirit
18	Lord		heard	people				wailing		meat				
19										eat				
20	Lord			we				wailing						
21									Moses	meat				

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
22										enough								
23	Lord								Moses									
24	Lord			people			tent		Moses				elders					
25													elders	Spirit	rested	prophesied		
26							camp						elders	Spirit	rested	prophesied		
27							camp		Moses				elders			prophesied	Joshua	
28	Lord								Moses								Joshua	
29	Lord			people					Moses				elders	Spirit			jealous	
30							camp											
31	Lord						camp											quail
32				people			camp											quail
33	Lord	angry		people	plague	burned												
34				people		craved				meat								
35				people														
	19	3	3	21	4	5	10	6	17	11	2	5	6	5	2	3	3	2
	Concept 1				Concept 2				Concept 3				Concept 4				Concept 5	Concept 6

The data in Table 1 depicts the repetition of two main characters under the first concept, the Lord and the people. As expected in most Old Testament chapters, the Lord is the central character in the pericope as it appears a total of nineteen times, followed by two key words that repeat three times in specific stanzas. The first keyword is *anger*, also listed as *angry* at the beginning in verse 1, the middle, in verse 10, and the closing of the pericope, in verse thirty-three. The second keyword is *heard* which appears sporadically in verses 1, 10 and 18 to emphasize the Lord's position in the situation. The next characters that echo throughout the entire passage are the people, denoting at least twenty-one recurrences. For the first quadrant, when combining all the words, we can understand that the Lord becomes angry at the people in several instances because he hears them complain. This concept can be best attributed to the ungratefulness of the people and blamed on their hardships in the journey through the desert.

The Lord's response to the people's discontent results in a fire and this particular word is listed three times in the first three verses. In Table 1, the word *fire*, also grouped with *craved*, shows a cause-and-effect relationship where God sends fire because the people desired other food. Later on, the *plague* listed in verse 33, similar to the fire, highlights God's punishment for greediness after sending the quail everyone longed for throughout the discourse. The other noun also included in this section involves the *camp* and the *tent* – recorded a total of ten times from start to finish. It is important to combine these words to understand the socio-cultural as well as the historical timeframe of this passage, where people represented a group of nomads moving from point A to point B in the search for the promised land. The last fundamental word in this quadrant is *wailing* or *cry*, showing up six times as a form of a grievance. As we look at Table 1 from an outsider's perspective, the second quadrant reflects the outcome of the following section, which significantly impacts Moses's actions and his relationship with God.

On a separate note, in the King James Version of this pericope, *tent* is translated to *tabernacle*, which differs from other bible versions. The New International Version considers the historical period, as the conquest to Canaan led people through the desert – hence the meaning of a portable tent. Traditionally, however, the tabernacle was considered heavenly in that it symbolized the rite of purification, ordination of priesthood, and an altar where God manifested himself (Jamieson, 2016, pp. 574-575). Other mentions of tabernacle appear in Exodus 25 and continue throughout the Bible as a symbolic gesture of eternal reality (Hrobon, 2013). Futhermore, besides portraying God's residence or temple in some way, it served the purpose of attracting people to worship God (Hays, 2016, p. 18). This is important to point out as, the word *tent* plays a critical role in the progression of the pericope discussed in the later sections involving the elders and Joshua as Moses instills the act of prophesying.

In the third concept, Moses represents the main character as referenced seventeen times. This section is grouped with words like *meat*, *manna*, *eat*, and *enough* – which clearly depict the requests that Moses was dealing with at the time. While manna was an excellent nutritional provision, people wanted something more pleasant like meat or fish, instead of something so bland in abundance (Geller, 2005, p. 7). This is why they ask for more meat, because it was scarce given the desert conditions of their journey. The next word associated with this quadrant consists of *trouble*, used to

highlight the pressure that Moses feels as thousands of people demand meat to eat, instead of just manna. We can see this progression about aversion for manna noted in verses 6 through 7, then Moses's troubles, listed in verses 10 and 11 of the passage. Moses recognizes his weaknesses, then turns to prayer (v.2), asks God for help (v. 10-11) and talks about the encumbrance he feels (v.14, 16), literally stating: "the burden is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14, New International Version).

For the fourth concept, the *elders* appear six times to symbolize the Lord's answer to Moses's prayer. This word intertwines with *Spirit* as well as *rested*, since the intention is for the "Spirit to rest on them, [the elders]," so they can share some of the burden that Moses is carrying (v. 25, 26). Other occurrences regarding the "power of the Spirit" appear in several other Bible passages with slight differences such as 1 Samuel 10:10 (cf. 1 Chron. 12:18, 2 Chron. 15:1, 1 Sam. 19:23). Another great example is Judges 3:10, which states: "The Spirit of the Lord came on him" (New International Version). According to Leeper (2003), the Old Testament often used these words together to highlight "God in action" or "God working, moving in the midst of his people" (p. 23). In relation to these statements, the word *prophesied* purports the meaning behind the call into discipleship especially for the elders as depicted in verses 25, 26 and twenty-seven.

