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Exemplary Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Case Study Discovering How Female Chief Executive Officers Create Meaning

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Exemplary Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Case Study Discovering How Female Chief Executive Officers Create Meaning

A Dissertation by

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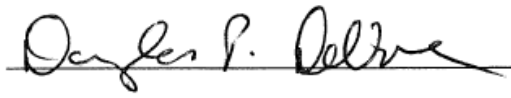

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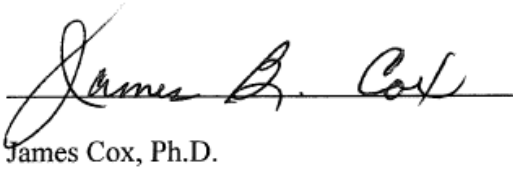

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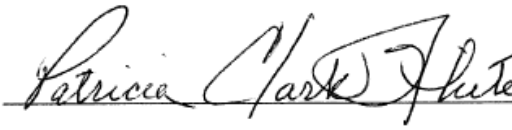

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ABSTRACT

Exemplary Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Case Study Discovering How Female Chief Executive Officers Create Meaning

by Stephanie A. Herrera

Purpose: The purpose of this thematic, mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary female chief executive officers (CEOs) use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through meaning-making domains: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. Additionally, it was the purpose of this study to determine the degree of importance to which followers perceived behaviors within the meaning-making domains.

Methodology: The exploratory mixed-methods case study was selected to gather insight into the behaviors of four female chief executive officers through interviews. Twelve of their employees were asked to complete an online survey. The results of both the qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys were then compared for triangulation.

Findings: The qualitative findings of this research suggest that exemplary female CEOs demonstrate behaviors from each of meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration), with character and vision as most significant to meaning making. Followers concurred with their quantitative input, finding the domains of character and relationships to be the most significant in creating meaning within the organization.

Conclusions: The study's findings support the need for CEOs to integrate behaviors from each of the meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration) in order to create meaning for themselves and their followers. CEOs wishing to develop behaviors across these domains should make decisions based on a moral

compass, invest in strategic planning, as well set aside time for reflection and self-development.

Recommendations: There is a need for further exploration in this area of study. Replication studies could identify differing populations, exemplary male CEOs, or look at other geographical locations. For a deeper look into this topic, a pure qualitative design approach is suggested. The 21 emerging themes also need a deeper understanding and each could contribute to its own study. Finally, it is highly advisable that studies be conducted in order to add to the body of knowledge on meaning-making leadership.

PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study meaning making in multiple types of organizations, four faculty members and 12 doctoral students discovered a common interest in exploring the ways exemplary leaders create personal and organizational meaning. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of 12 doctoral students. This mixed-methods investigation was designed with a focus on the ways in which top female executives in business create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, relationships, vision, inspiration, and wisdom. Exemplary leaders were selected by the team from various public, profit, and nonprofit organizations to examine the leadership behaviors these professionals used. Each researcher interviewed three highly successful professionals to determine what behaviors helped them to make meaning; the researcher then administered a survey to 12 followers of each leader to gain their perceptions about the leadership behaviors most important to creating meaning in their organization. To ensure thematic consistency, the team co-created the purpose statement, research questions, definitions, interview questions, survey, and study procedures.

Throughout the study, the term "peer researchers" is used to refer to the other researchers who conducted this thematic study. This dissertation focused on female chief executive officers (CEOs) of private sector companies in Southern California. My fellow doctoral students and peer researchers studied exemplary leaders in the following fields: Barbara E. Bartels, presidents of private nonprofit universities in Southern California; Kimberly Chastain, CEOs of charter school organizations; Candice Flint, presidents or CEOs of nonprofits in California; Frances E. Hansell, superintendents of K-12 schools in

Northern California; Sandy Hodge, CEOs of engineering technology organizations; Ed Jackson, technology industry leaders in Northern California; Robert J. Mancuso, a managing partner in a consulting firm; Zachary Mercier, professional athletic coaches in NCAA Division; Sherri L. Prosser, CEOs of healthcare organizations in California; Jamel Thompson, superintendents of K-12 schools in Southern California; and Rose Nicole Villanueva, police chiefs in California and Utah.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Globalization is multidimensional and has revolutionized the 21st century. Its ever-altering domains (political, economic, sociocultural, technological, and ecological) have contributed to the flattening of the world as Friedman (2005) asserted in his book, *The World Is Flat.* In recent years, the technological domain has intensified complexities across the others contributing to a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) business world. Organizations are challenged by the sheer speed of change in today's highly dynamic environments (Lawrence, 2013; Martens & Raza, 2009; Moss Kanter, 2011).

Complexities of current business environments have created innumerable challenges for organizational leaders. What was once acceptable or even an effective practice for leaders may be detrimental or utterly obsolete in today's organizational realm. Real change and breakthrough results are essential for leaders in these tumultuous times. In order to achieve these results, organizational leaders are called to contribute dynamically, transform, and engage employees in ways unprecedented (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Crowley, 2011; B. George & Sims, 2007; Horney, Pasmore, & O'Shea, 2010). Engagement allows individuals to be intrinsically committed to their work while displaying an outward demonstration of joy and their true self (Mautz, 2015; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010).

Engaging American employees continues to perplex most organizational leaders. Current statistics report only 33% employee engagement in American organizations, leaving an overwhelming number of employees disengaged while at work (Adkins, 2015; Crowley, 2011). According to Ulrich and Ulrich (2010), disengaged employees say they

will leave their company 10 times more than their engaged colleagues in a given year. This potential rate of turnover is costly for businesses and contributes to the following as well: decreased productivity, more work for other employees, forfeiture of knowledge, and additional hiring process expenses (Lucas, 2013).

In contrast, enthusiastic, committed, and engaged employees reduce turnover rates. These unique employees fulfill customer needs, are more passionate, work harder, and provide much needed innovation. Ultimately, these distinctive individuals collectively increase productivity and profits while contributing to meaningful work in organizations (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Conley (2007) proposed that "meaning *at* work is even more important than meaning *in* work" in creating engaged, enthusiastic, and committed employees (p. 89). He suggested that meaning *at* work addresses and fulfills all levels of psychologist Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) for employees within an organization (Conley, 2007). Self-actualization is the pinnacle of the pyramid in Maslow's theory and the ultimate goal for individuals. Further, the findings demonstrate a connection between the progression toward the self-actualized individual and meaning making at work (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Conley, 2007).

Engaged employees reported leaders as a key factor to making meaning while in the workplace. Meaning-making leaders create caring, authentic, and collaborative workplace cultures where individuals thrive. Additionally, these leaders are self-actualized, creating personal and organizational meaning, which ultimately promotes

long-term success for their organizations (Conley, 2007; Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

In *The Why of Work,* Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) stated the importance of viewing leaders as meaning makers. Mautz (2015) reaffirmed this notion and concurred with the authors on the role organizations play in contributing to an employee's identity and purpose while creating meaning in their own lives (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Working females, especially those in positions of power, have looked for ways to find a greater sense of meaning while at work through the pursuit of work/life balance. In the last few years, the idea of work/life integration or work/life harmony has been proposed as a solution, especially for those female business executives at the top (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Mautz, 2015; Sandberg, 2013).

According to recent reports, female business executives are an ever-increasing force in organizations, having distinct skill sets and characteristics that set them apart from their male counterparts (Daum, 2015; Whitten, 2015). *The Washington Post* reported one of the highest levels of female chief executive officers (CEOs) in history with 24 females, or 5%, on the Fortune 500 list and 650 females leading the top 5,000 businesses in the country (Daum, 2015). Can these female business executives shed insight on making meaning as it is increasingly essential and quite possibly the only way in which employees may reengage in the workplace and create personal as well as organizational meaning in the 21st century (Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010)?

Background

As globalization continues to impact the rapidly changing business environments, organizations are required to find new models and approaches for achieving breakthrough

results (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Lawrence, 2013; Martens & Raza, 2009). The concept of meaning making has recently caught the attention of researchers, many viewing organizational leaders as the central component to the notion. An understanding of meaning and how it is made is fundamental to this assertion (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Conley, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schreurs, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2009).

Meaning/Creating Meaning

Meaning denotes significance and has been studied extensively from a psychological perspective (Auhagen, 2000; Morgan & Farsides, 2009; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006). Piaget's (1954) constructivism theory is based on the idea that knowledge and meaning are acquired through experiences. Other researchers have correlated the importance of meaning through experiences with optimal human functioning and well-being. Ultimately, individuals find a sense of meaning in life through meaningful experiences (Frankl, 2006; Jahoda, 1958; Maslow, 1999; Rogers, 1989; Shek, 1992).

In the 21st century, work is a greater social structure than ever before in time. Employees have replaced other social structures such as church families, peer groups, and community organizations for their colleagues at work. Currently, the work setting offers experiences that provide meaning in life. This creation of meaning is not done in isolation but with others while at work (Conley, 2007; B. George & Sims, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Creating meaning is very much a social process. Members of groups or teams identify through these social processes in order to fundamentally construct meaning and find significance in their work (Drath & Palus, 1994; Gergen, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Meaning making is further derived through a sense of shared purpose. Leaders create a shared purpose in their organizations through inspiring a vision. In the end, individuals in the workplace are called to action by a vision when it proposes an ideal future and inspires possibilities (Denning, 2011; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

While working toward a common vision with shared leadership, communities of practice gradually develop. Communities of practice include a group of people engaging in ongoing activity with a common purpose or endeavor. Communities of practice where shared learning and innovation take place are foundational to human identity and meaning making (Lave, 1993; Wenger, 1998, 2007; Petersen, 2009). Communities of practice eventually become deeply embedded into the fabric of an organization's culture, as does meaning making overall. Leaders have the power to shape the culture of their organization, thus the power to create meaning for themselves and their followers (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Mautz, 2015; Pfeffer, 2010; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Through the thematic process, the 12 researchers developed a common theoretical framework applied to each of their respective studies. The theoretical framework for the five domains of "meaning" explored in this research was first introduced by Dr. Keith Larick and Dr. Cindy Petersen in a series of conference presentations and lectures to

school administrators in Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and to doctoral students at Brandman University. This initial research and work by Dr. Larick and Dr. Petersen (2015), coupled with their leadership experiences as school district superintendents, inspired the need to explore what exemplary leaders do to develop personal and organizational meaning, leading to high achievement. The five domains of leadership explored in this research include character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. The framework proposed by Larick and Petersen suggests that while each domain has merit, it is the interaction of the domains that support the making of meaning in organizations. In a 2015 ACSA State Conference presentation, Larick and Petersen proposed that leaders with character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration have the integral skills to create personal and organizational meaning. In recent presentations at Brandman University, Larick and Petersen (2016) further asserted that creation of personal and organizational meaning is fundamental to leading innovation and transformational change. The theoretical framework suggests that exemplary leaders who have developed behavioral skills in each domain have the capacity to create personal and organizational meaning to followers. The 12 thematic studies were designed to explore Larick and Petersen's (2015, 2016) theory to determine whether exemplary leaders across a variety of professional fields have developed the leadership behaviors that fuse the five domains and actualized meaning in their organizations.

In addition to Larick and Petersen, four particular researchers have built theories on prior research, indicating the need for meaning to occur in the workplace in order to maximize human potential and achieve breakthrough results. The ideas of Conley

(2007), Mautz (2015), and Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) were also used to support the theoretical framework for this study.

Conley's (2007) theory for meaning making is built primarily on the work of Maslow and his hierarchy of needs pyramid. Maslow suggests a peak experience when individuals reach the top of the pyramid (self-actualization) after fulfilling their physiological, safety, social/belonging, and esteem needs; he referred to individuals achieving these peak experiences as "peakers." He further described these self-actualized individuals as creative, flexible, courageous, willing to make mistakes, open, collegial, and humble.

Conley (2007), in his work, applies Maslow's theory to the work relationship and correlates it to meaning in the workplace. This demonstrates the need for peak experiences in the workplace in order to support employees in their search for meaning. Frankl (2006), Boyatzis and McKee (2005), and Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) provided additional frameworks for Conley's (2007) two components of meaning in the workplace: meaning *at* work (the feelings employees have about the organization and their work environment) and meaning *in* work (the feelings employees have specific to their tasks). Conley stated that meaning *at* work is of greater importance, allowing employees to have all of their needs met while feeling part of something greater than themselves. Leaders are responsible for creating the inspiration and support in order to accomplish this in organizations.

Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) made the case for meaning making through citing the *why* and *how* of meaning. They claimed that "employees' ability to find meaning in their work leverages and sustains their competencies and commitment" (Ulrich & Ulrich,

2010, p. 248). This creates a collection of capabilities adequate in addressing the challenges of global business environments and ultimately leading to success for the organization. Additionally, their research expresses the importance of leaders helping their followers find meaning in an organization through the application of seven meaning drivers:

1. Evolving their identity by using their personal values and strengths at work
2. Staying grounded in a purpose and a direction that connects personal drives to a common good
3. Enjoying satisfying relationships where they feel respected and attached
4. Creating positive work environments that sustain their productivity
5. Tackling challenges that invite growth and innovation
6. Finding value even in setbacks as they learn and bounce back
7. Appreciating the daily delights of civility, creativity, humor, playfulness, and pleasure. (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010, p. 248)

Not only do these drivers create meaning, but they create personal and profit value for the organization's leaders, hiring professionals, and followers.

Finally, Mautz (2015) proposed conditions for creating meaning *in* and *at* work, as well as traits of meaning-making leaders. His conditions or "markers of meaning" include three groupings: direction, discovery, and devotion. Direction includes a sense of engaging in meaningful work. Discovery suggests individuals being challenged and thus learning and growing. Discovery, additionally, contributes to employees feeling valued, worthy, and autonomous. The final grouping of devotion is explained by a sense of belongingness to a caring, authentic, and teamwork-based culture. Devotion also refers

to a feeling of connectedness and trust in leadership and the organization's mission while putting an individual's best self into all business activities.

The leadership traits Mautz (2015) indicated as being meaning making include the following: "a passion for potential, caring with a connective undercurrent, framing finesse, and the ability to create an environment of relaxed intensity" (p. 176). The first trait, "passion for potential," includes the positive belief in the possibilities of all employees while challenging and stretching employees to grow in ways they have never experienced. The second trait, proposed "caring with a connective undercurrent," refers to a leader's ability to empathize and anticipate the needs of their followers in an authentic manner. Next, possessing "framing finesse" explores the leader's ability to redefine what it means to work at the specific organization and why it matters. Finally, a leader's impact on a culture of relaxed intensity is described by an infused spirit of competitiveness, fun, engagement, innovation, and productivity. These four traits are what set leaders apart when creating meaning in organizations today (Mautz, 2015).

Leadership

Meaning-making leadership has roots in modern day leadership models. Servant Leadership, for example, focuses on serving the needs of others in a caring manner. This is a global leadership style beginning with an individual's natural feeling to serve and ensure other's needs are met (Greenleaf, 2002; Winston & Ryan, 2008). Van Dierendonck (2011) built on previous investigations and theories to propose six distinct traits of a servant leader. Those traits include the following: "empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship" (Van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1233).

Transformational leadership leads followers, along with leaders, on a journey of change that is in uncharted territory and often needs course corrections. This model, which involves major changes in mindset, behavior, culture, and systems, focuses heavily on the influencing factors that create follower motivation and performance through transformation of the leader and follower (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2010) referred to their transformational theory as conscious leadership.

Resonant leadership puts great importance on leaders being emotionally intelligent. Emotional intelligence refers to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Often referred to as EQ, emotional intelligence is a great indicator of leadership success—much more than IQ or a person's intelligence quotient (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2005).

Authentic leadership suggests that leaders create a sense of openness and validity through a values-based foundation with others in their organization. Authentic leaders are self-actualized and reflective (Conley, 2007; B. George and Sims, 2007). In *True North,* B. George and Sims (2007) provided a model for authentic leadership with self-awareness at the center. There are four surrounding elements essential to igniting passion and finding purpose in this leadership model. Those elements include a leader's values and principles, motivations, support team, and integration of life.

Visionary leadership revolves around the principles of creating, communicating, and implementing a vision and is built on charismatic leadership principles. Visionary leadership allows leaders to take followers along on a meaningful journey (Denning, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011). Spiritual leadership reflects aspects of charismatic leadership

as well and describes the leader's actions as intrinsically motivated and centered around faith, love, and hope (Fry, 2003). Kriger and Seng (2005) proposed that spiritual leadership is religiously value based. Additionally, transcendent leadership focuses on the levels of self, others, and organization. This model has combining elements of servant, authentic, and visionary leadership (Crossan, Vera, & Nanjad, 2008).

Centered leadership is largely based on the work of the McKinsey Leadership Project which started in 2004. This project was establish to enable female leaders with a model to maneuver and thrive in the corporate world. The centered leadership model includes the following dimensions: meaning, managing energy, positive framing, connecting, and engaging. Meaning is defined in this model through happiness, signature strengths, and purpose. Managing energy refers to minimizing the depletion of energy, restoring energy, and keeping a steady flow of energy as a leader. The idea of positive framing entails self-awareness, learned optimism, and the notion of moving on when a decision has been made. The connection dimension includes elements of networking, sponsorship, reciprocity, and inclusiveness. The final dimension in the centered leadership model is engaging. Engaging is inclusive of voice, ownership, risk taking, and adaptability (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Barsh, Cranston, & Craske, 2008).

Meaning-making leadership has been investigated recently by four researchers with three distinct perspectives: Conley (2007), Mautz (2015), and Ulrich and Ulrich (2010). Again, these theorists, as well as Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016), provide the theoretical framework for this study; this framework was discussed earlier. Their developments on how leaders create meaning for themselves and their employees are explored in even greater detail in the subsequent chapter.