Finally, the last two concepts represent opposites as the words are not interdependent of one another. As far as *Joshua*, his appearance in the pericope seems minimal, only referenced twice in three verses (v. 27-29), but he plays a significant part in the climax and end of the story. Specifically, the text describes this character as a "young man" (v. 27), "Moses' aide" (v. 28), and also lists his new given name as "Joshua son of Nun" (v. 28). The narrational texture, as well as argumentative texture analysis, depict Joshua's role in the passage in detail and emphasize important lessons regarding adaptability to new environments. The next and final word in this repetitive-progressive pattern consists of *quail*, which goes back to the original request from the people and Moses' prayer asking for more meat to eat, but God turns into loathsome desire, instead of a blessing.

How can we use the repetitive-progressive texture analysis to understand Moses's leadership? Solely based on the recurrence of words, the *complex challenges* in his role as a leader stands out the most in all concepts. In Figure 1, the reconfiguration of the words in the pericope are translated into the organizational context, where contingency theories and adaptive leadership come to life. Specifically, the causal effect of the challenges Moses experiences along with the situational variables lead to a series of effective outcomes such as the reliance on prayer and faith. While each situation, such as the complaints directly influenced his behavior, he tries to make it a more favorable outcome by identifying the constraints and demands of his position (Yukl, 2013, p. 177). Moses adapts to the challenges and finds advice from God, who allows him to persevere despite the difficulties. According to Nelson and Squires (2017), addressing complex challenges in today's turbulent environment can be leveraged by relying on adaptive leadership principles as it has been proved to be a promising approach to problem-solving.
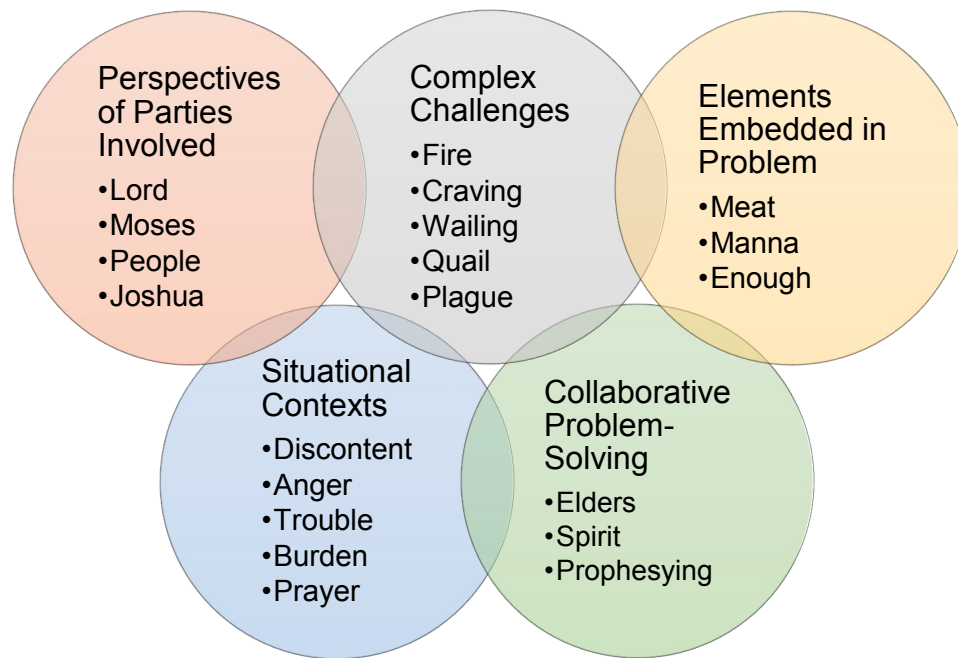
Figure 1. Translation of Repetitive-Progressive Texture Analysis into the Organizational Context. Adapted from Nelson and Squires (2017).

Opening-Middle-Closing Texture

The next step of the inner texture analysis involves the opening-middle-closing texture, which "resides in the nature of the beginning, body, and conclusion of a section of discourse" (Robbins, 1996, p. 19). For Numbers 11, Table 2 below illustrates the interesting structure of the passage, where the endings highlight the continuation of new stages of the journey in the March to Canaan. Note that the three-step narration process appears twice within the body of the pericope when compared to the introduction and conclusion.

Table 2
Opening-Middle-Closing Texture and Pattern in Numbers 11

Introduction		
Opening	v. 1	Opening progression, exposing the people's complaints. The Lord is angry to hear these lamentations and sends fire to the camp.
Middle	v. 2	After experiencing such occurrence –the people cry out their leader, Moses, who prays to the Lord and the fire goes away.
Closing	v. 3	The march continues, and they leave behind the "burning" place.
Body		

Opening		v. 4-9	Uncovering of the people's intense craving for other food. They reminisce the satisfying food from Egypt and complain about the manna.
Middle		v. 10-15	Moses acknowledgment of the unhappiness surrounding him – families continue to cry. Feeling weak and troubled, Moses asks the Lord for help.
	Beginning	v. 16-20	The Lord's response to Moses' request – the seventy elders to help him carry the burden of the people. God promises to provide an overabundance of meat to last one month even though the people have rejected his blessings.
	Middle	v. 21-23	Moses is unsure as to how the Lord will be able to provide meat for thousands of men given their current situation in the dessert. God reassures Moses of his promise.
	Closing	v. 24	Moses communicates the Lord's message and finds the seventy elders as instructed. He gathers them to pray.
Closing		v. 25	Progression of the Lord's promise as he speaks with Moses and shares the burden through revelation onto to the elders.
	Beginning	v. 26-27	Development of threats begin as Joshua notices that two of the elders prophesied in the camp, instead of the tent.
	Middle	v. 28	Joshua's introduction as Moses's aide – he decides to speak up. He asks Moses to stop the elders.
	Closing	v. 29	Highlight of Moses' discipleship – he wishes for everyone to become prophets.
Conclusion			
Opening		v. 31-32	Continuation of God's promise to Moses. The Lord sends the quail and people go out and gather as much meat as they can.
Middle		v. 33-34	The Lord's anger returns. People lack self-control and suffer another punishment, in the form of a plague.
Closing		v. 35	The march continues, and they leave behind the place where they bury people.

The opening scene in Numbers 11 highlights the first narrational unit, where the first three verses depict the opening, middle and closing of the introduction respectively. In looking at the nature the introduction, the reader can quickly identify how Moses sets the stage for the progression of the people and their complaints. The Lord sends out the fire as a punishment, which builds up the climax to the middle unit, where people turn to Moses for help, and his prayer helps dissipate the fire. The end shows a sequence, denoting the interconnectedness of the verses that follow.

As people move along the journey, similar patterns exist in the opening unit of the body in verses 4 through 9, when compared to the first verse of the introduction. In other words, these opening verses focus on the people's ungratefulness, but this section, in particular, reveals rich details, explains why the people are struggling and focuses on the sin – intense craving for other food. The middle portion of the pericope (v. 10-15) serves as a transition for the upcoming subsections when Moses recognizes the unhappiness of the people and his inability to provide the meat that they long for, so he seeks help from the Lord. The next three subsections (v. 16-24) illustrate the Lord's answer to Moses and ends with the manifestation of God's promises – gathering of the seventy elders.

Moving onto the conclusion of the body, we notice that verse 25 shows the progression of the Lord's promise when he "comes down in a cloud" and speaks with Moses to share the burden among the elders (New International Version). A sequence of three subsections also exists within the conclusion section, especially in verses 25 and 26, when Joshua notices that two of the elders stay in the camp to prophesize, instead of coming to the tent. The climax of this subsection, best highlighted in the middle section or verse 28, encompasses a challenging position for Moses given Joshua's request to stop the elders. The closing of this subsection, as well as the closing for the entire body of the pericope, serve as a lesson in the nature of Christian ministry. Specifically, it divulges Moses's honest call to discipleship as he wants everyone to feel the power of God regardless of where one prays.

In the conclusion of Numbers 11, the same pattern from the introduction follows the trend of discontent and punishment. In this case, however, God provides the meat but the lack of self-control and greediness results in a plague. The march continues as listed in verse 3 and verse 35, reflecting a continuation of the story in the upcoming chapters of the book of Numbers in the Old Testament.