Followership

Historically, research on leadership has taken a leader-centric approach, leaving followers out of the equation. The term *followership* encompasses much more than simply changing the perspective from the leader to the follower (Riggio, 2014). Drucker (1988) exposed the great power in followership as it relates to responsibility. His notion of followers taking on more responsibility and involvement promotes satisfaction and engagement in the workplace. Kelley (1992) suggested that effective followers have the following characteristics: self-management, commitment, competence, and courage. These elements also create leaders among followers with the desirable ability to work independently or collaboratively with little to no supervision (Manz & Sims, 1987).

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory defines how high levels of LMX through trust, support, and influence provide more rewarding and gratifying relationships among leader and followers. Followers experiencing these quality relationships are more productive, committed, and satisfied in the workplace. Conversely, low levels of LMX produce strained and unsatisfying relationships (Goertzen & Fritz, 2004; Gerstner & Day; 1997). Social identity theory focuses heavily on the ability a leader has in speaking to followers' self-images. In this case, a leader's ability to effectively encourage followers from a selfish concern to a shared one, based on collective goals and values, is seen as his or her having a more positive emotional connection with his or her followers (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The evolution of followership continues to highlight the intertwining relationship between leaders and followers. The idea of leadership being "co-produced" is one of Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012). These researchers discussed how followers engage in

leadership behaviors while participating in teams and developing ideas (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Tapscott and Senge (2015) suggested the additional notion of creating leaders in all followers and erasing the very term followership from the business vocabulary. These ideas are built on the origins of power sharing and collaboration of the postindustrial leadership paradigm (Brungardt, 1998).

Meaning-Making Domains

Meaning-making domains contribute to a positive leader-follower exchange, which encompasses positive interactions, collaboration, and power sharing. Researchers Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016) presented their case for a positive leader-follower exchange through meaning making in their Five Elements of Leadership in *Taking People With You: Leading as a Maker of Meaning*. These five elements, also referred to as domains, include character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

Character. Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016) paralleled character with respect and echoed B. George and Sims' (2007) proposal for leadership based on solid values and principles. These principles are the basis for a leader's moral and ethical reasoning as well as his or her actions. Kouzes and Posner (2007) concurred, stating how "nothing communicates more clearly than what leaders do" (p. 322). Furthermore, character denotes a sense of trustworthiness and integrity. Trust is essential for effective leadership; it allows for collaboration, innovation, and organizational buy-in (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). A leader's integrity also becomes foundational for meaning making as it provides a system for guiding a leader's every decision and action. Maxwell (2011) stated, "When values, thoughts, feelings, and actions are in alignment, a person becomes focused and his character is strengthened" (p. 200). Leaders demonstrating a positive and

trustworthy character, capably put forth visions for their organizations based on principles of inspiration, motivation, and influence (Maxwell, 2000).

Vision. Leaders enlist their followers in meaning making when they bring the vision of their organization to life. Proposing a sense of shared vision acts as a change driver for organizational transformation as well (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The practical sense of a vision as a meaning-making tool is additionally powerful for leaders, especially in terms of influence. A vision is an image of what an organization is seeking to create (Cialdini, 2006; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005). Sinek (2009) proposes The Golden Circle when building an organizational vision. The Golden Circle starts with purpose, or the *why*, in setting a vision. The purpose is followed by *how* the organization will accomplish it and lastly by *what* the organization does for profit. When leaders deliver a vision in this distinct order, more stakeholders are compelled to follow. Starting with the *why* is what sets great and inspiring leaders apart from others.

Relationships. Relationships are important for providing a sense of meaning as they connect individuals to one another (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Dutton and Heaphy (2003) suggested that work is more meaningful when it is social in nature. Furthermore, relationships in the workplace are improved when trust and respect are mutually given and received. In "Views from the C-Suite," a chapter in *Extraordinary Leadership*, Marrow (2010) reported how six C-suite executives felt "strongly that being authentic was essential to connecting meaningfully with others and gaining their trust" (p. 31). Authenticity, in this context, is defined through a true sense of self while openly relating to others. All six participants noted authenticity as a central element in "their efforts to build, mine, and sustain vibrant relationships" (Marrow, 2010,

p. 31). Respect in trusting relationships is noted as essential to maintaining ongoing relationships (Bolton & Bolton, 1996; Duck, 1990). Mautz (2015) suggested that fostering relationships over time, especially in team-oriented environments, offers meaningful connections for leaders and followers.

Wisdom. Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016) paired wisdom with learning as it relates to meaning making. These researchers discussed how a leader's ongoing pursuit of learning is essential for the creation of meaning for themselves and those they lead. Seligman (2002) suggested that wisdom and knowledge are closely related to five individual character traits: curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, creativity, and perspective. These emotional traits connect directly with the human spirit and demonstrate how wisdom cannot be independent of individuals (Ardelt, 2003).

AM Azure (2008) provides a framework for measuring wisdom for leaders. Their framework is described by the following seven pillars: time perspective, reflective life experience, making sense of ambiguity, trade off judgement, dealing with life pragmatics, psychological empathy, and emotional maturity. Leaders who increase their wisdom through these pillars effectively coordinate the talent, who are the knowledgeable individuals or experts in the field, within their organization and across various functions to achieve maximum results. Wise leaders understand that wisdom is "not what is known, but rather the manner in which knowledge is held and in how that knowledge is put to use" (p. 9).

Inspiration. Kouzes and Posner (2007) found that inspiration in leadership fulfills a need others have for creating meaning and purpose in their lives. Inspirational leaders who exude enthusiasm and energy and are positive about the future inspire hope

for their followers. Moreover, they project positive emotions, which greatly impact relationships, and ultimately productivity, in an organization. Positive emotions contribute to a positive and thriving environment where individuals are engaged in extraordinary performance. Leaders also provide meaning through inspiration by providing challenges for followers or enacting a sense of team comradery while proposing a shared purpose and vision (Walumbwa, Christensen, & Muchiri, 2013). Zenger and Folkman (2013) discovered how inspiring leaders were better at establishing a clear vision for their organization as well as making connections with their followers. Additionally, these researchers demonstrated how inspiring leaders had a passion for change and were role models in their organizations. Similar to previous points, Gallo (2007) confirmed how inspiration, motivation, and positive influence are vital to achieving organizational results.

Female Business Executives

Global pressures are forcing leaders to find new ways to connect with their followers, address employee disengagement, and create meaning within their organizations. This crisis for meaning is complicated by the challenges of the volatile business environments. Today's leader is called to engage employees in meaningful work in order to make much-needed change and achieve breakthrough results (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Friedman, 2005; Lawrence, 2013). Meaning-making leadership proposes that infusing meaning into the workplace will engage employees once again as well as increase stakeholder's satisfaction, production, sales, and profit (Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Meaning-making leadership is influenced by various leadership theories; transformational leadership, first introduced by Burns (1978), is one that has a strong influence. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Eagly and Carli (2003) comparing male and female managers, found female leaders to have more of a competitive edge when it comes to transformational leadership. Empowerment and collaboration, characteristics commonly connected with females, are seen as defining factors in transformational leaders (Bailey, 2014).

Although women may be capable of carrying out this important work, statistics indicate that women hold significantly fewer positions of power around the world than their male counterparts (Sandberg, 2013). In 2013, Sandberg highlighted troubling statistics for women:

- Women are 57% of college graduates and 63% of Master's degree holders, but that majority fades as careers progress
- 21 of the Fortune 500 CEOs are women
- Women hold 14% of executive officer positions
- Women hold 16% of board seats
- Congress is 18% female
- Women make $.77 to every $1.00 a man earns. (Carlson, 2013, p. 2)

A recent study out of UC Davis shows there to be only one woman for every seven men among directors and the highest-paid executives in California's largest public companies. Additionally, it was discovered that of the 1,823 highest-paid executives, only 10.5% were women. Of the 191 women executives in this study, only 17 were CEOs and 52 were chief financial officers (CFOs). This study also highlighted a

discrepancy in median income with men's compensation at $2.1 million and women at $1.9 million. Of the 400 California public companies, only 4.3% have female CEOs, a rather low percentage. Conversely, the top 25 ranked public companies in California have 44% female CEOs, a phenomenon among the data (UC Davis Graduate School of Management, 2015). How can these exemplary female business executives, specifically those in the CEO role, share their success with others in the context of meaning making?

A significant amount is known about meaning making as it relates to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration, especially with regard to modern-day leadership and followership models. Little is known on meaning-making leadership as it relates to these five variables. Furthermore, the integration of how these five meaning-making domains may interact is an unexplored topic. A study highlighting their integration may shed light on meaning-making leadership literature as well as provide an opportunity to learn from exemplary female business executives utilizing successful meaning-making strategies.

Statement of the Research Problem

Unlike other leadership models, meaning-making leadership has not been studied extensively. The current literature proves beneficial in many ways but is limited. Studies on meaning making show how influential certain leaders can be in meeting the psychological needs of their followers, reengaging the disengaged workforce, and inspiring others to achieve organizational success through creativity and collaboration. Meaning-making leadership models appear to benefit from overlapping variables. These variables include character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Crowley, 2011).

Relationships at all levels have a direct impact on organizational success and significance in most every model. Inspiration and vision are two other traits leaders possess in a variety of models. Charismatic leaders or storytellers are those capable of inspiring a vision motivating employees of organizations and bringing them along for a journey toward a common goal. These leaders have the power to inspire the message of "meaningful work is done here" or "you are contributing to something great" in an organization (Conley, 2007; Crowley, 2011; Denning, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Wisdom, sometimes referred to as part of character, allows leaders to frame and then define cultural expectations in order to share leadership, learn together, and innovate among leaders and followers. At the base of most leadership are the values and character traits specific to the leaders. Leaders' character is a defining element and has lasting impact and influence on the authenticity of their actions (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Research, however, is unclear on how these five aforementioned variables interact and form the basis for a leadership model that focuses on making meaning in organizations. The specific strategies leaders use while the five variables are at play is an unexplored topic. Additionally, there are no studies gathering feedback from followers on how they are affected by leaders who use strategies to make meaning in all five variables. Therefore an investigation on the integration of the five (character, vision relationships, wisdom, and inspiration) as they relate to meaning-making leadership will further strengthen the literature and models for leaders as they venture into uncharted territory.

Although reports indicate a rise in female business executives, they are still few and far between (Daum, 2015). There is great opportunity for work to further equip female leaders and those who sponsor or mentor them with new research. More information is needed on the strategies and tools used by exemplary female business leaders to create meaning both personally and organizationally. Investigation into how the five variables (character, vision relationships, wisdom, and inspiration) interact to create powerful meaning making would shed light on the topic and add to the body of meaning-making leadership literature currently in circulation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to determine the degree of importance to which followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Research Questions

1. What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?
2. To what degree do followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning?

Significance of the Problem

Leadership is an essential element of thriving organizations, affecting profitability, stakeholder commitment, and employee retention (Zenger & Folkman, 2009). Leaders' knowledge, skills, and abilities particularly mark the vitality of an organization (Altman, 2006). Additionally, researchers indicate the imminent need for leaders to address the complexities of the 21st century workplace and criticize traditional leadership models. Most traditional leadership models are described as unevolved, lacking knowledge and strategies for leaders to guide their followers through a search for meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in work—a defining necessity in today's society. When leaders improve their ability to create meaning, they provide a solution to follower disengagement (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Follower disengagement or low employee commitment is among one of the societal trends Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) proposed as a crisis for meaning and leaders. It is marked by the following conditions:

1. Declining mental health and happiness, . . .
2. increased concern for environmental demands, . . .
3. increased social responsibility, . . .
4. increased organization purpose, . . .
5. increased individual motivation, . . .
6. increased complexity of work, . . .
7. increased isolation, . . .
8. low employee commitment, . . .
9. growing disposability and change, . . . and

10. greater hostility and enmity." (pp. 17-21)

Consequently, a leader's ability to promote a meaning-rich environment that engages employees addresses many of these trends, elevates performance, and impacts financial results. Businesses with highly engaged employees outperform their industry peers with 27% higher profits, 50% higher sales, and 50% high customer loyalty. Additionally, these companies report higher stock performances, possess more of a competitive edge, and experience more overall success in current business conditions (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The findings in this study can provide in-house professional development content to human resource departments that understand the need to increase employee engagement.

Cranston and Keller (2013) explored the idea of a meaning quotient (MQ) and the need for increased levels of MQ in today's leaders. Their investigation was inspired by the disconnect existing "between the desire of practitioners to create meaning in the workplace, the good ideas emerging from cutting-edge research, and the number of specific, practical, and reliable tools that leaders know how to use" (para. 14). This study can help business leaders to improve their meaning-making abilities in order to reach their disengaged employees, improve productivity, and ultimately improve overall organizational success.

Meaning-making leadership is a contemporary and practical leadership model for the 21st century. This model is built upon research imbedding character, vision, relationships, inspiration, and wisdom as constructs of meaning making (Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). A study to assess how these five variables interact within the context of meaning making would fill a gap in current meaning-making leadership

literature. Furthermore, the specific strategies that these meaning-making leaders use and that their followers perceive as meaning making could provide knowledge and skills helpful to organizational leaders at all levels. The findings could be used by university leadership development programs as well as leadership development programs in organizations (Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, 2014; Turnbull James, 2011).

According to Jay (2014), although companies have continued to put emphasis on developing female leaders over the past decade, there is minimal progress for women when compared to men in top-level executive positions. A study focusing on exemplary female business executives could be used as a model for other females interested in climbing the corporate ladder or perhaps companies who value diversity at the top. With the limited exposure for women in top-level executive positions, a study highlighting the strategies exemplary female business executives use and how their followers perceive those strategies offers insight for organizations seeking increased performance and a competitive advantage (Barsh et al., 2008; Boatman, Wellins, & Neal, 2011; Daum, 2015; Sandberg, 2013).

Definitions of Terms

Following are definitions of terms relevant to the study. For alignment and clarity, the definitions are presented with the theoretical definition followed by the operational definition. All were created collaboratively through the thematic process.

Exemplary

Theoretical definition. Someone set apart from peers in a supreme manner, suitable behavior, principles, or intentions that can be copied (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014).

Operational definition. Exemplary leaders are defined as those leaders who are set apart from peers by exhibiting at least five of the following characteristics: (a) Evidence of successful relationships with followers; (b) evidence of leading a successful organization; (c) a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings; (e) recognition by their peers; and (f) membership in professional associations in their field.

Meaning

Theoretical definition. Meaning is a sense of purpose as a fundamental need, which leads to significance and value for self and others (Bennis, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Frankl, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Pearson, 2015; Varney, 2009; Yeoman, 2014).

Operational definition. Meaning is the result of leaders and followers coming together for the purpose of gathering information from experience and integrating it into a process, which creates significance, value and identity within themselves and the organization.

Character

Theoretical definition. Character is the moral compass by which a person lives his or her life (Bass & Bass, 2008; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; T. Moore, 2008; Quick & Wright, 2011; Sankar, 2003).

Operational definition. Character is alignment of a value system, which promotes ethical thoughts and actions based on principles of concern for others through optimism and integrity while being reliable, transparent, and authentic.

Vision

Theoretical definition. A bridge from the present to the future created by a collaborative mindset, adding meaning to the organization, sustaining higher levels of motivation, and withstanding challenges (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Landsberg, 2003; Mendez-Morse, 1993; Nanus, 1992).

Operational definition. Vision is foresight demonstrated by a compelling outlook of the future shared by leaders and followers who are engaged to create the future state.

Relationships

Theoretical definition. Relationships are the bonds that are established between people through encouragement, compassion, and open communication, which lead to feelings of respect, trust, and acceptance (Frankl, 2006; B. George, 2003; B. George & Sims, 2007; Henderson, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007, 2009; Liborius, 2014; Mautz, 2015; McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008; Reina & Reina, 2015; Seligman, 2002; D. M. Smith, 2011; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Operational definition. Relationships are authentic connections between leaders and followers involved in a common purpose through listening, respect, trust, and acknowledgement of one another.

Wisdom

Theoretical definition. Wisdom is the ability to utilize cognitive, affective, and reflective intelligences to discern unpredictable and unprecedented situations with beneficial action (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Kekes, 1983; Pfeffer, 2010; Spano, 2013; Sternberg, 1998).

Operational definition. Wisdom is the reflective integration of values, experience, knowledge, and concern for others to accurately interpret and respond to complex, ambiguous, and often unclear situations.

Inspiration

Theoretical definition. Inspiration is a source of contagious motivation that resonates from the heart, transcending the ordinary and driving leaders and their followers forward with confidence (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; I. H. Smith, 2014; Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

Operational definition. Inspiration is the heartfelt passion and energy that leaders exude through possibility-thinking, enthusiasm, encouragement, and hope to create relevant, meaningful connections that empower.

Followership

Theoretical definition. Followership is the role held by certain individuals in an organization, team, or group. Specifically, it is the capacity of an individual to actively follow a leader. Followership is the reciprocal social process of leadership. Specifically, followers play an active role in organization, group, and team successes and failures. (Baker, 2007; Riggio, Chaleff, & Blumen-Lipman, 2008).

Operational definition. For purposes of this study, a follower is defined as a member of the leadership team who has responsibilities for managing different aspects of the organization. This group of followers could include chief information officer, assistant superintendents, director, coordinator, chief financial officer, director of personnel services, coordinators, administrators, sales manager, account manager, principal, and so forth.

Delimitations

Delimitations for this study narrowed the scope and set boundaries for participants involved in the research. This study was delimited to exemplary female CEOs leading private companies with more than 20 employees in Southern California. These businesses were identified by the Small Business Profile produced for California in 2015 (Small Business Administration [SBA], Office of Advocacy, 2015). To be considered exemplary, the female CEO must display or demonstrate a minimum of five characteristics from the following list of criteria:

1. Evidence of successful relationships with stakeholders.
2. Evidence of leadership behaviors promoting a positive and productive organizational culture.
3. Have 5 or more years of experience in that profession or field.
4. Written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.
5. Recognized by peers as a successful leader.
6. Membership in associations of groups focused on their field.

The quantitative survey was delimited to 12 of the female CEOs corresponding followers.

Organization of the Study

Five chapters, including references and pertinent appendices, form the organizational structure of this study. This first chapter gave an introductory discussion on the study's theoretical framework, leadership and followership components, female business leaders' foundations, and meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration). Additionally, this chapter presented the study's problem statement, purpose, significance, research questions, and delimitations. Chapter

II is an expansion of the first and a complete review of literature on elements related to meaning, leadership, followership, female CEOs, and meaning-making domains as identified by Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016). Chapter III describes the research design, methodology, and limitations for the study. Chapter IV presents a complete analysis of the data collected as well as a discussion of its findings. Finally, Chapter V synthesizes and offers the summary, conclusions, and recommendations formulated from this study.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II offers a comprehensive review of literature, providing historical and theoretical elements pertinent to this study. The review of literature is structured into five main sections: meaning/creating meaning, leadership, followership, meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration), and female chief executive officers (CEOs). An overview/importance of the subject or domain is explored as well as emerging themes. Related theories are discussed and the connection is made on how each subject or variable is tied to meaning. This chapter closes with a summary on all major topics explored.

Meaning/Creating Meaning

It was Greek philosopher Plato who stated, "Man is a being in search of meaning" (as cited in Burton, 2008, para. 1). Throughout history, other philosophers, psychologists, and investigators have dedicated their efforts to discovering the necessity humans possess to understand the concept of meaning. Many of them have discovered how to create meaning in their own lives. Few of these figures have experimented as to how meaning can be created for others, especially as it relates to an organization. Throughout this section, an overview of meaning/creating meaning, as well as its importance, is presented.

Overview and Importance of Meaning/Creating Meaning

Meaning has been an explored topic for centuries. Starting with the works of Greek philosophers Socrates (Ambury, n.d.), Plato (380 BCE/2008), and Aristotle (350 BCE/n.d.). Wilfred Drath and Charles Palus (1994), Viktor Frankl (2006), Abraham Maslow (1999), and Jean Piaget (1954) continued this quest for man's understanding of

meaning in the 20th century. In this 21st century, Joanna Barsh (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Barsh et al., 2008), Chip Conley (2007), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Bryan Dik, Zinta Byne and Michael Steger (2013), Bill George and Peter Sims (2007), Scott Mautz (2015), Dan Pontefract (2016), Tom Rath (2015), Dave and Wendy Ulrich (2010), as well as Amy Wrszniewski (Wrszniewski et al., 2003), have paved the way to discovering how important seeking meaning in and outside of the workplace can be for successful, positive, and joyful human development. The following themes continually emerge in the literature on this topic: meaningful existence, value and belongingness, shared purpose/vision, and leaving a legacy.

Meaningful existence. Much of what these authors agree upon is the fact that there is an emphasis and increased level of purpose, happiness, and success when an individual is able to create meaningful experiences in his or her life. This meaningful existence often leads to optimal human functioning and well-being (Frankl, 2006; Jahoda, 1958; Maslow, 1999; Rogers, 1989; Shek, 1992). Seeking meaning in what individuals do in their daily routines and throughout their lifetimes is indeed a fundamental component of human existence (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Dik et al., 2013; Mautz, 2015; Sandberg, 2013). This profound human discovery further promotes an individual's passion and true self, opening up a plethora of opportunity in all walks of life (T. Moore, 2008).

Value and belongingness. When emotional connections become a part of an experience, they become meaningful and memorable. Connections providing significance and value matter even more to an individual (Mautz, 2015). The majority of literature exploring meaning and significance has been in the psychology realm

(Auhagen, 2000; Morgan & Farsides, 2009; Steger et al., 2006). In fact, the influential investigations and writings in the 21st century related to this topic are largely based on the work of Abraham Maslow (1943/2000, 1999).

In Maslow's (1943/2000) paper, *A Theory of Human Motivation,* the psychologist describes in a five-level pyramid what he calls a *hierarchy of needs.* Starting from the bottom or the foundation of the pyramid and working up, the levels are as follows: physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization.

Physiological needs are the essential needs: air, food, water, sex, sleep, and shelter. Safety needs are those of protection, security, employment, resources, morality, law, health, and property. Family, friendships, work groups, and affection make up the love/belongingness need. The esteem need can be fulfilled with self-esteem, confidence, achievement, status, and reputation. At the pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy of needs lies self-actualization. This need pertains to morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, and the acceptance of facts. Individuals ascending to this peak experience the most personal growth and fulfillment (Burton, 2012; Chapman, 2014; Maslow, 1999).

Maslow's (1943/2000) third need of love/belongingness focuses much on the social interactions that are made in a person's life—the relationships. Feeling a sense of belonging or value when in a relationship is how individuals create meaningful emotional connections. These connections are made at home and in other social structures. One of the greatest social structures of the 21st century is the workplace. Other more traditional relationships made up of church groups or community organizations have been replaced in part by colleagues at work. Today's workplace provides meaning for individuals by

offering experiences through relationships that provide value and the fulfillment of belongingness (Conley, 2007; B. George & Sims, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Shared purpose/vision. Creating meaning is not done in isolation (Conley, 2007; B. George & Sims, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Members of groups or teams identify through these social processes in order to fundamentally construct meaning and find significance in their work (Drath & Palus, 1994; Gergen, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Denning (2011), Kotter and Cohen (2002), and Kouzes and Posner (2007) discussed how meaning making can be deliberate and produced through a sense of shared purpose. These authors pointed to an inspiring vision delivered by a leader as the impetus to sparking a sense of purpose in an organization. Furthermore, a vision proposing an ideal future and inspiring possibilities tightly bonds leaders to their followers as well as colleagues to other colleagues (Denning, 2011; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Communities of practice, a group of people engaged in ongoing activity with a common purpose or endeavor, develop over time when individuals work toward a common vision with shared leadership (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These communities share learning practices and innovate. In fact, they fulfill both of Maslow's top needs: esteem and self-actualization. Individuals making up communities of practice handle adversity and challenges unlike others. They tend to thrive and perform as a result of their shared ascension to Maslow's peak. Conley (2007) asserted that as individuals transcend to the peak of Maslow's pyramid, they ultimately see their work as less of a job or career and more of a calling—a passion. Passions satisfied through learning and creativity leading to innovation are foundational pieces to

human identity and meaning making (Lave, 1993; Petersen, 2009; Wenger, 1998, 2007). Csikszentmihalyi (2003) also asserted that

> if leaders can make a convincing case that working for the organization will provide relevance, that it will take the workers out of the shell of their mortal frame and connect them with something more meaningful, then his vision will generate power, and people will naturally be attracted to become part of such a company. (p. 154)

Leaving a legacy. As these communities of practice become rooted into organizations' frameworks, meaning making is increased and becomes embedded into the organizational culture. Leaders of these organizations have a tremendous amount of influence and power in shaping mindsets and cultures that inspire the ascension to the peak of Maslow's pyramid. This, ultimately, helps to create meaning for the leaders and their followers (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Mautz, 2015; Pfeffer, 2010; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

A leader capable of creating meaning for him/herself and others is leaving a legacy. Mautz (2015) suggested a leader's purpose as a motivating factor for time spent at work. In fact, he believed it is purpose that creates a sense of direction for individuals at work, but a leader's legacy is what guides activities along the work-life journey. Kouzes and Posner (2012) considered a leader's legacy as making a difference in the lives of others. Sinek (2014) concurred with Kouzes and Posner (2012) and further defined a leader's legacy as a foundational element to allow for others to continue the leader's advancements in an organization. All in all, contributing to a deliberately created meaningful existence shaped by an overarching mission to create a better life for

others allows a leader to leave a legacy to be proud of in life (Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Rath, 2015).

Leadership

Alan Keith of Genentech stated, "Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen" (as cited in Kouzes & Posner 2007, p. 3). Throughout this section, an overview and the importance of leadership are explored. Lastly, the relationship between leadership and meaning is discovered.

Overview/Importance of Leadership

Daft (2008) mentioned, as he outlined the history of leadership theories, how many current leadership models stem from the great man theory of leadership to a variety of characteristics, behaviors, contingencies, influences, and relational theories—all eventually leading to what is discussed in this section. Nine modern leadership theories are explored in this section: servant leadership, transformational/conscious leadership, resonant leadership, authentic leadership, visionary leadership, spiritual leadership, transcendent leadership, centered leadership, and meaning-making leadership. There is notable overlapping among these theories, which all unquestionably lead up to the most current form of leadership, meaning-making leadership.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership focuses on serving the needs of others in a caring manner. This international leadership style is rooted in an individual's natural feeling to serve and ensure that other's needs are met (Greenleaf, 1970; Winston & Ryan, 2008). Van Dierendonck (2011) is well known for his work developing servant

leadership. His contribution to the body of knowledge on servant leadership is largely based on previous investigations and theories.

Greenleaf's early assertions of servant leadership have particular emphasis on social responsibility through the transformation of followers (Graham, 1991). Patterson (2003) took this a step further by highlighting the explicit focus a leader has on the needs of followers. There is both responsibility and opportunity in appointing or selecting servant leaders to assist followers in their personal and professional progression (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) acknowledged a shift in traditional leadership to one having a greater focus on the interactions between the leader and follower, especially in a global setting.

Prior to Van Dierendonck's (2011) creating his six traits of servant leadership, Spears (1995) built on the work of Greenleaf's proposing 10 characteristics of a servant leader: "listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community" (Van Dierendonck, 2011, p. 1232). A handful of authors have proposed variations of these characteristics: Laub (1999) introduced a modified version proposing six clusters of servant leadership, whereas Russel and Stone (2002) expanded greatly by outlining nine functional characteristics and 11 additional characteristics. In 2003, Patterson offered a model exploring seven dimensions based on character virtues that exemplified excellence.

Van Dierendonck (2011) presented his six traits for servant leadership. These include "empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship" (p. 1233). In fact, an entire conceptual

model of servant leadership supported the traits described, and all led to self-actualization, primarily follower job attitudes, performance, and organizational outcomes. Figure 1 displays the conceptual model developed by Van Dierendonck on servant leadership.

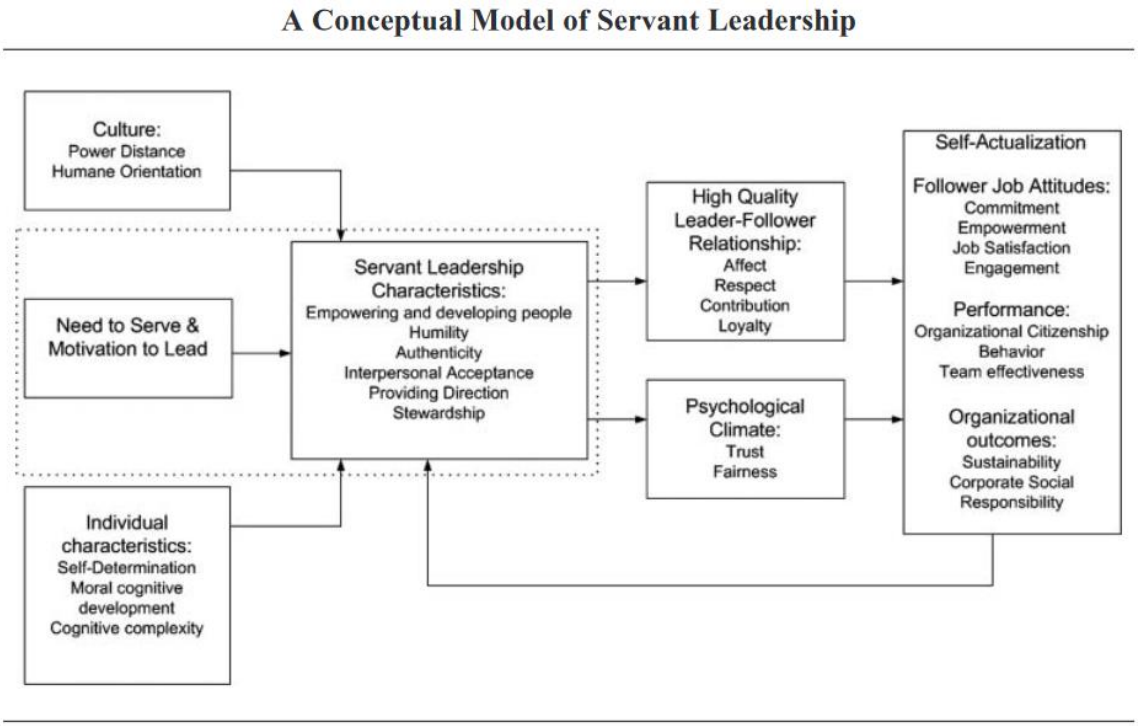

Figure 1. A conceptual model of servant leadership.

Transformational/conscious leadership. Transformational leadership leads followers, along with leaders, on an unmapped voyage through personal and organizational change. This model encompasses changes in mindset, behavior, culture, and systems, with a heavy emphasis on the factors creating follower motivation and performance through a transformation of the leader and follower (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978).

Burns (1978) showcased his two-step leader influence process for transformational leadership in his book, *Leadership*. The first of the steps included the leader's efforts to lift his or her followers' morals, values, and ideals. The next step was to inspire change in workers, teams, and the organization at large. His work particularly highlighted the importance of developing good relationships with followers. Burns, as well as Kuhnert and Lewis (1987), found that uplifting followers through relationships while the leader displayed high morals motivated followers to contribute even more toward the goals of the organization. Through fostered relationships, trust and respect ensued, and an increased level of confidence grew in followers. Individuals began to see their contribution and value and thus raised their level of performance and motivation toward goals. This was very different than previous models relying on leaders to outline expected performance tasks (Bass, 1985; House, 1977; Yukl, 1989).

One of the most mentioned transformational leadership models since Burns is the model composed of four major concepts by Bass (1985). These include "(1) idealized influence; (2) inspirational motivation; (3) individualized consideration; and (4) intellectual stimulation" (Levine, Muenchen, & Brooks, 2010, p. 578). The first attribute, idealized influence, discusses the leader's ability to display behaviors seen as a personal risk or sacrifice while delivering an inspiring vision (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The next, inspirational motivation, goes hand in hand with influence. An inspirational leader motivates others through enthusiasm, confidence, and the belief that others are capable of the desired vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Bass (1985) described the third concept, individualized consideration, as a heightened awareness leaders have to their followers' needs and wants. The leader essentially becomes both a coach and mentor,

communicating effectively, providing feedback, and pushing followers to grow both individually and within the constructs of the organization and its goals (Panopoulos, 1999; Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1993).

Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2010) discussed conscious leadership as one and the same as transformational leadership. Their work builds on previously discussed authors' models, but includes a "state of awareness or level of consciousness" unlike others (p. 82). The notion is that being more aware as a leader expands influence and deters the concept of "autopilot"—which is when the leader simply goes through the motions without being deliberate about strategies, decisions, reactions, or relationships. A leader who is more aware is mindful, reflective, alert, and observant (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010).

Resonant leadership. Resonant leadership relates greatly to emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EQ) denotes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management and acts as an indicator for leadership success, often more than an individual's intelligence quotient (IQ). A resonant leader demonstrates self-awareness by perceiving his or her own emotions in an accurate manner, especially when situations become intense or challenging. Self-management is the self-control enacted to control emotions or to maintain a positive outlook. Social awareness expands beyond the individual and is established when the leader develops an awareness of the organization and empathy toward its employees. Lastly, relationship management involves the leader's influence on teams and overall ability to inspire, coach, and mentor (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2005).

Three truths are discussed by McKee et al. (2008) explaining resonant leadership:

1. Smart is not good enough—multiple intelligences make a difference;
2. Moods do matter—a leader sets the tone in an organization; and
3. Great leaders do not thrive on constant pressure—learning to manage stress and rejuvenate while leading is essential to a leader's well-being.

Much of the literature surrounding resonant leadership reflects its focus on developing the leader personally. Resonant leadership lays out action steps, leading to milestones, learning goals, then a personal vision, which, in turn, provides the structure and framework for leaders to impact their organizations and create real change (McKee et al., 2008).

Authentic leadership. Authentic leaders create a sense of openness and legitimacy through a values-based foundation with others in their organization. The concept of authentic leadership focuses much on the leader's self-actualization and reflection (Conley, 2007; B. George and Sims, 2007; Maslow, 1971). In fact, this theory is rooted in the discipline of psychology. Rogers (1959, 1963) and Maslow (1968, 1971) focused greatly on the development of the self-actualized or full-functioning individual. Showing how this type of leader, in sync with him or herself, provides a clear and accurate view with the ability to make better personal decisions and lead as a model for others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; B. George and Sims, 2007).

Avolio and Gardner (2005) outlined the following elements as distinctive to making up authentic leadership: positive psychological capital, positive moral perspective, leader self-awareness, leader self-regulation, leadership processes/behaviors, follower self-awareness/regulation, follower development, organizational context, and

performance. They also compared these elements to a variety of other leadership styles being discussed throughout this section. Although servant, spiritual, and charismatic leadership reflect elements of authentic leaders by their definition, it is the transformational leader who lines up most like the authentic leader.

Building on previous work, in *True North,* B. George and Sims (2007) provided a model including a leader's values and principles, motivations, support team, and integration of life for authentic leadership. Self-awareness is at the center. The four surrounding elements discussed previously become essential to igniting passion and finding purpose in this model. Authentic leadership for B. George and Sims (2007) focused on self-discovery and the development of the leader through five distinct dimensions: purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart.