Based on the opening-middle-closing texture analysis, the biggest takeaway from a leadership standpoint lies in the ability to identify areas of weaknesses and consulting with people who can provide more appropriate information or coaching (Yukl, 2013, p. 178). In fact, the pattern in this particular section reveals a central theme of carrying the burden comprised of complaints and unhappiness almost like a domino effect that gets passed down onto Moses, and then the elders. From that perspective, Saul (2006) notes that leaders who see the future in weak signals tend to act on them by adapting to emerging change (p. 95). As shown in Figure 2 below, Moses recognizes the people's complaints, acknowledges his feelings of distress, asks for help, and is able to take on the emerging change. While this is not easy to process, he struggles because the Lord is angry at the discontent and tests his discipleship forcing him to adapt to change while encouraging the act of prophesying. The final consequence of this arrangement in the pericope, thus reveals the power of the Spirit as well as the seventy elders.
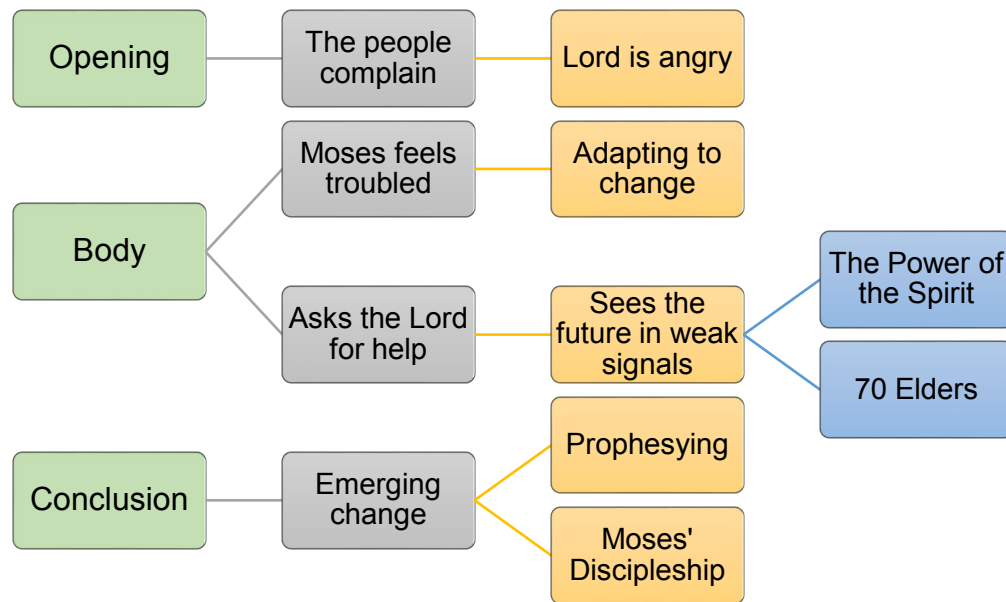
Figure 2. Opening-Middle-Closing texture from a Leadership Perspective. Identification of Weaknesses and Consulting for Additional Help.

Narrational Texture and Pattern

The next section of the inner texture analysis looks at the narrational texture or the storyteller within the text. Robbins (1996) denotes that narrational texture "resides in the voices (not often identified with a specific character) through which the words in the texts speak" (p. 15). In Numbers 11, a total of three narratological units exist. Each of those units represents significant cascading effects as well as similarities in occurrences. The first scene is the fire from the Lord based on the people's complaints, which purport some forewarning if the ungratefulness remains. As more details regarding the people's desires continue, the second scene takes place where Moses has a one on one conversation with God and then goes out and about to follow his command. Additionally, this scene includes God's fulfillment to Moses's request and also presents some challenges in the process of sharing the burden among the elders. In the last scene, God finishes what he pledged to Moses, but chooses to teach the people a lesson to understand the importance of gratefulness and perseverance in the face of adversity.

In the pericope, the voice of God emerges from basic narration as well as an attributed speech during the conversations that take place with Moses. The fire and the plague, for example, serve as a way of communicating with the people, teaching them harsh lessons in hopes to influence the resisting masses. From a socio-cultural perspective, God depicts the views of a revolutionist, which typically declare that "only destruction of the world – the natural world, but also, more specifically, the social order – will be sufficient to save people" (Robbins, 1996, p. 72). While God was the provider for needs, he did not necessarily fulfill every desire in the people's hearts – thus making him appear punitive rather than instructive (Rommer et al., 2016). Ironically, in verse 18,

the pericope states "Now the Lord will give you meat," meaning that God chooses to fulfill those desires as a test to their character (New International Version). In return, the people take advantage of the situation when they receive more than enough meat to eat, and we once again experience the anger from the Lord.

On the other hand, the voice of God toward Moses unveils a significant difference. This variance, noted at the beginning of the passage, occurs when Moses prays to the Lord and the fire dies down as listed in verse two (New International Version). The prayer at that point sets the stage for the type of relationship between Moses and the Lord, which progresses as the story unfolds. In the following verses (16-18), the Lord embraces Moses's request, and his attributed speech appears nurturing, yet firm as he communicates his everlasting love and deep understanding. One can also infer that God provides clear direction and instructions on his premise to the people and accomplishes this by sending the seventy elders to assist Moses and also by sending the quail. As a main character in the story, the Lord evidently portrays two ways of communicating with the people and Moses.

Next, the voice of Moses comes in the form of supplication as well as interrogations which seem to go unanswered. His views, often categorized as utopian, reveal that Moses "seeks to reconstruct the entire social world according to divinely given principles, rather than simply to amend it from a reformist position" (Robbins, 1996, p. 74). Most questions that Moses asks the Lord can be found in verses 11 through 13 followed by his cognizance of self-doubt and weakness in leading the people to the promised land. Specifically, Moses states the following: "I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me" (Num. 11:14, New International Version). With that in mind, Moses shares his challenges with God, asks for help and then receives a solution right away. As Cotton (2001), notes: "God relieves the pressure Moses felt after sending the seventy elders" (p.5). When compared to the voice of God, it is apparent that Moses strongly believes that "people remake the world rather than a divine power destroy this present world" (Cottone, 2001, p. 74). As he gathers the seventy elders and reaffirms his discipleship to Joshua, the level of human commitment become the highlight of the passage.