Visionary leadership. Visionary leadership is built on transformational leadership and charismatic leadership principles with a heavy emphasis on the principles of creating, communicating, and implementing a vision. Visionary leadership includes storytelling as a mechanism of sharing a vision, thus allowing leaders to take followers along on a meaningful journey (Denning, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Taylor, Cornelius, & Colvin, 2014).

Visionary leaders focus primarily on a clearly articulated vision to guide their organization, providing meaning and purpose to followers (Nanus, 1992; Sashkin, 1992). Starting with a leader's personal vision, it is then combined to create a shared vision with others in the organization, acting as a springboard to empower change, action, and productivity. Visionary leaders perceive a lack of change, action, and productivity as a disconnect in the vision's not being fully implemented or understood. The premise is that

people will not need to decipher where they are headed or what their main objective is if the leader clearly defines and communicates it to them (Heath & Heath, 2010). Judge and Piccolo (2004), Keller (2006), and Wang and Howell (2010) provided evidence to support organizational effectiveness and increased individual performance when applying visionary leadership. Much of this is because of the connection created with the leader and followers through commitment to a common vision, trust, motivation toward common goals, and increased performance (Zhu, Chew, & Spangler, 2005).

Spiritual leadership. Kouzes and Posner (1987) began to develop the theory on spiritual leadership. Fairholm (1998) built on previous work, which led to Mitroff and Denton's (1999) publication of *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*. Strack and Fottler (2002) were some of the first researchers to venture into and explore the unknown connections of spirituality and leadership. Their findings found that over 90% of Americans indicated some sort of spiritual belief. Furthermore, those providing feedback indicated that their spiritual belief "provides meaning, purpose and hope. . . influence their beliefs, values and thoughts; and provides power and energy to one's life" (p. 7). Soon after the idea of spirituality's being fundamental to human existence, Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as "as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p. 711).

Fry (2003) further discussed how the leaders' actions are intrinsically motivated and centered on faith, love, and hope. Kriger and Seng (2005) show spiritual leadership as religiously value based. Kouzes and Posner (2007) continued their exploration into this field and showcased their discovery into the four essential characteristics for spiritual

leaders on which most spiritual leadership research is based: honest, forward looking, inspirational, and competent.

Transcendent leadership. Aldon (2004) is well known for his contribution to transcendent leadership. He introduced the levels of self as a way of connecting to both spirituality and science. The transcendence of levels by a leader is central to the model. Gardiner (2006) focused not only on the transcending characteristics of self but also of those within the organization. His 21st century global leadership perspective of transcendent leadership is rooted in servant leadership principles developed by Greenleaf in the 1970s. Gardiner discussed the triple bottom lines of profits, people, and the planet as a passageway to global sustainability. This model is collaborative and all-encompassing in nature. It relies heavily on the multiple intelligences of organizational leaders and followers in making decisions that impact the economic, social, and environmental realms of an organization. This model deliberately steers away from transaction and transformation as well as the idea of interdependence. The central ideas highlighted in this model are shared governance and a wholeness uniting all of humanity. Crossan et al. (2008) concurred with Gardiner (2006) and denoted transcendent leadership as a strategic form of leadership going beyond the levels of self, others, and the organization at large.

Centered leadership. Centered leadership is largely based on the work of the McKinsey Leadership Project after linking up with Joanna Barsh in 2004. Centered leadership is based on five principles: meaning, framing, connecting, engaging, and energizing (Barsh & Cranston, 2009). Meaning is primary to this model and is explained through elements of happiness, signature strengths, and purpose. The idea of framing

relies heavily on self-awareness, learned optimism, and the notion of moving on from decisions. Much of this concept is rooted in positive psychology. Connecting includes elements of networking, sponsorship, reciprocity, and inclusiveness. Much of the research behind this dimension is based on the power of vulnerability and trust. Next, engaging is inclusive of voice, ownership, risk taking, and adaptability. This element in which mindful action becomes front and center, makes the conscious acknowledgement that leaders do not just allow all things permissible, but indeed they make what they want to happen occur. In the end, centered leadership focuses on a leader's ability to manage energy by minimizing the depletion of energy, restoring energy, and keeping a steady flow of energy as a leader—returning to center. The whole concept is very fluid and cyclical (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Barsh et al., 2008).

Meaning-making leadership. Meaning-making leadership has been highlighted by four researchers with three distinct perspectives: Conley (2007), Mautz (2015), and Ulrich and Ulrich (2010). At the time of the study, these authors were the main contributors in the area of meaning-making leadership; they provided support for the theoretical framework utilized for this study.

Conley's (2007) work is deeply rooted in psychology with Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid as his framework. He suggested a focus on "peak experiences" or self-actualization as a leader's ability to create conditions fulfilling followers' needs as a way of maximizing their potential in contribution to overall organizational transformation and success (Conley, 2007). There are seven principles of what Conley suggests:

> (1) embody an inherently positive view of human nature, (2) create the conditions for people to live their callings, (3) promote and measure the value of intangibles,

> (4) ability to move fluidly between being a "transactional" and a "transformational leader," (5) calibrate the balance between "conscious" and "capitalism," (6) focus on your customers' highest needs, and (7) lead to peak. (Conley, 2012, para. 3)

As leaders fulfill their followers' needs and both entities move upward on Maslow's hierarchy, the level of meaning increases greatly for individuals (Conley, 2007).

Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) described meaning making through the concept of the *why* and *how* of meaning. Their explanation of *why* "refers to the human search for meaning that finds its way into our offices and factories, a search that motivates, inspires, and defines us" (p. 3). When exploring the *how* of meaning, they explained in what manner the "how gets us into the practicalities of how leaders facilitate the search personally and among their employees" (p. 3). Their findings further expressed the importance of leaders helping followers to find meaning in their organization through the application of seven meaning drivers: (a) identity, (b) purpose, (c) relationships, (d) positive work environments, (e) adversity, (f) value, and (g) daily delights of civility, creativity, humor, playfulness, and pleasure. The leaders, hiring professionals, and followers benefit from the creation of personal and profit value these drivers bring to the organization (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Finally, Mautz (2015) designated conditions for creating meaning *in* and *at* work, as well as traits of meaning-making leaders. The idea that as humans, creating meaning *in* work refers to a longing individuals have to find significance or contributed purpose or value. Meaning *at* work includes an increased connection made at a social level with others from a community of practice. Mautz displayed the lasting effects of meaning

both in and at work and how its impact increases overall performance and retention issues found in organizations. His "markers of meaning" include three categories: direction, discovery, and devotion. Direction is very straightforward, "doing work that matters" (Mautz, 2015, p. 18). Discovery is about "(1) being congruently challenged, (2) working with a heightened sense of competency and self-esteem, and (3) being in control and influencing decisions or outcomes (sense of autonomy)" (Mautz, 2015, p. 18). Lastly, devotion refers to the following: "(1) working in a caring/authentic/teamwork-based culture, (2) feeling connection with and confidence in leadership and the mission, and (3) being free of corrosive workplace behaviors" (Mautz, 2015, p. 18).

In addition to these meaning markers, specific meaning-making leadership traits are explained in Mautz's (2015) book, *Make it Matter*. They include the following: "a passion for potential, a caring connective undercurrent, framing finesse, and the ability to create an environment of relaxed intensity" (Mautz, 2015, p. 176). A leader who has a passion for potential inspires and energizes others toward the possibilities that exist. When a leader expresses a caring connective undercurrent, he or she engages with others in a way that brings the best qualities out in them. There is an authenticity and genuineness emitted by the leader that undeniably keeps individuals enthralled and engaged. Framing finesse is possessed by leaders to make connections for employees. It is the ability to put into perspective the great effects an employee's contributions make, by sculpting perceptions and tying meaning in at all levels of the organization. To finish, a leader's ability to create an atmosphere of relaxed intensity increases the opportunities for positive and uplifting emotions. There is a greater sense of buy-in, camaraderie, belongingness, and the idea that the community is special in and of itself. These explored

meaning making traits distinctly set leaders apart and contribute to the creation of meaning in 21st century business environments (Mautz, 2015).

Leadership and Meaning

Leadership and meaning have a significant relationship. As indicated in this review of modern leadership theories leading up to meaning-making leadership, the 21st century expects that today's leaders are meaning makers. With the evolution of organizations and the influx of changes over the last century, especially in regard to technology and social structures, many individuals seek a leader willing to fulfill their needs as they, in most cases, subconsciously climb the hierarchy of needs pyramid. Leaders acknowledging this phenomenon will actively engage with their followers, fulfilling their needs while pursuing meaning themselves, which eventually provides meaning at the organizational level and naturally improves performance and achievement exponentially (Conley, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Followership

Much of the time, followers are defined by their rank in an organization or the behaviors they exude from day to day (Kellerman, 2008). Followership is particular to followers. Throughout this section, the concept of followership is explored. First, it is explored with an overview and the importance of followership followed by a discussion on the connection between followership and meaning.

Overview/Importance of Followership

Compared to leadership, there is minimal information available about followership. In fact, most literature on followership is leader centric and does not expand on the unique dynamic existing among followers and their respective leaders.

Followership, in a modern context, displays the increased power that followers possess and how they are impacting change in leaders and their organizations (Kellerman, 2008).

Riggio (2014) denoted followership as much more than a simple shift in perspective from leader to follower. Drucker (1988) highlighted the relationship between followers and responsibility. He asserted that when followers take on more responsibility and involvement, their satisfaction and engagement in the workplace increase. Kelley (1992) delineated how effective followers have characteristics including self-management, commitment, competence, and courage—thus, creating leaders among followers. These desirable follower traits demonstrate an ability to work independently or collaboratively with little to no supervision (Manz & Sims. 1987).

Followers experience increased quality relationships and are more productive, committed, and satisfied in the workplace when they show high levels of leader-member exchange (LMX). The LMX theory is built on trust, support, and influence providing more rewarding and gratifying relationships among leader and followers. The LMX process is based on three stages: (a) role taking (in a new role), (b) role making (defining themselves in the role), and (c) routinization (ongoing exchange or relationship building). On the contrary, when low levels of LMX are produced, relationships become strained and unsatisfying (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Gerstner & Day; 1997; Graen & Cashman, 1975).

Social identity theory, influenced by Tajfel and Turner (1979), describes how the social identity that individuals take on or how they define themselves is determined by their membership in a group, many times applied to organizational settings. With this in mind, leaders have the ability to effectively encourage followers from an individualistic

stance to a shared one. Followers contribute greatly to the community, which is created on collective goals and values although these are greatly influenced by the leader. This theory outlines the phases in which individuals evolve, starting with their social categorization, then their social identification, leaving the comparison of both, which can affect their self-esteem. When followers are part of the in-group, their esteem and relationships flourish. According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), "People find meaning, in life and work, by connecting with others, in a way that makes, both lives, better" (p. 208).

Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2012) continued research to explore the evolution of followership and contributed the idea of leadership's being *co-produced*. They highlighted how followers engage in leadership behaviors while participating in teams and developing ideas. Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, and Carsten (2014) introduced followership theory and its connection to the leadership process, thus the impact of followers or following on the process. They explored followership as a construct and included the following: the role of the follower, the behaviors of the follower, and the outcomes linked to the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). This further solidifies the interconnected relationship to transform leadership within an organization. Agreeing with these researchers, Senge, in an interview with Eisler (2015), further suggested that Brungardt (1998) was right about power sharing and collaboration within this relationship, yet he disliked the title of followership. Senge saw leadership qualities and development across the board regardless the role (Eisler, 2015).

Kellerman (2008) would disagree with Senge and demonstrated how essential the role of follower is to an organization. In fact, according to Riggio (2014), "Good followers support and aid the leader when he or she is doing the right thing, and stand up

to the leader—having the courage to let the leader know when he or she is doing something wrong or headed in the wrong direction" (as cited in Moran, 2014, para. 3).

Kellerman (2008) offered five skills important to followers and explained how they greatly impact success and achievement in a 21st century organization: awareness, diplomacy, courage, collaborative, and critical thinking skills. Followers possessing these skills become the glue or the binding element of the organization. They become fully engaged and aware of all workplace elements, including others' needs, motivations, or annoyances. Diplomacy is paramount for the follower; knowing how, when, or with whom to pick a battle goes a long way. Followers must have the courage to stand up for what is right, regardless of who they would need to address. This is an essential trait of an exemplary follower who will stand up for moral and ethical principles. Furthermore, a follower in the 21st century must be collaborative and possess critical thinking skills. Leaders look to followers for insight and participation on projects and teams. Again, these five elements produce a highly effective follower, which is essential to overall organizational development, change, and success.

Followership and Meaning

There is a deep connection that exists between followership and meaning. Mautz (2015) discussed the unseen levels of creativity and competitive advantage when increasing the meaning quotient (MQ) in work conducted in an organization. Cranston and Keller (2013) described increased levels of MQ as personal investment plus peak performance. This is very similar to what Conley (2007) discussed in reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid. Conley showed a direct connection to followership and meaning as the leader is better able to meet the increasing needs of the

21st century employee. He explained his three reasons for why meaning is now more important than ever to followers—and to organizations as a whole:

> (1) corporate transformation follows personal transformation, (2) work is a more dominant part of our lives than ever before and has replaced some of the social structures that previously created connection and meaning in our lives, and (3) over and over again, we see that companies that create lasting success have a deep sense of mission and meaning in what they do. (pp. 85-86)

These points solidify the significant influence meaning has on followers and their leaders. Additionally, it demonstrates the need for further exploration into how leaders can increase MQs in followers, thus taking their organization to another level of achievement, status, and success.

Meaning-Making Domains

This thematic study is rooted in the idea that five critical domains are essential for a leader and their organization in the creation of meaning. Over the next section, each variable: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration is explored. The presented literature is clear that a connection to meaning exists with each variable. Researchers Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016) have developed the working hypothesis that some combination of or relationship to these five domains exists. These researchers presented a positive leader-follower exchange through their presentation, *Taking People With You: Leading as a Maker of Meaning* (Larick & Petersen, 2015, 2016). This thematic study sheds light on what is known of these domains in relation to meaning, what is not known, and where a substantial gap exists in the literature for future study. The first of the five domains to be explored is character.

Character

Cairo and Dotlich (2010) highlighted the important role character still plays for leaders in the 21st century. In fact, they

> believe that leaders of strong character who can take a stand based on clear values and ethics, make difficult trade-offs, do the right thing, form a clear point of view, and act on principles as much as their intellect and acumen will be the ones who survive and prosper. (Cairo & Dotlich, 2010, p. 286)

Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016) demonstrated how character combined with respect echoed B. George and Sims' (2007) notion of leadership's needing to be based on solid values and principles. B. George and Sims suggested these principles form the basis for a leader's moral and ethical reasoning as well as his or her actions.

Upon a review of the literature related to character, four themes emerged. The first is a leader's moral compass or true north, as B. George and Sims (2007) described it. Next is the idea that values are the underpinnings of character. Additionally, authenticity resounds greatly as a cornerstone to a leader's character and the relationships built with others in the organization. Finally, is the notion that optimism or a positive outlook is essential when a leader wants to create meaning for him/herself and his or her organizations. These four themes are discussed in further detail throughout this section; there is also a discussion integrating character, leadership, and meaning at the end.

Moral compass. B. George and Sims (2007) proposed in his book, *True North,* a need for leadership to be based on solid values and principles. The collection of these elements becomes the basis for a leader's moral and ethical reasoning, which eventually results in the leader's actions. Kouzes and Posner (2007) also found that "nothing

communicates more clearly than what leaders do" (p. 322). This sense of responsibility causes the leader to make decisions or take action using elevated moral and ethical reasoning. These continual and ingrained patterns of thinking and actions further establish purpose or meaning pertinent to the leader's success as well as to his/her followers (Cisek, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2016; Loughead, 2009; Mautz, 2015).

T. Moore (2008) denoted the need for leaders to align their actions at work and in their daily lives. He further discussed the conflict that becomes present when there is disharmony among these two realms. Essentially, the leader needs to be morally and ethically consistent regardless of the situation (T. Moore, 2008). Although, this behavior appears to be self-serving to the leader, B. George and Sims (2007) suggested that the ability to lead with purpose and increase power is through finding one's *true north*. A leader's true north is based on self-awareness, values, and principles. Riggio, Zhu, Reina, and Maroosis (2010) attributed leaving an ethical and moral legacy to the importance of building trust among members in the organization. Trust is created through honest and dependable relationships. As a final point to this section, Bass and Bass (2008) concluded that moral and ethical leaders increase the effectiveness of their followers; this can only occur with a solid value system.

Values. Preliminary work from Larick and Petersen (2015) suggests a connection stemming from character to respect, integrity, honesty, and trust. Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, and Switzler (2014) advocated honesty, integrity, and trust also as the defining and critical elements to the construction of moral and ethical character. Baird (2010) believed that "trust is a byproduct or antecedent of acting with integrity or

being ethical, valuing and protecting the interests of others, behaving with consistency or predictability, and having professional competence" (p. 126).

Maxwell (2011) highlighted the benefits of a positive and trustworthy character and further suggested that "when values, thoughts, feelings, and actions are in alignment, a person becomes focused and his character is strengthened" (p. 200). Kouzes and Posner (2012) considered a leader's character to embody fearlessness, collaboration, welcoming differences, and being nimble. Spano (2013) drew a link between character and wisdom, expanding on how integral a role decision making and doing the right thing is to not only the leader but to the organization at large.

In fact, an organization's shared purpose, teamwork, learning and innovation, and ability to recognize other's efforts through appreciation and encouragement are additional values highlighted as important to achievement, meaning, and success (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, 2012; Lowe, 2010; Tyler, 2008). Reina and Reina (2007) proposed that successful leaders "demonstrate they consider the best interests of others rather than just themselves" (p. 39). W. Moore (2014) concurred with these authors and further denoted the leader's ability to establish an organizational culture based on organizational values as a way of connecting meaning to one's life. Many leaders open up the topic on values with their organizations through their overt authenticity or transparency with colleagues and followers (B. George and Sims, 2007).