Development of threats and conflict arise when Joshua judges the elders in verses 27 and 28 for not following the same orders in the act of prophesying. His stance, better identified as the devil's advocate in the story, show that his questions and doubts about the elders define Moses's character. With honest intentions, Joshua simply follows his mission as Moses's assistant and his introversionist views reveal the struggles in trusting the new members of the group. An introversionist is someone who normally "views the world as irredeemably evil and considers salvation to be attainable only by the fullest withdrawal from it" (Robbins, 1996, p. 73). In essence, the voices of the people also share some similarities in the fact that they reject the Lord and question his ability to provide the most basic needs in the March to Canaan.

Considering the narrational texture pattern analysis, the voices in the pericope, and the conversations that take place exude nothing more than courage from Moses and his counterparts. This central theme of courage goes back to the original research question in this paper because part of being a leader requires doing the right thing with no guaranteed results (Terry, 1993). According to Northouse (2016), the courage from the adaptive leaders originates from the ability to manage and regulate their own

personal distress whether that is anxiety, tension, or frustrations (p. 268). Evidently, Moses regulates his personal distress by leaning on God. He shares his pain and asks for help, which he receives in the end. The voices of God thus provide guidance and strength, so that Moses could continue his disciplined attention by providing direction for the people. In Figure 3 below, the central themes in this textual pattern reveal the importance of courage in action prominent in adaptive leaders:
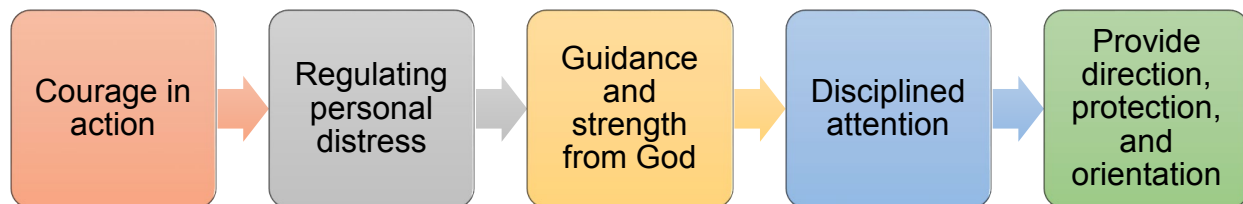

Figure 3. Central Themes in the Narrational Texture and Pattern Analysis.

Argumentative Pattern

Moving onto the argumentative texture section, this represents the fourth step in inner texture analysis, where the discourse "presents assertions and supports them with reasons, clarifies them through opposites and contraries, and possibly presents short or elaborate counterarguments" (Robbins, 1996, p. 21). In Numbers 11, a total of three distinct conversations take place in the pericope as outlined in Table 3 below. The first conversation features the complaints, or as one can identify as the arguments of the people, which include a series of exclamations and statements to communicate that they want the meat to eat, rather than the manna currently available. As the conversations between the people and Moses end in verse 6 of the pericope, the reader gets a clear picture of the situation and identifies with their discontent as they ruminate about the blessings Egypt had to offer in the past. The rhetorical progression then shows a principle of causation where these conversations between the people and Moses then affect the outcome and tone of the following dialogues.

Table 3
Argumentative Texture in Numbers 11

Verses	Argumentative Pattern	Character
4	Exclamation	People
5	Statement	People
6	Exclamation	People
11-12	Question	Moses
13	Exclamation	Moses
14-15	Statement	Moses
16	Answer	Lord
17	Rhetorical Statement	Lord
18	Command	Lord
21	Re-direct of original question	Moses

23	Question / Answer	Lord
27	Statement	Joshua
28	Exclamation / Command	Joshua
29	Prophetic Utterance	Moses

The succeeding rhetorical progression exists in the conversation between God and Moses, denoting more questions than statements especially in verses 11 and twelve. Intriguingly, Moses's approach to God emerges in the form of an ultimatum where he shares his weaknesses and states the following: "If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me" (Num. 11:15, New International Version). Moses's appears palpably troubled, but these declarations show his selflessness and willingness to openly reach out to God – to find refuge in his all-powerful love. With such a provocative proclamation, the Lord then responds to Moses by only addressing his premise of fulfilling the requests – providing help to share the burden (elders) and meat to eat. While some questions remain unanswered, Moses challenges God's plan concerning the meat as listed in verses 21 and 22 because he does not think there will be enough for everyone. As a response, God then reiterates Moses's original question and asks: "Is the Lord's arm too short?" (Num. 11:23). These exchanges in communication reveal the importance of believing in God, believing in his word and his promise and to never question the plan that he has for each one of us.