Authenticity. Authenticity is directly related to self-awareness, and self-awareness is the foundational element of EQ. Authentic leaders display a great sense of EQ and tend to be much more tolerant of others (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; B. George and Sims, 2007; Goleman, 2005). B. George and Sims (2007) claimed that the

importance of leaders' knowing and truly understanding themselves is paramount to becoming authentic. They suggested that through exploration of self, leaders have the ability to achieve the following: (a) find their right role or place, (b) increase their self-confidence, (c) become consistent, (d) connect more with others, and (e) can complement their skills (B. George and Sims, 2007). This Harvard professor compares a leader's full capability for self-awareness to *peeling back the onion* of one's self, *confronting blind spots*, and *reflection and introspection*.

Peeling back the onion of one's true self includes observing a variety of layers including the following: attire/body language, appearance/leadership style, strengths/weaknesses, needs/desires, values, motivations, shadow sides/vulnerabilities, and understanding one's life story/blind spots. Blinds spots in particular are key to a leader's ability to connect with followers and build trusting relationships. When a leader solicits feedback, as in the form of a 360-degree survey, the potential for growth and connectedness is exponential. Furthermore, when a leader has carved out time to reflect deeply upon the feedback or become introspective as a way of being, authenticity increases. This introspection leads to insight, which affects all aspects of a leader's self—including the moral and ethical base, his/her values, and most certainly the heart. An authentic leader leads from the heart and connects his emotions to what actions he/she displays any given day (Crowley, 2011; B. George and Sims, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Northouse, 2009).

Optimism. Optimism is the final theme to be explored as it relates to a leader's character. Fredrickson's (2009) view of optimism encompassed how positive emotions or a sense of hopefulness about the future impact one's character, relationships,

organizations, and communities. Her work suggested that these positive emotions inspire new and innovative actions, ideas, and connections to others on a social level. She further discussed the profound impact optimism, and five positive emotions in particular, have on a person's well-being resources, which she defines as physical, intellectual, and social (Fredrickson, 2009).

The five positive emotions are joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love. Fredrickson (2001) suggested that joy "broadens by creating the urge to play, push the limits, and be creative" (p. 220). Ellsworth and Smith (1988) and Frijda (1986) found this also to be the case, not only in terms of social or physical behavior but also in behaviors that are intellectual or artistic in nature. Interest denotes the desire to explore and interpret new information or experiences while developing one's self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Izard, 1977; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tomkins, 1962). Contentment, the third positive emotion Fredrickson (2001, 2009) discussed, is the wish to enjoy what circumstances are present in a person's life, then combine them somehow into fresh views of self or the world (Izard, 1977). Pride, highlights the urge to share word of success with others all while imagining greater successes and achievements for the future (Maltby, Lewis, & Hill, 1993). Lastly love, which Izard (1977) suggested should be within the context of close and safe relationships, is about "creating recurring cycles of urges to play with, explore, and savor experiences with loved ones" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 220). These positive emotions evoke habitual patterns of thinking and acting and ultimately increase a leader's resiliency and ability to respond to future threatening or unpleasant situations or experiences (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001).

Character, leadership, and meaning. Character is the foundational and defining element for successful leaders (Conley, 2007; B. George and Sims, 2007; Mautz, 2015, Maxwell, 2011). Kouzes and Posner (2007) attested that the credibility established through a leader's honesty, forward looking, inspiration, and competency (all traits a leader possesses) is also the foundation of leadership. These credible leaders display an alignment with their words and actions—"they walk the talk" (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 40). This demonstrates a leader's consistency over time and inspires followers to have a sense of pride, camaraderie, alignment in values with those of the organization, a commitment, and even a sense of ownership in the organization. A leader's consistent character and credibility have great influence on employees' mindsets which eventually can impact investors, customers, or clients—and the bottom line.

Mautz (2015) displayed how destructive behaviors help to erode meaning making from occurring in the organizational setting. The top trait he highlighted for destroying a sense of certainty is a lack of integrity. He stated, "The smallest breach of integrity will stand out, each and every time, for the wrong reasons—in ways that absolutely destroy faith" (Mautz, 2015, p. 201). When a leader does not have integrity and his/her values do not serve as a guide for actions, there is a loss of personal commitment on the part of followers. If there is a lack of personal commitment, then a commitment to shared values, one that inspires a positive difference in attitudes and performance about work, will diminish. A leader's moral compass, values, authenticity, and positive emotions undoubtedly play a critical role in preventing this coercive breakdown of meaning in an organization (B. George and Sims, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015).

Vision

Northouse (2009) asserts the necessity in a leader having a vision and how essential it is to his/her effectiveness in an organization. Time and again the research leads to vision as an essential element a leader must have for him/herself and possess for his/her organization. More times than not, vision is linked to purpose (Sinek, 2009; Vaill, Bunker, & Curnutt Santana, 2010).

Vision has been an important attribute to a variety of leadership theories that lead to meaning-making leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), "Visions are about ideals—hopes, dreams, and aspirations. They're about our strong desire to achieve something great. They're ambitious. They're expressions of optimism" (p. 133)**.** Exemplary leaders not only need to possess vision or be forward thinkers, but they must inspire a well-communicated and hopeful vision of a desired state for their organizations. The four themes resounding when delving into the domain vision are forward thinking, purpose, the difference between an imposed vision versus shared vision, and the importance of communicating the vision (Cuppett, 2014; Kotter, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2009, 2016). Further exploration into these themes as well as a discussion of vision as it relates to leadership and meaning is provided in this section (Davies & Davies, 2010).

Forward thinking. "Exemplar leaders are forward-looking. They are able to envision the future, to gaze across the horizon and realize the greater opportunities to come" (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 104). Additionally, forward thinking allows a leader to respond to wake-up calls or to react wisely if change is needed (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Farrell, 2015; Levenson, 2012). These particular leaders also anticipate changes and adjust accordingly (Farrell, 2015; Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Kouzes and Posner (2012) and Petersen (2009) suggested this form of forward thinking is visionary and goes beyond the leader's mindset in order to impact the systems and culture of the entire organization, eventually becoming an action plan backed by strategy.

This strategic mindset and cultural approach is very much of an expansive perspective on the direction of an organization and is quite different than the operational mindset and culture where everything is explained step by step. Forward thinking includes "vision and direction setting, a broad organizational-wide perspective; a three- to five-year perspective; a template for short-term action; considerable organizational change; and strategic thinking more than strategic planning" (Davies & Davies, 2010, p. 5). Denning (2011) reiterated Kouzes and Posner's (2002) position in the following passage:

> Leaders share the characteristic of being forward looking or being concerned not just about today's problems, but also about tomorrow's possibilities. They're able to envision the future, to gaze across the horizon of time and imagine the greater opportunities to come. They see something out ahead, vague as it might appear from a distance, and they imagine that extraordinary feats are possible and that the ordinary could be transformed into something noble. (Denning, 2011, p. 111)

In order to implement a solid vision in any organization, the purpose, or the *why,* must be obvious and meaningful to those fulfilling it (Sinek, 2009).

Purpose. Sinek's (2009) idea of The Golden Circle is essential to both the leader and organization as it relates to vision. The entire premise of this theory starts with the *why* when creating a vision—not focusing on *what* an organization's activities are, but *why* those organization's activities are important to all stakeholders. Consequently, after

the *why* is explored, then the *how* is determined. Sinek proposed that this particular ordering of a vision creates a greater compulsion to follow and fulfill the outlined purpose.

In their book *The Why of Work*, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) explored four categories of purpose or motivations for individuals, based mostly on the work of Victor Frankl. These four categories include insight, achievement, connection, and empowerment. These researchers explained the impact a leader can have when he/she has a good grasp on these four elements. In fact, they believed a leader has the ability to lay out a well-communicated vision with value-added goals that improve the quality of life and create a deep sense of meaning for organizational stakeholders when they are all at play (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Starting with insight, this attribute explores the possibility of self-awareness and reflection. Achievement highlights how certain individuals find purpose in accomplishments. This drive for achievement displayed by a leader can provide a catalyst of motivation for getting things done—thus increasing an overall sense of accomplishment. The third, connection, has a high focus on relationships and interactions among people. Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) proposed that creating meaningful connections to others will ultimately lead to a shared sense of life and purpose and quite possibly lead to connections motivating "peace keeping, compassion, cooperation, and teamwork and fosters skill in listening, empathy, honesty, and service" (p. 89). Lastly, Ulrich and Ulrich discussed empowerment and the investment leaders put into building up others. They highlighted the role social responsibility plays when creating a sense of purpose in an organization—connecting what is set out in the organizational vision to the

greater societal good. In conclusion, these four categories embrace knowing oneself, knowing others within the organization, knowing the organization, and knowing how to position the organization to connect to real-world impact.

Imposed versus shared vision. Research suggests that followers will put their energy into upholding an organization's vision when it is one created collaboratively with leaders rather than imposed by leaders. Exemplary leaders know the importance of enlisting their followers to create a shared vision, finding inspiration as a key ingredient. When followers gather inspiration from their leaders, they become excited about the organizational direction and its possibilities as well as becoming excited for their own aspirations and dreams. Shared visions allow leaders to identify what values are important to them as the leader, and furthermore, to take on an empathetic follower viewpoint of various perspectives (Conger, 1989; Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2009, 2012; Landsberg, 2003; Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008).

Mautz (2015) agreed on the significance of having a clear and compelling organizational vision and additionally highlighted the importance of keeping a watchful eye on including those who will be carrying it out in the creation process. If not, he asserted, meaning will be lost: "The troops have to understand not only where they are going, but why it matters. They want to know that *they truly matter* to help bring it to life" (Mautz, 2015, p. 30). Overall, a shared vision is more powerful than one imposed by a leader. When a leader articulates a stimulating vision, it connects to individuals' identities. Identities are based on values, both personal and organizational. These values become the support for a well-executed vision, and this connects and strengthens the

organizational community, thus increasing meaning for all stakeholders (Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Communicating a vison. According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), "Every organization, every social movement, begins with a dream" (p. 17). A leader's ability to interpret a dream into a well-communicated vision, one that breathes life into the future for his/her followers, is essential for sparking action, innovation, and achievements. The manner in which a leader communicates a vision must be inspirational rather than commanding. Leaders connect at an emotional level with followers by understanding their dreams and values, ultimately tying them to the organizational vision that inspires meaningful action (Campbell, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Millman, 2011; Pontefract, 2016). Denning (2011) proposed storytelling as a way of connecting emotionally with others while inspiring a compelling vision. In fact, he suggested that leaders be well-practiced in storytelling in order to provide the credibility needed to inspire an entire organization. Using well-known stories that connect the past and are used as a launch pad to the future will gather the buy-in leaders need to take their organizations to the next level (Denning, 2011). Pontefract (2016) further discussed how linking three aspects to the organization's vision while communicating with followers will build strong connections and call others to action. These include personal, organizational, and role purpose.

Pontefract (2016) asserted that individuals who continually develop, define, and decide their values and priorities become more self-aware and thus find clarity and purpose for their lives. Again, when those individuals' values and aspirations are tied to the organization's vision in such a way, it more tightly binds the followers to the

organization. Building on Martin (2011), Pontefract (2016) introduced a model named good DEEDS: "Delight your customer, engage your team members, (be) ethical within society, deliver fair practices, and serve all stakeholders" (p. 21) as a way of creating organizational purpose. When a leader has help in developing purpose at the organizational level and communicates values tied to the vision, team-member engagement rises across departments and extends to clients or customers. Lastly, when leaders inspire their followers to connect with their roles and provide a sense of purpose through their inspirational communication, followers become more passionate, innovative, and committed (Pontefract, 2016).

Vision, leadership, and meaning. Exemplary leaders exude characteristics of being forward thinking and having purpose, plus inspirationally communicate a shared vision. In fact, researchers suggest a well-communicated and compelling vision that is connective, purposeful, and inspiring as a defining element for organizational success (Conger, 1989; Denning, 2011; Hersey et al., 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2009, 2012; Landsberg, 2003; Mautz, 2015; Sarros et al., 2008; Sinek, 2009; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Furthermore, Pontefract (2016) discovered that when vision is coupled with the individual, organizational, and role purpose, and communicated in such a way to increase team-member engagement, meaningful experiences become a common occurrence. Visions are meaning-making tools leaders can enact to influence their colleagues, followers, organizations, and even communities. In many ways, the vision of an organization acts as a change driver, and an inspirational leader steers the ship with that vision in the desired direction. This leader must be looking ahead with purpose and inspire others in a shared journey to create meaning both personally and organizationally

(Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Cialdini, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Senge et al., 2005).

Relationships

Kouzes and Posner (2007) discussed the multiple layers existing in the development of key relationships in an organization. Their assertion lies in the fact that leaders who are not conscious of fostering relationships for team collaboration and a common purpose or vision do not stand a chance for success, achievement, or meaning making in the organization. Leaders do not exist without followers. The success of leaders is dependent on their ability to build relationships with others (Conley; 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). A multitude of research highlights the importance of relationships in leadership. The resounding themes on the overall importance of relationships and leadership are discussed in this section. These include authentic connections, trust and cooperation, mentoring and supporting, and affecting change. At the end of this section, relationships are discussed to see how they pertain to leadership and meaning.

Authentic connections. Marrow (2010) affirmed how C-suite executives exclaimed "strongly that being authentic was essential to connecting meaningfully with others and gaining their trust" (p. 31). Additionally, Crowley (2011) asserted that leaders who make personal connections with their followers ultimately inspire them to great levels of achievement. Mautz (2015) conferred with this assertion, adding how important it is to be intentional in building nurturing relationships. Authentic relationships are below the surface interactions and connections allowing individuals involved in the relationship to be more exposed, sharing their personal thoughts, feelings, and aspirations

(Crowley, 2011; B. George and Sims, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Crowley (2011) also believed that connections of the heart improve a leader's relational authenticity. He suggested more time for one-on-one encounters with others, as well as expressing gratitude and a genuine interest in others' dreams and aspirations. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) suggested increased EQ as a contributing element in a leader's ability to make authentic connections. Leaders who exert EQ utilize a variety of relationship management strategies, such as building trust, acknowledging another person's feelings, and displaying concern for others. B. George and Sims (2007) agreed with Bradberry and Greaves (2009) and linked these strategies with overall mutual respect. They confirmed how essential mutual respect through the development of trust is and how this characteristic acts as a base for empowerment (B. George & Sims, 2007). Authenticity in leaders will build greater authentic connections. A leader increases his or her own authenticity by becoming self-aware, remembering his or her roots, staying grounded, standing by his or her values, supplementing any weaknesses they see in themselves with others' strengths, building a supportive team, and using reflection frequently (B. George & Sims, 2007; Marrow, 2010).

Trust and cooperation. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) believed, "Trust is a peculiar resource; it is built rather than depleted by use" (p. 191). Sinek (2009) suggested that the emergence of trust begins when self-serving gains are taken out of relationships. Furthermore, he implied that trust is less centered in rational experiences and more based on feelings (Sinek, 2009). Trust greatly increases among those in an organization when experiences are connected to emotions. According to Harvey and Drolet (2005), "Trust is much like love—we know it when we feel it—we know it when we see it, but we are

not sure what creates it. Trust is not an act or set of acts but the result of other actions or variables" (p. 21).

Cooperation remains the interdependent characteristic also leading to trust. This is a mutual trust that is two way and ever evolving. Cooperation, thus trust, increases when the interdependent relationship is clear, there is consistency among what is said and what is done, when interactions are honest, when the individuals in the relationship are likeable, and finally, when trust is given mutually (Harvey & Drolet, 2005). From a leader's perspective, trust in a relationship additionally creates a sense of security, essential for inspiring and influencing. When followers feel genuine trust from their affable leader who sincerely listens to them, they tend to do whatever it takes to fulfill the leader's vision for the organization (Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Helsing & Lahey, 2010; Sinek, 2014).

Mentoring and supporting. When trusting authentic relationships are established, both the leader and follower have the opportunity to learn from one another. Often times, the leader takes on the role of mentor and uses the ongoing interactions and connections as a way to further support followers and promote reflection for their personal growth. These interactions are vital to an organization. This allows leaders to expand their own wisdom plus influence, guide, and champion followers, helping them to align better with the organization's vision and values—ultimately increasing meaning for all (Crowley, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2016; Mautz, 2015; Patterson et al., 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

With this continual evolving insight, leaders have the opportunity to reframe situations and experiences for others. They tend to take a big picture approach to myopic

setbacks and inspire followers to carry on with determination. This increases a follower's resolve in the overall vision of the organization. This gesture is seen as a collaborative and cooperative approach to ensure that everyone succeeds (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). This is good for business in every way. These mentoring and supportive relationships modeled at the top trickle throughout an organization, growing ideas that can have great impact on the behaviors, mindsets, culture, and systems in an organization (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Affecting change. Leaders must become savvy and competent when it comes to interacting with others. These interactions can increase commitment among team members. Additionally, the quality of interactions, thus the relationships within an organization, can increase change efforts and results. Conversely, poor quality relationships lacking authenticity, trust, and support will destroy a leader's ability to make change in an organization (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Harvey & Drolet, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Ackerman Anderson and Anderson (2010) highlighted the leader's responsibility in addressing their followers' core human needs through the change process. These core human needs include "security, inclusion and connection, power, order and control, competence, and justice and fairness" (p. 141). The relationships a leader builds with his team will be the defining factor in his being capable of meeting these needs as any change process takes place within an organization.

Relationships, leadership, and meaning. Relationships provide a sense of meaning when they connect individuals to one another (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003).

Work in itself becomes more meaningful when relationships are established and individuals feel part of a team where fostering relationships is intentional (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Mautz, 2015). It is the leader's responsibility to create team-oriented environments where authenticity, trust, cooperation, support, and respect are nurturing elements that aid in the development and self-actualization of others in the organization. When employees, in particular, reach the peak of Maslow's (1999) pyramid, they are more innovative, flexible, collegial, and open to taking risks. Employees experience great satisfaction when reaching this peak and ultimate development of self. This satisfaction is greatly linked to the quality of relationships that exist between themselves and their leaders (Conley, 2007; B. George and Sims, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015; Sinek, 2009).

Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) and Mautz (2015) see fostering relationships and teams as essential to creating personal and organizational meaning. In fact, placing a high priority on this to the point that values in which the organizational relationships are built are then reflected in the organizational culture helps to build a sense of commitment, confidence, and community among employees. Moreover, this culture of relationships builds friendships and encourages others to do so as well. Friends tend to help each other out, learning from one another, teaching when needed, and modeling the way. These strong bonds are essential to the meaning-making process. Again, these relationships must contain elements of authenticity, trust and cooperation, mentoring and support, and have the power to affect change.

Wisdom

Wisdom allows individuals to interpret patterns presented in life with discernment, integrity, and care (Strom, 2014). The ongoing pursuit of wisdom is highlighted with Larick and Petersen's (2015, 2016) presentations. They introduced an existing relationship between a leader's wisdom and meaning making that happens throughout an organization. This very elusive topic has been explored by multiple researchers over the course of time. Literature and studies particularly concerned with how wisdom relates to leadership have been used for the purposes of this study. The themes continually emerging in a vast review of literature include the following: intelligence and EQ, mindfulness, reflection, and a living legacy. In addition to further exploration of these themes, a discussion on wisdom and how it relates to leadership and meaning is also presented in this section.

Intelligence and EQ. Intelligence and EQ play a key role in the development of wisdom. They indeed make up a grand majority of explanations in existence on wisdom as a concept. Time and again, wisdom is shown to represent dimensions of the cognitive and affective self. Some researchers include the reflective self as an additional dimension (Ardelt, 2003; Clayton & Birren, 1980; Dey, 2012).

Intelligence is tied closely with the cognitive dimension of an individual. It particularly relates to a person's understanding, comprehension, and deeper interpretations of the perceived world (Ardelt, 2000; Blanchard-Fields & Norris, 1995; Chandler & Holliday, 1990; Kekes, 1983; Sternberg, 1990). Knowledge, or lack thereof, and life's uncertainties also make up this cognitive dimension of wisdom as well (Ardelt, 2003). This practical form of thinking goes hand in hand with a person's ability to

reason, learn from others and an environment/culture, and exercise judgement (Sternberg, 1985; Takahashi & Overton, 2005). In leadership, the ability to exercise this cognitive dimension of wisdom or intelligence is important, but it is not everything. Time after time, research also indicates a need for EQ while people are in leadership positions (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2005; McKee et al., 2008).

EQ is part of the affective dimension of wisdom and focuses largely on four skills, increasing overall sympathetic and compassionate love (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Pascual-Leone, 1990; Levitt, 1999). EQ inspires positive emotions and behaviors, while works toward eliminating negative or toxic behaviors and feelings (Dey, 2012). The four components largely making up EQ are under two umbrellas: personal competence and social competence. Personal competence includes self-awareness (the ability to accurately perceive and maneuver one's emotions) and self-management (the ability to control emotional tendencies and steer them in the positive direction). Social competence includes social awareness (the ability to read and decipher others' emotions) and relationship management (the ability to interpret emotions in order to manage interactions; Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 2005).

Mindfulness. Erlich (2015) stated, "Mindfulness is present, open, and engaged attention. When you pay active attention, you build self-awareness, which is the heart of leadership" (p. 22). Much like wisdom, the concept of mindfulness is complex and multidimensional. Brown and Ryan (2003) defined mindfulness as "the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present" (p. 822). Langer (1989)

made the distinction between mindfulness and mindlessness. Mindfulness, unlike mindlessness, engages the mind actively in the present, eliminating distractions.

In leadership, mindfulness is used as a tool to access information. It provides clues by thoroughly scanning the internal and external environments, allowing leaders to be curious and shift their minds continually back to the present. Mindfulness creates insight, which impacts leaders and their organizations at large and is observed through exercises like listening, walking, or breathing (Ehrlich, 2015; Hanh, 1992). Ehrlich (2015) asserted mindfulness as being more than concentration or meditation in the present. He elaborated on this concept, especially related to leaders, as "an attitude of openness or acceptance" toward one's self or experience (Ehrlich, 2015, p. 23).

Some organizations are implementing mindfulness as an organizational strategy for all employees because of its benefits. These benefits include the following:

- Body. Paying attention to physical health, especially exercise, diet, and sleep.
- Mind. Learning to stay focused and setting boundaries to ensure time to think.
- Emotion. Cultivating gratitude, empathy, and positivity.
- Spirit. Staying connected to sources of meaning, values, and purpose.
- Connecting. Giving and getting support to form strong, lasting relationships.
- Inspiring. Energizing others with your vision and passion. (Ehrlich, 2015, p. 13)

Schaufenbuel (2014) found that these benefits contributed to (a) a reduction in employee absenteeism and turnover, (b) better cognitive functioning, (c) increased production by employees, (d) better relationships in and outside the organization, and (e) overall increased job satisfaction. Leaders receive a variety of benefits when mindfulness is implemented within their organization. There is clarity on values and the purpose at hand, a connectedness of feelings, a clearing of the mind in order to make better decisions, and a relaxation of the body—a full spirit, emotion, mind, and body

experience. Additionally, connections among individuals improve through better listening and trust building. A leader's personal inspiration and inspiring message will develop as well, creating a sense of passion to lead others toward the vision of the organization (Ehrlich, 2012, 2015). Lastly, "Mindfulness usually entails adopting regular reflective practices," which leads into the next part of this section on wisdom, reflection (McKee et al., 2008, p. 29).

Reflection. Jay (2010) and LeBoeuf (2006) posited that the incorporation of reflection and reflective practices add to the learning experiences of all individuals in an organization. Like mindfulness, reflection draws out clarity for individuals and increases their potential for making decisions. Reflection includes three aspects: reflection-in-action (introspection while learning and doing), reflection-on-action (planned reflection built into activities), and reflection-for-action (Jay, 2010; Schön, 1983, 1987; Sullivan & Wiessner, 2010). Jay (2010) highlighted reflection-for-action, which includes contemplating the future with mindful planning and strategy in order to take the next step. Bennis (2003) agreed with Jay (2010) in that reflection is a tool for inspiring, informing, and demanding outcomes. Bennis (2003) stated, "After appropriate reflection, the meaning of the past is known, and the resolution of the experience—the course of action you must take as a result—becomes clear" (p. 108).

Bennis (2003) asserted that "to look forward with acuity you must first look back with honesty" (p. 62). Kail (2012) agreed with Bennis (2003) and believed that in order to gain wisdom, one must reflect on his/her experiences. This type of introspection involves a deeper and more transparent look into understanding how these life experiences shape the way in which people perceive the world around them. He further

discussed the manner by which reflection connects the way a leader performs to his potential. Leaders access help of a mentor or coach often to probe and instigate a deeper form of thinking. This deep reflection increases wisdom and allows leaders to become more emotionally intelligent, creative, intelligent, and integral (Looman, 2003).

A living legacy. Current research highlights the importance for leaders to spend time thinking about the living legacy they will leave to their organization. A legacy embodies the work one has accomplished over a career and the wisdom accumulated to propel growth, innovation, and opportunities (Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Llopis, 2014; Mautz, 2015). Llopis (2014) is careful to point out that a leader's legacy does not begin at the end of a career, but rather during experiences, decisions, actions, and even mistakes taking place during a leader's career.

Cashman and Eastman (2001) believe in the leader's having a great stake and choice in the legacy they leave—"a choice to create either a living legacy or a dying one" (p. 7). Through over 20 years of executive coaching, Cashman and Eastman (2001) have witnessed 10 core principles supporting a leader to a living legacy:

1. Going beyond the heroic image of legacy;
2. Uncovering a personal legacy;
3. Discovering a community legacy;
4. Using reflection to answer profound questions;
5. Searching unfulfilled self-commitments;
6. Exploring unfulfilled commitments to colleagues or followers;
7. Changing the leader's legacy mindset from *whats* to *hows*;
8. Focusing on long-term implications;

9. Being authentic; and
10. Leaving a legacy here and now. (p. 7)

Kouzes and Posner (2006) pointed out the immense responsibility leaders have in their book, *A Leader's Legacy.* These researchers tied leaving a legacy to significance in one's life, especially in the relationships established. Additionally, they pointed out how much others remember what a leader does for them whether it is through serving, teaching, helping, or sacrificing. These experts further suggested that leaders make leadership personal by sharing the personal side of themselves with others, giving others the opportunity to know the leader, understand his/her thinking, trust in their relationship, and feel empowered while carrying out the vision of the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Wisdom, leadership, and meaning. Wisdom and leadership have a direct and intertwining relationship. Wisdom as a form of advanced cognitive and affective functioning is vital to understanding one's self and others. This essential characteristic aids leaders in continually evolving to further impact and transform various individuals and their experiences within organizational settings (Achenbaum & Orwoll, 1991; AM Azure, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990).

Scott Mautz (personal communication, April 11, 2016) suggested that wisdom in leadership promotes the sharing of ideas and an exchange of learning critical to individual and organizational development. Seligman (2002) reaffirmed how wisdom and knowledge are closely related to five individual character traits: curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, creativity, and perspective. These emotional traits connect directly with the human spirit and demonstrate how wisdom cannot be independent of

individuals, especially as they become more self-actualized and influence leaders in an organization (Ardelt, 2003; Conley, 2007).

Mautz (2015) made the case for wisdom as a connector for meaning making as he discussed the two-way relationship existing between the leader and their followers. As a leader converts his/her wisdom through profound advice, thoughts, or suggestions, he/she is sharing knowledge and enriching the lives of followers—all while contributing to a living legacy that will ultimately permeate through an organization. These emotional inheritances or living legacies are insights of wisdom, often much more valuable than the traditional financial inheritances, and binding for individuals.

Inspiration

According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), "People expect their leaders to be enthusiastic, energetic, and positive about the future" (p. 34). In fact, there is evidence to support the idea that inspiration highlights and brings out an individual's values and interests (Jennings, 2013). Moran (2013) interviewer Handal who reported that ongoing research indicates how important it is that leaders use enthusiasm to empower, build confidence, and inspire others in their organization. In order to face the challenges of the 21st century, leaders must inspire their followers toward a vision that invokes an emotional charge leading to innovation and achievement. This section explores, through four themes, how leaders can use inspiration to fulfill needs and create meaning for themselves and their followers. These four themes include how inspiration lies in the heart, how it acts as a motivator, how it fulfills a need for purpose, and how it provides hope. At the end of this section, a discussion on how inspiration relates to leadership and meaning is explored.

Lies in the heart. Crowley (2011), author of *Lead from the Heart,* asserted employee engagement is a leading force driving human potential and performance. He made the distinction between employee satisfaction and engagement, inferring that the latter is more complex and more difficult to assess. His research concludes that employees displaying a high levels of engagement while at work are more passionate, creative, and take on more initiative; they will essentially do what they can to help the organization. Crowley further discussed how emotions drive engagement: "Emotions arouse feelings. Feelings influence movement—and behavior. Accordingly, how people are made to feel on their jobs, and whether they sense their own needs are being met, drives them to engaged or disengaged performance" (p. 18). Leaders have a great responsibility in how they inspire their followers to be engaged. A leader's inspirational intentions must be sincere and start from the heart, encouraging positive emotions and igniting the passion to unlock human potential (Crowley, 2011; Gallo, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) proposed that at the center of heartfelt leadership is caring. They believed that unless leaders display caring behaviors toward others and demonstrate a notion of care for what occurs in the organization, team members will not make caring for leaders or what they engage in while at work a priority. Mutual heartfelt caring allows for others to connect in a deeper manner; the leader sets the tone and expectations of this for the organization. The leaders model the behaviors that lie in the heart and inspire others. For example, when employees are acknowledged for their contribution in displaying the values and striving toward the vision of the organization, leaders are passing on courage to their followers. This courage helps to inspire

employees to move forward in the ability to take risks and also feel delighted in their contributions—binding them even more to fellow colleagues. Employees will love and work feverishly for leaders because of the way they make them feel—leading from the heart as a priority in inspiring a workforce and unlocking human capability (Crowley, 2011; Gallo, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Acts as a motivator. Thrash and Elliot (2003) believed that inspiration encompasses motivation and provides followers the direction and stimulus needed to solve problems while engaging in tasks. Problem solving promotes creativity while unlocking human potential, which ultimately leads to innovations. Leaders who can provide inspiration for innovations are credited with providing meaning and purpose for their followers. Followers who find a greater sense of meaning in their work lead more engaging and satisfying lives (Kaufman, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Gallo (2007) reiterated the importance of motivation as it relates to inspiration and positive influence while achieving organizational results. Thrash and Elliot (2003) coupled motivation with transcendence (aspiring to great levels) and evocation (provoked by something other than self). Regardless, inspiration truly goes beyond motivating employees within an organization. Leaders have the responsibility of inspiring others to achieve toward the vision of the organization in everything they do every day. According to Kerfoot (2001),

> Inspiring leadership unleashes creativity, enthusiasm, and passion that motivational leadership cannot. An inspired workforce is motivated to fulfilling the organization's vision, but does so with a personal connection and passion to the values and objectives laid out by the leader. (p. 530)

Fulfills a need for purpose. Kouzes and Posner (2007) stated, "People commit to causes, not to plans" (p. 121). Therefore, inspiring others to fulfill a plan that leaves little for them to be challenged or to learn from ultimately will leave them disengaged. Inspiration fulfills a need individuals have for adding purpose and meaning to their lives. Inspiration cultivates high performance in followers by linking them to challenging and engaging work that contributes to the greater good. Inspiration demonstrated by strategic visionary leaders produces working environments conducive to productivity, innovation, and accomplishment. Sustained innovation and ongoing follower achievement of team goals provide organizational results and enthusiasm for the work being done. This again, leads to a higher sense of follower engagement, purpose, meaning, and overall life satisfaction (Conley, 2007; Kaufman, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

Provides hope. Hope is looking forward to a future that is exciting and attainable in the eyes of the beholder; hope is also contagious. Many times, hope carries individuals through life's challenges or transitions. Hope can provide the much-needed energy to move forward and carryon with courage and resilience. Leaders who provide a positive vision, inspiring hope in their followers, will fulfill a sense of purpose humans yearn for throughout a lifetime. This sense of purpose makes interactions meaningful and inspires teams to push toward goals. If the entire team is inspired, hopeful, and bound together with trusting relationships, then anything is possible. Leaders' positive and hopeful emotions additionally impact relationships in a positive way. These positive emotions and good working relationships or team comradery contribute to a thriving, exciting, and challenging environment where there is a high level of engagement and the very best of

each team member becomes apparent (Gallo, 2007; McKee, 2011; McKee et al. 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2013).

Inspiration, leadership, and meaning. There is a direct connection between leadership and inspiration. Dess and Picken (2012) discussed how important it is for 21st-century leaders to use a strategic vision to motivate and inspire individuals in their organizations. Inspiring a vision for stakeholders creates more buy-in, increases performance, and ultimately, contributes to a positive and innovative organization. Leaders hold the majority of responsibility for inciting inspiration to others in their organization (Kaufman, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Zenger and Folkman (2013) proposed that inspiring leaders are better at establishing and communicating a clear vision for their organization, connecting themselves more to followers. This connective aspect binds leaders and followers, creating better relationships based on trust and understanding. Novak (2013) furthermore believed that leaders have the ability to unleash the power of people by inspiring them toward a vision in which everyone wins together. This inspires followers to come along on a journey with leaders where they will learn more about themselves and their own potential. This sort of journey is exciting and meaningful for both the leader and the follower (B. George and Sims, 2007; Senge, 2006). This meaningful voyage continues to inspire leaders, and thus, continues the cycle of inspiration in which the leader begins again to inspire others through compassion and heart, motivation, purpose, and hope (Crowley, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; McKee, 2011; McKee et al., 2008; Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

Female CEOs

This study focuses on female CEOs. The role of a CEO, sometimes referred to as the president, is critical and quite certainly one of the most influential positions in any organization. The CEO is the top-level executive in the company. A CEO's primary responsibilities lie in his/her interactions with a board of directors and the leadership/direction of an executive team. A CEO also establishes the vision, executes strategy, builds productive teams, and motivates/inspires others to fulfill organizational objectives. An exemplary CEO aligns his or her leadership characteristics and behaviors with the values of an organization (Pasmore, 2014).

Drucker (2004) described the CEO role as being not only focused on the inside of the organization but also the link to the outside of the organization. He defined the outside as society at large, the economy, technology, customers, suppliers, media, and the markets. In many ways, the CEO acts as the face of the organization when interacting with these entities. According to Lafley (2009),

> The CEO alone experiences the meaningful outside at an enterprise level and is responsible for understanding it, interpreting it, advocating for it, and presenting it so that the company can respond in a way that enables sustainable sales, profit, and total shareholder return growth. (para. 7)

An overview as well as more specific details on the role and importance of CEOs are discussed in this section. Furthermore, this section explores the complexities females face as they start a career and aspire to achieve higher leadership positions. Lastly, the connection between female CEOs and meaning is established.

Overview/Role/Importance of Female CEOs

CEOs possess the top-level leadership positions in organizations and are ultimately responsible for "meeting the needs of employees, customers, investors, communities, and the law" (Robbins, 2006, para. 1). CEOs are given the task of balancing the demands of both the inside and outside of an organization, weighing internal and external interests, while being mindful of the short- and long-term priorities of the business (Drucker, 2004; Lafley, 2009). At the end of the day, "the CEO is the only one held accountable for the performance and the results of the company—according not just to its own goals, but also to the measures and standards of diverse and often competing external stakeholders" (Lafley, 2009, para. 8).