The third and final conversation occurs between Joshua and Moses when the elders exempt themselves in joining the tent to prophesize. The actions of the elders trigger a reaction in Joshua, as Eldad and Medad choose to stay inside their tents unlike the rest of the group. Joshua's innate nature of serving Moses, portray a similar challenge to the one Moses posed to God in earlier conversations. His immediate reaction is to run and tell Moses what he witnesses as shown in verse 27 then followed by an exclamation and command to stop the elders from staying inside their tents. Joshua then states: "Moses, my Lord, stop them!" (Num. 11:28, New International Version). In hopes to end the conversation on a positive note, Moses uses a symbolic phrase or as one can call a "prophetic utterance" to note that these two people and anyone in the march have a genuine heart and should follow the word of God wherever they might be.

Looking at the argumentative pattern from a macro perspective, it is quite apparent that the commotion in this pericope is relatively high, demonstrating an opportunistic leader. However, being an opportunist can carry a double-edge sword meaning of taking advantage of a situation at the expense of others (Dean, Brandes, & Dhwardkar, 1998; Hawkins, Lewin, & Amos, 2012). This is not the case for Moses; his opportunistic demeanor from the argumentative assertions reveal that he is altruistic and attempts to "initiate a path towards self-development and authentic followership" (p. 359). As noted in Figure 4 below, leaders who adapt to change often do so in a selfless way. Whether that is in the form of proclamation or supplication, it ultimately leads to self-development. At the end of the day, an opportunistic demeanor allows leaders to look into the future by taking action today.
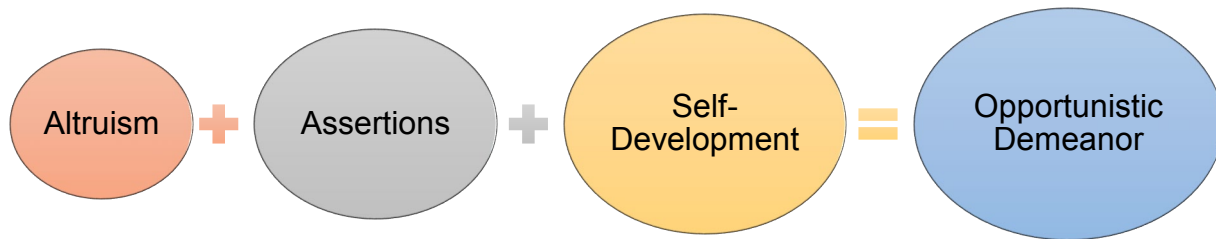
Figure 4. Positive Adaptive Leadership Progression: The Nature of Opportunism in the Narrational Texture and Pattern Analysis.

Sensory-Aesthetic Texture

The last section of this analysis comprises the sensory-aesthetic texture of a text "which resides prominently in the range of senses the text evokes or embodies (thought, emotion, sight, sound, touch, smell) and the manner in which the text evokes or embodies them (reason, intuition, imagination, humor, etc.)" (Robbins, 1996, pp. 29-30). For this pericope, all three body zones in the sensory-aesthetic texture exist especially in the first scene where representative nouns like the anger from the Lord help the reader understand his position in the narrative. A parallel trend also follows the end of the pericope when the plague kills several people noted in verse thirty-three. The dissatisfaction of the people goes hand in hand with the anger of the Lord, so the author uses words like *complained* in verse 1 to invoke feelings of discontent as well as *his anger was aroused* to connote the sinners versus the believers. For Moses, the word *troubled* in verse 10 symbolizes the encumbrance of the people's disgruntlement. The reader can sense the amount of weight he is carrying as the tone in which he exposes his weaknesses to the Lord reveal signs of surrender.

Under the zone of self-expression, the wailing, Moses's self-doubt, Moses's doubt against the Lord and even Joshua's doubt against the elders – all invoke feelings mutual self-unveiling. Lastly, for the zone of purposeful action, one can immediately identify Moses's devotion in reaching out to God for help as a specific activity highlighting the steps of discipleship. The elders, in this case, purport different behaviors unlike the group in the act of prophesying, which creates a tense atmosphere for Eldad and Medad. The elders, new to the practice of revelation through the power of the Spirit, all exhibit good intentions without hesitation. Similarly, Joshua's honest intentions and devotion to his leader reveal that he is also on the path towards ministry.