Drucker (2004) believed the CEO's tasks revolve around four key ideas: (a) defining what is meaningful to the outside of the organization, (b) using that information to create something usable inside the organizations, (c) establishing priorities, and (d) putting the right people into critical positions with a focus on performance. Trammell (2014) agreed with these assertions but expanded on the CEO's role while adding these tasks as key for achievement of a business: (a) promote a strategic vision, (b) allocate adequate resources, (c) define the culture, (d) use good judgement to make decisions, and (e) take an active stance in managing the organization's performance. These tasks are defining elements to organizations and therefore make the position of the CEO one of the most important. Drucker (2004) concurred, "CEOs have ultimate responsibility for the work of everybody else in their institution" (para. 1).

The role of a CEO is mostly characterized into six distinct areas of responsibility: (a) legal compliance, (b) strategic planning, (c) management, (d) governance, (e) financing, and (f) community relations. First and foremost, the CEO has the responsibility of ensuring that the company is following all regulations and laws pertinent to the business. This includes monitoring compliance and filling any legal or regulatory documents. Second, the CEO is responsible for the strategic short- and long-term planning of the business. The CEO constructs the mission, vision, values, and culture as well as creates policies in order to move the organization forward toward objectives that align with all strategic elements. Next, the CEO is the leader of the executive team. The executive team consists of high-level executives, like chief operating officers (COOs), chief information officers (CIOs), chief marketing officers (CMOs), and chief financial officers (CFOs). The CEO provides coaching, guidance, direction, and evaluation for his/her executive team.

Governance is also a major consideration for the CEO. Governance includes the oversight of all processes coordinating and controlling an organization's resources and actions. In organizations where there is a board, the CEO works at the discretion of the board of directors. In cases where the CEO is the founder or owner of the business, the board of directors tends to act as more of an advisory board. The CEO is in this position to give guidance and advice to the board while also receiving input from the board (Heathfield, 2016; Joyaux, 2016). CEOs enable the board to fulfill all required governance while developing relationships with board members and providing informal and formal updates on strategy, performance, management direction, and decisions

(Carmanah, 2013). In some business settings, there is no board, and the CEO lacks direct oversight of a board.

Additionally, CEOs have financial responsibilities. They must provide detailed financial information and analyses, sharing all of this with the board of directors. This high-level executive position also acts as the lead for investor relations, representing the organization to stakeholders (shareholders, analysts, brokers, funds, etc.). This coincides with the final major area of responsibility for a CEO, community relations. The CEO is responsible for promoting and advocating for the business at all levels (local, state, and national) through marketing and communication activities. CEOs also work with legislators, regulatory agencies, and other entities to promote legislative and regulatory policies and reform. These six major functions encapsulate the majority of how a CEO employs his/her time and effort (Carmanah, 2013; Heathfield, 2016; Joyaux, 2016).

The importance of the CEO position lies mainly in the solid foundation he/she creates for the organization. The strength of the foundation created by the CEO will determine whether or not the organization is relevant and sustainable (Beckham, 2016; Gebreel, 2010). One of the characteristics demonstrated by CEOs bringing relevancy and sustainability to their organizations is the idea of strategy. The CEO's role becomes of greater importance because of the strategy he/she must implement while steering the organization one way or another. Beckman (2016) stated, "Both the formulation and the execution of strategy benefit from depth of insight. Insight strengthens judgment; the richer the pool of insight and the more intentional its application, the better the results" (para. 2). When CEOs exercise superior judgment, they produce superior results through strategic initiatives. This becomes increasingly important in the face of change and

change efforts; CEOs are the active change agents in their organizations (Beckman, 2016). CEOs fulfill this essential role by demonstrating leadership that uplifts, provides directions, and motivates others while fulfilling the needs inside and outside of an organization (Drucker, 2004; Gebreel, 2010).

The majority of information on the role and importance of the CEO is not gender specific. The literature does not make a distinction for the tasks, objectives, and significance of male versus female CEOs. With that said, there is information exploring the complexities women face as they ascend to high positions in business, such as that of the CEO.

Women have made substantial progress in the last century in regard to entering the workforce and pairing men in positions (Platt, 2015). A major study released by McKinsey & Company along with Lean In shows a trend in women's being represented in the corporate structure (McKinsey & Company/Lean In, 2016). Their findings demonstrate how women and men enter the workforce at essentially equal levels, but as leadership opportunities increase and promotions occur, the number of women moving up into higher level leadership positions falls far below their male counterparts. Female C-suite executives make up a mere 19% of all those holding these top-level positions. C-suite categories include CEOs, COOs, CIOs, CMOs, and CFOs (McKinsey & Company/Lean In, 2016).

These statistics display a very disadvantaged playing field for women. The McKinsey & Company/Lean In (2016) joint study shed light on a variety of factors limiting access for women in business. One of the factors includes the pushback women face when attempting to negotiate for a higher level position. Assertive women are

stereotyped as “intimidating” or “aggressive.” Secondly, it displays the limited access women in business have to senior leaders. This limited exposure prevents women from being noticed and recommended for higher level positions within a company. The next aspect holding women back is a genuine lack of feedback on their performance. Some managers report not providing much-needed constructive feedback because of the following: hurting feelings, being afraid the person will dislike them, fearing an emotional outburst or breakdown, or being concerned about a perception of bias. Lastly, women become their own greatest challenge when moving toward higher level executive positions at times. In fact, there is a disproportion in the number of men versus women wanting a promotion as well as those desiring to go into top-level executive positions. Only 74% of women claim they would like to be promoted to the next level, and only 40% of women compared to 56% of men want a top executive position. Much of this discrepancy has been explained by the amount of housework and childcare still accompanying working women (McKinsey & Company/Lean In, 2016).

Clearly, the research indicates the capabilities women have in carrying out important work at top-level leadership positions. The question remains as to what exactly women at the top do to stay engaged, lead with an effectiveness that provides results for an organization, and create meaning in their lives or their organizations. As previously discussed in this review, global pressures are continuing to force leaders to think outside the box and to inspire innovation that achieves break-through results. Engaging tasks, and connectedness contribute greatly to fulfilling a vision with greater purpose, addressing employee disengagement, as well as creating meaning for the entire organization. Meaning-making leadership, which encompasses a variety of leadership

theories, mostly transformational leadership, empowers and stimulates collaboration with teams and creates a culture that is purposeful and significant in every way. Women have been acknowledged for their ability to empower and inspire collaboration among others. The outcome of these aspects in a leader is often attributed to an increase in satisfaction among stakeholders and a rise in production, sales, and profit (Ackerman Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Bailey, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Friedman, 2005; Lawrence, 2013; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich &Ulrich, 2010).

Women and those who mentor women can learn from exemplars in the field as well as influence them with these noted behaviors or discovered information to continue ascensions to the top of their organization. Meaning will increase for these women, but only with the right information and people at the table. Lastly, organizations can benefit tremendously, both culturally and financially, when there is more gender equity at the top of organization (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Sandberg, 2013; Woetzel et al., 2015).

Meaning and Female CEOs

Sandberg (2013) believed women will continue to push forward through their careers, return back from maternity leave, and rival men in the workplace only when their work is worth something—when it has purpose, when it has meaning. Barsh and Cranston (2009) could not agree more with this assertion. These researchers believe it all starts with meaning. They discuss how meaning is a major motivation in a woman's life and propels individuals toward bold goals with a contagious passion. It is meaning, they assert, that promotes both success and happiness.

Meaning is the third level of happiness, the other two being pleasure and engagement. This deeper level of happiness is seen as motivating, sparking creativity,

creating effectiveness, and improving overall well-being. Meaning creates an unmatched and resilient element for any individual, team, or organization. In fact, Maslow's theory would suggest that this level of happiness, or meaning in what one does for work or life, addresses a higher need in order to fully develop. Meeting these needs is a critical element for individuals, giving them confidence to take risks and persevere (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Conley, 2007; Maslow, 1999).

For working women, meaning becomes essential. Meaning is what satisfies a woman while she is away from home. Meaning allows women to focus on core strengths, releasing positive emotions providing significance. When a woman becomes a leader and is responsible for more than just herself, her purpose also increases, thus working to fulfill the needs of others while contributing to a shared vision that connects to her own values and a greater purpose (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Sandberg, 2013).

Female business leaders, like those in the CEO positon, who display this level of meaning in what they do personally and at work, are much more easily able to provoke a sense of meaning for others they lead. In fact, creating environments that will increase MQs in others is a priority for female leaders. This is in addition to the necessary components of IQ and EQ. This mix of IQ, EQ, and MQ increases productivity and *peak performances* or flow for individuals and teams by five times (Barsh & Cranston, 2009; Cranston & Keller, 2013; Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Cranston and Keller (2013) laid out three actions leaders desiring an increase in MQ take for their organizations. The first refers to storytelling. A sense of meaning is sparked by all people in an organization when leaders focus on the benefits not only to the company but also to society, the customer, the working team, and individuals at a personal level. Next, is the assertion

that when employees have a choice in what they do, they become more engaged and committed. One way to achieve this is by implementing a vision and asking big picture questions. Lastly, when leaders surprise employees with small rewards, they feel motivated and inspired. Even something as simple as praise through a thank-you card can increase meaning for individuals in the organization. Essentially, these three actions touch on three of the five meaning-making variables explored in this study: vision, wisdom, and inspiration.

Female CEO's Connection to Meaning-Making Domains

There is a lack of literature connecting female CEOs to the five meaning-making domains explored in this chapter: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. Much of the research on these topics as they relate to leaders is generalized for individuals and not gender specific. Clearly a gap in this body of research exists.

Summary

Throughout this review of literature, all of the key elements for this study were defined and explored. This included meaning, leadership, followership, meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration), and female CEOs. One of the major discoveries was the connection many modern leadership theories had to meaning-making leadership, the most influential being transformational leadership. Additionally, a strong connection was established for meaning and each of the five meaning-making domains. An exploration of female CEOs displayed many interesting aspects unique to women leaders.

This chapter demonstrated the connection meaning has to each of the five meaning making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration).

Some findings even suggested a connection among a few variables, yet no literature exists except preliminary work suggesting a connection among all five meaning-making domains presented by Larick and Petersen in 2015. Additionally, there is a scarcity of relevant information highlighting how female CEOs find meaning for themselves or their organizations, particularly as meaning relates to these five meaning making domains. In all, a comprehensive review of literature related to a variety of topics linked to meaning and female CEOs exhibits a substantial gap in the literature. A study to investigate the integration or connection of the five meaning making domains is needed.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III discusses the thoughtful methodology of this mixed-methods case study. Within this chapter, a review of the purpose statement and research questions is provided. Additionally, the research design, population, sample, and instrumentation are discussed. Data collection and analysis procedures are also explained in detail. This includes interview and survey development and procedures in order to produce validity and reliability for the study as well as participant selections methods. Finally, the limitations of this study are presented.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary female chief executive officers (CEOs) use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to determine the degree of importance to which followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Research Questions

1. What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?
2. To what degree do followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning?

Research Design

Four major factors where considered when determining the methodology of this study: "(1) the problem to be investigated, (2) the purpose of the study, (3) the theory base, and (4) the nature of the data" (Roberts, 2010, p. 141). Through careful consideration of each factor, it was determined that a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research with triangulation, would greatly increase the validity of the findings (Wargo, 2013). Triangulation increases the strength of a study by incorporating elements of data, investigators, theories, methods, or environments (Patton, 2015). In this case, *methodological triangulation* utilizing multiple methods to study exemplary female CEOs and their followers was selected (Guion, 2002).

Three distinct mixed-methods designs were considered for this study: convergent parallel design, explanatory sequential design, and exploratory sequential design. Convergent parallel, the first design to be considered, has both qualitative and quantitative elements deployed, collected, and analyzed simultaneously. The researcher then interprets or explains the convergence (conjunction) or divergence (discrepancy) of the data collected (Creswell, 2013). A narrative inquiry approach was considered for the qualitative aspect of this design. This unique approach focuses on stories that shape the individual experiences of participants, becoming the researcher's window into the culture and constructs of meaning upon analysis (Patton, 2015). A descriptive design was considered for the quantitative portion of the convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Descriptive statistics summarize data in a comprehendible and meaningful way to simply describe the results collected. Conclusions cannot be made in this case and therefore

presented a major drawback to this design (Patten, 2014). Another reason convergent parallel was not found to be the most appropriate design related to the narrative inquiry component's requiring a large amount of data collection in order to dig deep into the narratives, gain diverse perspectives, and achieve quality feedback (McMullen & Braithwaite, 2013). Ultimately, the substantial amount of effort and expertise needed for the convergent parallel design did not align well with the timelines or the purpose of the study.

An explanatory sequential design was also considered for this study. This mixed-methods design starts by collecting and analyzing quantitative data and adds a qualitative follow-up aspect to collect and again analyze data. At that time, the researcher interprets how the qualitative data explains the quantitative results (Creswell, 2015). Inferential statistics were considered for the quantitative aspect of this mixed-methods design in order for the researcher to make inferences about the "effects of sampling errors on the results that are described with descriptive statistics" (Patten, 2014, p. 113). The qualitative portion of this design considered was phenomenology. This qualitative approach uses words as data when gathering participant "knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and feelings as well as detailed descriptions of people's actions, behaviors, activities, and interpersonal interactions" (Roberts, 2010, p. 143). Phenomenological studies for the most part use in-depth interviews and up to 10 participants. This multiphase design can be a lengthy process as there is a need for multiple contacts with participants when using this design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2004). Additionally, since the purpose of this study looked to gather the perspectives of both the leader and his or her followers as they related to the study's five variables, this design made it difficult to

accomplish this task mainly due to the need to survey, then interview the same population. Overall, the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach was not found to be the most appropriate for this study.

The exploratory design was the last to be considered for this mixed-methods study. This design traditionally starts with qualitative data collection and analysis and implements next a quantitative component. The quantitative data collection and analysis follows in the process and is sometimes, but not always, based on those discovered variables of the initial qualitative phase. The researcher produces a product, such as a questionnaire in this case, to conduct the quantitative aspect of the study. Quantitative results are produced allowing the researcher to interpret how those results may provide a better understanding of the variables being explored (Patten, 2013). A case study was considered to make up the qualitative aspect of this study. Flyvbjerg (2011) described a case study as "an intensive analysis of an individual unit (a person or community) stressing development factors in relation to environment" (p. 301). Creswell (1998) asserted case studies to be both an object of study and methodology through qualitative inquiry. Additionally, A. L. George and Bennett (2005) proclaimed case studies as a method for developing and testing theory. Inferential or descriptive statistics could then be utilized to run tests or provide summaries of captured data through the questionnaire (Patten, 2014). Essentially, exemplary female CEOs would be selected to participate in the case study. Two to four participants for the sample would be sufficient to provide depth and transferability; this small sample size would not provide generalizations (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2006). Their followers would then provide feedback through the questionnaire developed. Although this exploratory mixed-methods design is

multiphased and time consuming, it is for the most part straightforward while designing, implementing, and reporting (Creswell, 2013). The exploratory mixed-methods design was selected as the most appropriate, especially with the strict timelines and limited number of female CEOs available to participate in the study.

This exploratory mixed-methods case study furthered the understanding of behaviors female CEOs implement while making meaning as well as how their followers perceived their use of those behaviors when creating meaning. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews of four female CEOs who were considered exemplary in creating personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers. Their followers then provided feedback through a questionnaire to further deepen the understanding of these exemplary female CEO behaviors. The goal of this mixed-methods case study was to triangulate the data in a way that would provide valid and reliable results (Wargo, 2013).

Population

A study's population can be defined as a collection of individuals, objects, or events having similar characteristics, particularly a common and binding characteristic allowing for generalized results through research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Weiss & Weiss, 2012). For this particular study, CEOs working at a private California business made up its population. A private company is defined as a company owned by a small number of individuals, most likely the founder being one of them. Private companies do not sell portions of their businesses through stock like public companies (Reeves, 2004). According to the most recent Small Business Profile for California (SBA, 2015), there

are 3,622,304 private businesses, with 696,239 employing other workers in California. Over 80% of these businesses employ 20 or more employees.

A target population is defined as a group with comparable traits that set them apart from other groups about which a researcher wishes to capture information and draw conclusions (Creswell, 2008). The target population for this study included exemplary female CEOs working in a private Southern California business with more than 20 employees as identified by the 2015 Small Business Profile. Currently, there are 563, 953 in the state (SBA, 2015). There is insufficient evidence existing to suggest the number of female CEOs leading these private companies.

Qualitative Sample

A "group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected" is the definition of a study's sample (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). From the target population, the study's sample was produced through a purposeful sampling; this includes four female CEOs with at least 20 employees. This method was selected to highlight information-packed cases by carefully identifying exemplary leaders (Patton, 2002). Again, an exemplary leader for this study was defined as meeting five of the following criteria: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers; (b) evidence of leading a successful organization; (c) have a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) have published, or presented at conferences or association meetings: articles, papers, or other written materials; (e) peer recognition; and (f) membership in professional associations in their field. Although there is no existing database to determine female CEOs in private California businesses, this method allowed the researcher freedom to select participants from a large pool. Participants were considered

based on recommendations from the researcher's networks. This type of sampling is referred to as *snowball sampling* (Creswell, 2013). According to Heckathorn (2011), Coleman and Goodman, the creators of snowball sampling, described it as a way of looking into the structures of social networks. This method may also be referred to as a nonprobability approach for hard-to-reach populations (Heckathorn, 2011). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) encouraged the use of multiple sampling strategies or a "combination of purposeful sampling" (p. 326) when needed for an investigation.