How can the sensory-aesthetic texture analysis apply to the overall exploration of Moses as an adaptive leader? Putting all the negative commotion aside such as complaints, anger, death, and trouble – the weight that Moses carries turns into his inner motivation for purposeful action. In other words, he addresses Joshua's concerns and inspires the elders and the followers to continue towards the path to God. Such expression reveals that Moses once again falls in line with the principles of adaptive leadership. According to Yukl (2013), adaptive leaders often provide more guidance to people with interdependent roles, in this case, Joshua and the elders symbolize those whose actions that are carefully harmonized by Moses's conscious coordination. Using Glover's et al. (2002) approach to human adaptive processes, the nature of the

sensory-aesthetic pattern in this pericope perfectly elucidates practices that modern leaders rely on to be successful as delineated in Figure 5 below:
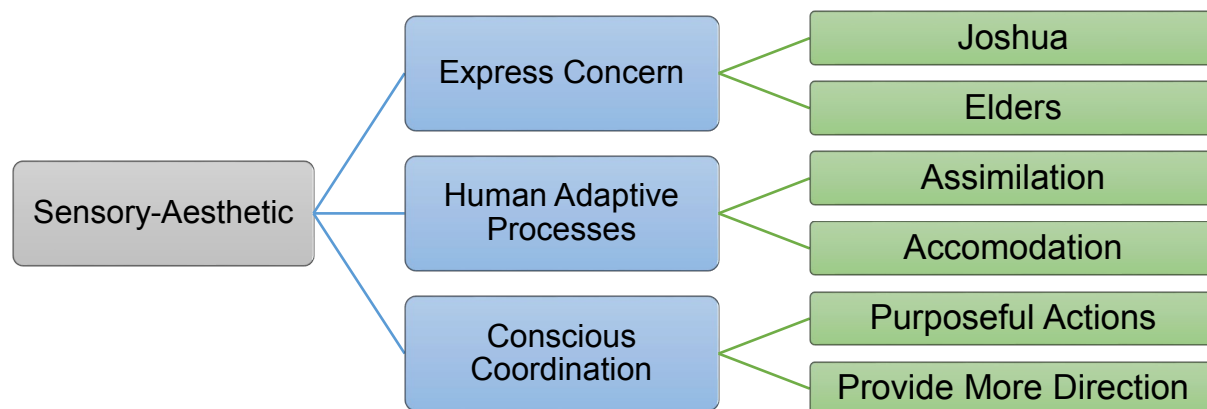

Figure 5. Express Concern for those with Interdependent Roles. Adapted from Glover, Rainwater, Jones, and Friedman (2002).

IV. MOSES AS AN AGENT OF ADAPTABILITY

What can we learn about Moses's role in the March of Canaan? How does the pericope of Numbers 11 intersect with adaptive leadership? Can Moses be identified as an agent of adaptability? The answers to these questions are discussed in this section using Govindarajan's (2016) perspectives which focus on the idea that adaptive leaders are: 1) attuned to weak signals, 2) recognize and utilize others who think differently, 3) practice planned opportunism, 4) manifest courage in many ways, and 5) view challenges as great opportunities (p. 42-45). These considerations also follow the framework developed by Heifetz and his colleagues (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997) which highlight a six-step process of leader behaviors for adaptive work. Lastly, the author references the guidelines for adaptive leadership as outlined by Yukl (2013).

Attune to Weak Signals

One of the most common behaviors we notice in Moses is his self-awareness. He recognizes that people are dissatisfied with the current food situation and the desert conditions, but instead of quitting and leaving everything behind – he turns to prayer. Moses shares his problems with God and seeks help. In the organizational leadership context, leaders need to identify these weaknesses and be alert to the changing environments especially in today's world, where everything changes, often from day to day. An effective adaptive leader naturally attunes to weak signals by "always thinking ahead about how to capitalize on them" (Govindarajan, 2016, p. 42). Sometimes this may even require one to "consult with people who have relevant knowledge" so that it facilitates and benefits the efforts to make the change (Yukl, 2013, p. 177). Moses, for example, reached out to God and exposed his overwhelming feelings of self-doubt and surrender. Using the framework developed by Heifetz and his colleagues (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997), attuning to weak signals also represents the first two steps in

adaptive leader behaviors which include "getting on the balcony" and "identifying adaptive challenges" (Northouse, 2016, p. 263).

Recognize and Utilize Others Who Think Differently

The next lesson in Moses's leadership abilities as an agent of adaptability reside in the fact that "he keeps an eye on the mavericks…[who] may be the first to recognize weak signals" (Govindarajan, 2016, p. 43). Joshua, in this case, represents the maverick of the story, the one who spoke up and told Moses to stop the elders from prophesying as they did not follow the same orders as the rest of the group. What is the benefit of a maverick in an organization? These are the people who provide "the kind of observations and innovations that help companies move forward" (p. 43). These are the individuals who challenge the status quo and speak the unspeakable, often associated with archetypes like the "sacred cow" and the "elephant in the room" (Northouse, 2016, p. 265). The premise of adaptive leaders relying on mavericks show that this particular leadership style can be conceptualized as a process that anyone can learn. Specifically, DeRue (2011) denotes that in viewing leadership as social interaction process, "individuals engage in repeated leading–following interactions, and through these interactions, co-construct identities and relationships as leaders and followers" (p. 145). Reflecting back to pericope of Numbers 11, Moses serves as Joshua's mentor, and he relies on him to lead the march even when presented with challenging situations.

Proactive Planned Opportunism

When God answers Moses's request, Moses goes and finds the elders as instructed. Moses also understands that by sharing the burden through revelation, this regulates the distress felt by the people including himself. According to Govindarajan (2016), planned opportunism requires leaders to ensure that their organization has "the capabilities, processes, and culture necessary to have one foot in the present and the other in the future" (p. 44). By following the continuation of the adaptive leadership framework, planned opportunism aligns with step three and four, which involve regulating distress and maintaining disciplined attention respectively (Northouse, 2016, pp. 265-267). Creating a holding environment highlights the most critical behavior in regulating distress to maintain consistency among followers and involve "direction, protection, orientation, conflict management, and productive norms" (p. 265). Regulating personal distress is just as important, as it can cause cascading effects on the rest of the organization. As far as maintaining disciplined attention, this is where adaptive leaders make sure that employees "focus on the tough work they need to do" (Northouse, 2016, p. 267). When Moses responds to Joshua and tells him that he wishes for everyone to be prophets in verse 29, one can sense that this is the "tough work" everyone to focus on – the act of prophesying.

Manifest Courage in Many Ways

Once God puts the "power of the Spirit" onto the elders, their job is to help Moses carry the burden of the people and continue their journey through the desert (Num.

11:25, New International Version). In doing so, Moses gives the work back to the elders as they come to the tent and prophesize. Moses also serves as the catalyst in communicating the word of God to the people and continues to provide direction in the midst of resistance. The fifth step in the adaptive leadership framework inspires leaders to give the work back to the people, as it is important to limit some influence and "shift problem solving back to the people involved" (Northouse, 2016, p. 269). Additionally, adaptive leaders provide direction and structure in hopes to empower employees and make them "feel secure in what they are doing" so that they can "think for themselves rather than thinking for them" (Northouse, 2016, p. 269). After all, as DeRue (2011) mentions in his research studies that "the nature of work in organizations is changing to include more interdependent work, more fluid and less centralized work structures, and a greater emphasis on the need for leadership at all levels of an organization" (p. 145).

View Challenges as Opportunities

The last and final lesson from Moses's adaptive leadership suggests viewing challenges as opportunities. Moses listens to the people's complaints, just as God also hears them. In conjunction, God uses the state of dissatisfaction to test the people's faith and character by sending the meat and the seventy elders. In return, Moses overcomes these trials by putting his best foot forward and setting the example of human commitment to discipleship. These perspectives are similar to the sixth and final step in the adaptive leadership framework, which entails "protecting the voices from below," also known as a leader's ability to cautiously "listen and be open to the ideas of people who may be at the fringe, marginalized, or even deviant in the group or organization" (Northouse, 2016, p. 271). Even Yukl (2013) mentions that given the complexity of today's environments, successful adaptive leaders recognize threats and opportunities, and show "willingness to make changes in the processes, products, services, or the competitive strategy of the organization" (p. 302). Perhaps instead of dwelling on how difficult certain situations might be, people should focus on the benefits an obstacle can bring in the long-run analogous to Moses's story.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on Govindarajan's (2016) five perspectives of effective adaptive leadership and the framework developed by Heifetz and his colleagues (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997), we can classify Moses as an agent of adaptability. Moses's behavior in the passage also aligns with Yukl's (2013) definition of adaptive leadership, listed as "an emergent process that occurs when people with different knowledge, beliefs, and preferences interact in an attempt to solve problems and resolve conflicts" (p. 296). As demonstrated in the inner texture analysis of Numbers 11, the mixed multitudes in the march create conflicts which Moses graciously handles and then inspires the people to believe in God all-powerful. In summary, the passage can be best described as the tenacity of a leader in transition as he led thousands towards the promised land through the desert (Carter, 2011). Other researchers like Sommer (1999), concur that "this story shows Moses to be a humble prophet, unaffected by his unique status and happy to share his spirit with others" (p. 610). In an organizational

context, this pericope highlights the importance of adaptability skills for "organizational success and survival" (Nelson, Zaccaro, & Herman, 2010, p. 131). Further analysis of Numbers 11 from a different leadership perspective will enhance the validity of Moses' classification as an agent of adaptability.

The opening statement asked: how do leaders respond to unexpected trials in the era of uncertainty and change? As demonstrated in this paper, the best answer to that is to adapt to challenges just like Moses did, see the future in weak signals, practice courage, instill a positive opportunistic demeanor, and use conscious coordination to motivate followers. As Cohen noted, the greatest leaders often turn weaknesses into strengths, which encompasses the whole theme of Moses' leadership evidenced throughout this analysis.

About the Author

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