Quantitative Sample

A quantitative sample was determined once exemplary female CEOs were chosen and explained the study's design needs. Exemplary CEO participants were asked to verify having 20 or more employees within their organization upon initial e-mail or phone contact with the researcher. After interviewing the exemplary female CEOs, the researcher took the time to discuss the criteria specified for their followers who would be asked to complete the online questionnaire. Study criteria indicated that in order to contribute as a follower participant, employees must be fully employed with the company and in a management level or equivalent position. This quantitative sample was limited to 12 of the exemplary female CEOs' followers.

Once the researcher conducted the interview with the exemplary female CEO participant, she followed up with an e-mail. This e-mail included a gesture of gratitude for the time taken to conduct the interview as well as a message she wanted the CEO to use to distribute the survey. The message also included the online survey link and the researcher's identifying code. CEOs or their designees were responsible for distributing e-mails to the quantitative sample participants. This e-mail can be found in Appendix A.

Instrumentation

Purposeful interviews conducted by the researcher and a custom survey designed by the thematic team's researchers were the instruments used for this study (see Appendices B and D). The study's in-depth interviews of exemplary leaders fulfilled the qualitative aspect of this mixed-methods case study, and the questionnaire developed for their followers addressed the quantitative aspect of the study (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). Additionally, this mixed-methods case study provided rigor, breadth, depth, and credibility to the investigation though the triangulation of data (Creswell, 1998).

Interviews

Creswell (2014) cautioned researchers about how "experiences may cause researchers to lean toward certain themes, to actively look for evidence to support their position, and to create favorable or unfavorable conclusions about the site or participants" (p. 188). Patton (2002) recommended a reflective lens by which a researcher becomes more mindful of participant characteristics to address potential researcher bias. The researcher was conscious and reflective throughout the study, taking notes, and documenting reflections along the way (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Additionally, the researcher further developed her conversational skills while also immersing herself in literature related to business protocols and culture in order to conduct effective face-to-face interviews (Patton, 2002). All four interviews were conducted with Brandman University's Institutional Review Board's (BUIRB's) approval and began with introductions and small talk to create a trusting environment. Each recorded portion of the interviews began with an overview, the purpose, and an explanation of the procedural safeguards. All participants signed BUIRB's informed consent form and gave permission

to be audio recorded. All questions asked of the participant were consistent with the thematic team's questions, which were created and tested. The information retrieved from the recorded interviews was transcribed shortly after the face-to-face interview and coded using the qualitative analysis software program NVIVO.

Survey

Quantitative surveys were used to collect data from exemplary female CEO participant's followers; 12 participants were designated by each leader for the survey. These surveys were distributed electronically through SurveyMonkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com) and were relatively easy to administer, manage, and secure (Fowler, 1993). The questionnaire was created by the team of thematic researchers with the help of Dr. Jim Cox (personal communications, January, 23, 2016 through August 29, 2016) and derived through thoughtful research revolving around the five meaning-making elements of the study: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. Before completing the 30 six-point Likert scale questions, the participants reviewed a brief introduction and then signed-off on the informed consent section.

Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2014) defined validity as whether or not the instrument "items measure the content they were intended to measure" (p. 160) and how distinct that may look for qualitative versus quantitative data. Reaffirming the need for both validity and reliability in a study, Creswell also explained reliability as it "refers to whether scores to items on an instrument are internally consistent, stable over time, and whether there was consistency in test administration and scoring" (p. 247). The interview guide, questions, and the follower survey were developed by the thematic team of researchers. The

researchers paid close attention to the alignment of these items to the overall purpose and research questions of the thematic study. As part of the validation process, the final protocol interview questions were reviewed with the input of experts.

Field Testing the Interviews

Field tests for both the interview questions and the survey were conducted. Creswell (2005) explained pilot testing as essential to making changes to an instrument through the feedback of individuals. Individuals participating in the field test not only completed the instrument, in this case answered questions or responded to a survey, but they also evaluated the instrument providing rich feedback. Each thematic team member tested the interview questions by finding a participant similar to one he or she would use for his or her study. An expert qualitative researcher accompanied each team member to observe the researchers' tone and body language. After the interview, the expert provided the researchers with constructive feedback, specifically on their interview style and process.

Researchers maintained the study's criteria of an exemplary leader by identifying participants exhibiting five of the six characteristics: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers; (b) evidence of leading a successful organization; (c) have a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) have published, or presented at conferences or association meetings: articles, papers, or other written materials; (e) peer recognition; or (f) membership in professional associations in their field. All researchers used the same interview guide and questions to test field-test participants (see Appendix B). A specific set of questions was created and administered to collect feedback about the questions and the interviewer (see Appendix C). This step provided "appropriateness,

meaningfulness, and usefulness" while increasing the validity of the qualitative aspect of the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 462).

Field Testing the Surveys

Two researchers from the thematic team were tasked with testing the survey or quantitative aspect of the study. These researchers selected one leader each and asked that their followers complete the field-test survey. There were 10 participants who participated in this process. The individuals participating in this group were provided with the same brief introduction, instructions, 30 questions, and demographic section of the survey (see Appendix D). Creswell (2005) asserted that a well-conducted field providing information to the researcher can increase the success when conducting the actual study.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability was also applied to the qualitative portion of this study to further develop reliable results. Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Campanella Bracken (2010) asserted intercoder reliability as a term used to express to what extent "independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion" (para. 3). According to Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Campanella Bracken (2002), "It is widely acknowledged that intercoder reliability is a critical component of content analysis and (although it does not ensure validity) when it is not established, the data and interpretations of the data can never be considered valid" (p. 589). Furthermore, Neuendorf (2002) explained how content analysis identifies and records objective characteristics of messages. He believed this component to be essential to establishing reliability in any study.

A researcher independent of the study reviewed 10% of the qualitative data to compare it with the data coding and categories established by the researcher. This process was conducted independently to ensure that data categories had acceptable levels of reliability, made sense, and that they were arranged in an appropriate and logical manner (Lombard et al., 2002; Patton, 2002). The researcher used Neuendorf's (2002) "rule of thumb," which was established by many other methodologists (including Banerjee, Capozzoli, McSweeney, & Sinha, 1999; Ellis, 1994; Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000; Krippendorff, 1980; Popping, 1988; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998) to determine the acceptable levels of reliability. This included an acceptable level of reliability in which "coefficients of .90 or greater would be acceptable to all, .80 or greater would be acceptable in most situations, and below that, there exists great disagreement" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 145). The caveat was that .70 could be used when looking at exploratory research.

Triangulation

Patton (2015) believed triangulation to strengthen a study by using a combination of methods. This study's design is inherently set up to address method triangulation, which refers to the "use of multiple methods to study a single problem or program" (p. 216). In this case, the researcher is gathering information using a qualitative method or interview and a qualitative method or survey. Patton highlighted the danger in utilizing only one method and further expanded on how vulnerable a study with one method can be to errors. This study was designed with multiple methods that provided various data types, thus providing increased cross-data validity checks.

Data Collection

Creswell (2006) stated, "Researchers collect data in a mixed methods study to address the research questions or hypotheses" (p. 110). The data collection process was created in a straightforward manner in order to reduce ambiguity for both the participant and the researcher. All exemplary female CEOs were contacted via e-mail or by phone to solidify participation and agree on a time, date, and location. A confirmation e-mail providing these details was then sent to each participant along with BUIRB's informed consent form. All university guidelines were adhered to in order to maintain confidentiality to the participants. The researcher set up hour-long face-to-face interviews using the seven guiding questions created by the thematic team of researchers. The researcher used two audio-capturing devices to ensure all data were captured. Additionally, the generic probes created by the other researchers aided this researcher in providing depth to the interview (see Appendix B).

Once the researcher concluded the interview with the exemplary female CEO, the female CEO was thanked for her time and given information on how her followers could access the SurveyMonkey link to collect information. This information was also e-mailed to the leader. The survey link included information on the study, an informed consent agreement, explanation of the Likert scale, 30 survey questions, and a section requesting demographic information (see Appendix E). The researcher checked on participant progress often to ensure completion by all 12 followers. The researcher sent friendly e-mail reminders to the leaders when little to no progress was being submitted electronically. All data collection procedures are outlined in detail in Table 1.

Table 1

Data Collection Procedures

Steps for data collection	Detailed checklist
Interviews	
1. Recruit and contact exemplary female CEOs with chairs approval 2. Send participants the Bill of Rights and informed consent form 3. Review the Bill of Rights and the informed consent form just prior to conducting face-to-face interviews 4. Conduct interviews 5. Leave information to access the survey at the conclusion of the leader interview	o Obtain permission from Brandman University IRB to conduct the study o Explain the study, its benefits, and process to potential participants via phone and e-mail (see Appendix F) o Ensure that potential participants meet the criteria of the study o Schedule interviews with participants (initially 1 hour with the caveat that it may go over) o Answer any questions the participant has on the day of the interview upon reviewing the Bill of Rights and agreeing to the terms of the informed consent form o Ensure the researcher has multiple copies of the interview questions and that the visuals for the participant are magnified to ensure easy reading o Start both recording devices to ensure interview is captured o Read the interview document created by the thematic team—interject generic probes when needed o Upon completion, thank the participant and leave the information sheet with them to share with their followers.
Surveys	
1. Follow up with an e-mail to the CEO on how her followers can access the survey 2. Follow survey submissions to ensure completion. Reach out to followers to ensure completion. 3. Reach out to CEO when necessary to ensure follower participation	o E-mail female CEOs to provide information on how the followers may access the survey, thanking them again for their participation o Check on follower participant submissions o Send follow up e-mail to participant when necessary to increase participation o Upon completion of all follower participant feedback, send female CEOs a thank-you note

Data Analysis

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) stated, “Data analysis in mixed methods research consists of analyzing the quantitative data using quantitative methods and the

qualitative data using qualitative methods" (p. 128). Onwuegbuzie and Combs (2010) concurred with these authors offering their own definition of what they call *mixed analysis* as well: "Mixed analysis involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques within the same framework, which is guided either a priori, a posteriori, or iteratively (representing analytical decisions that occur both prior to the study and during the study)" (p. 425). This section explores the manner in which the researcher analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data captured through participant interviews and surveys.

In order to apply triangulation to this study, a mixed-methods model was adopted providing data from both qualitative and quantitative sources. The goal of the qualitative aspect of this study was to organize the data in order to discover patterns. Ultimately, these patterns allow the researcher to understand and interpret relationships emerging among categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher in this study used coding as a way of organizing the data. Coding allows researchers to identify, name, and categorize data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Once interviews were conducted and recorded, the researcher transcribed the data into a Word document in order to copy it into NVIVO software, which aided in coding the vast amount of data. Open coding was applied to identify related concepts and demonstrate patterns emerging within the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Ten percent of the data was given to a researcher independent of the study to cross-check information, ultimately reaching an acceptable level of reliability: 90% being acceptable, 80% or more being acceptable in most situations, and 70% being acceptable in exploratory research (Neuendorf, 2002).

The feedback provided from the Likert scale survey questions given to participants fulfilled the quantitative element of this mixed-methods study. A Likert scale was selected in order to gather follower perceptions and attitudes on a rating scale (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The survey was designed on a 1 to 6 scale: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*). Participants completed these 30 questions online after receiving access to the survey from their leader, the female exemplary CEO. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize, identify, and describe essential characteristics of the data. The central tendency was found through the mean as well as the percentage (Cramer & Howitt, 2004; Pierce, 2008). Once the qualitative analysis was conducted, the researcher then compared the data outcomes to make inferences about what emerged from both data sets from the distinct methods.

Limitations

There were four limitations in this study: time, the instruments, the sample size, and geography. Limitations refer to the conditions that a researcher is unable to control and can limit the ability to generalize a study's findings (Roberts, 2010). The remainder of this subsection explores each of the four aforementioned limitations with details.

Time

Time was a limiting factor, especially when collecting qualitative data, in this study. Within the time constraints of an hour-long interview, it is possible that even exemplary participants leave out information relevant to a study, limiting the depth of the interview. The four participants interviewed may have not expanded significantly to fill in the significant gaps driving the study.

Instruments

There were limitations on both the qualitative and quantitative instruments used in this study. In regard to the qualitative instrument, the limitations revolved around the researcher as the instrument. Precautions were taken to reduce researcher bias though innate subjectivity including personal assumptions may persist even with cautious attention in such cases. As for the quantitative instrument, the survey administered to followers, there were also limitations. The followers were selected by the CEO, which means there is a possibility that they were chosen because they aligned in vision and values with their leader. The electronic survey asked that participants self-report, and therefore, it was based largely on their perceptions. Results were also based on the understanding of the directions provided to the participants. Finally, the researcher had little control of the environment in which the participants took the survey; the electronic component allowed for varied settings.

Sample Size

The sample size was also a limitation of this study. Four female exemplary CEOs from private companies in California provided information to answer the research questions for this study. This sample size was appropriate for the mixed-methods case study design, yet due to its small size, significantly limits the ability to generalize findings.

Geography

The final limitation was the geography of the study's population. The study was delimited to Southern California. This limited access to additional exemplary CEOs who could have provided significant input shedding light on the research questions.

Summary

Chapter III discussed the methodological elements of this mixed-methods case study. A review of the purpose statement and research questions was provided to show alignment of study and its methodology. The research's design, population, sample, and instrumentation were discussed; elements of validity and reliability were also covered. Data collection and analysis procedures for the interviews and surveys were explained with detail. Finally, the limitations of this study were presented.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Chapter IV delineates the processes involved for this study, most importantly the research, data collection, and findings. First, a restatement of both the purpose statement and research questions is provided at the beginning. The research methods and data are then discussed as are the population, sample, and demographic data for the study. The majority of this chapter is dedicated to the presentation and analysis of data. The major findings related to the meaning-making domains are also explored. The final section of this chapter summarizes all major elements related to the study's research, data collections, and findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary female chief executive officers (CEOs) use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. In addition, it was the purpose of this study to determine the degree of importance to which followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Research Questions

1. What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?

2. To what degree do followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

An exploratory mixed-methods case study was applied to this investigation in order to better understand the behaviors female CEOs implemented while making meaning. Additionally, a survey measuring the degree to which exemplary leaders' followers rated the importance of meaning-making behaviors was also part of this study. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews of four female CEOs who were considered exemplary in creating personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded with the leaders' permission with the intention of capturing the full scope of the interview. Following the leaders' interviews, 12 of their followers were asked to provide feedback through an online questionnaire delivered through SurveyMonkey, further deepening the understanding of these exemplary female CEO behaviors. Followers submitting the 30-question online questionnaire did so anonymously. All qualitative and quantitative data were stored securely by the researcher. The goal of this particular design was to triangulate the data to provide validity and reliability for the study (Wargo, 2013).

Population

CEOs working at private California businesses made up this study's population. A private company was defined as a company owned by a small number of individuals with the founder potentially being one of them. According to the most recent Small

Business Profile for California from 2015, there are 3,622,304 private businesses, with 696,239 employing other workers in California (SBA, 2015).

The target population for this study was defined as a group with comparable traits setting them apart from other groups from which the researcher wanted to capture information while being able to draw conclusions (Creswell, 2008). The target population in this case study was exemplary female CEOs working in a private Southern California businesses with more than 20 employees as identified by the 2015 Small Business Profile (SBA, 2015). Currently, there are 563,953 small businesses employing more than 20 individuals in the state (SBA, 2015). There was insufficient evidence in order to suggest the number of female CEOs leading these private companies.

Sample

From the target population, the study's qualitative sample was produced through purposeful sampling; four female CEOs with at least 20 employees, who met five of the following criteria, were identified: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers; (b) evidence of leading a successful organization; (c) have a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) have published, or presented at conferences or association meetings: articles, papers, or other written materials; (e) peer recognition; and (f) membership in professional associations in their field. Although there was no existing database to determine female CEOs in private California businesses, this method allowed the researcher freedom to select participants from a large pool. Participants were considered, based on recommendations from the researcher's networks, including the exemplary leaders' networks. All four of the participants or female CEOs met all six of

the criteria outlined above defining each one as exemplary leader. All participant organizations were located in Southern California.

The study's quantitative sample was made up of 12 followers from each of the exemplary female CEOs' organization. Follower participants were fully employed with the business and working in a management level or equivalent position. Exemplary female CEOs selected the respondents and relayed the message drafted by the researcher with the online survey details. The CEO participant or her designee distributed the researcher's message via e-mail to the CEOs' selected followers.

Demographic Data

Four exemplary female CEOs were selected to participate in this study. The interviews were considered the qualitative portion of the study. As stated previously, all the leaders were considered exemplar based on meeting the criteria outlined by the researcher's thematic team. Three of the four were in their 60s and one was in her 40s. Three of the four were college educated and one was not. One participant had her doctorate from a prestigious Southern California university. Table 2 displays the demographic information for each of the participants.

A total of 33 individuals took the online questionnaire from four of the Southern California private businesses that were selected for this study. This was a return rate of 69% since 12 surveys were deployed by each exemplary leader or her designee. All demographic information was gathered at the end of the online questionnaire; not every individual responded to this optional section. One survey participant did not respond to any of the demographic questions. A different survey participant omitted her age in the demographic section. The information that was collected is reflected in Table 3.

Table 2

Demographic Information for Exemplary Female CEOs

Category	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age range	55-69	35-54	55-69	55-69
Years as CEO	18	8	30	25
Level of education	EdD	High school	BS	MBA
Successful relationships with followers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leading a successful organization	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession	✓	✓	✓	✓
Have published or presented at conferences/ association meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition by peers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Membership in professional association in field	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 3

Demographic Information for Exemplary Female CEOs' Followers

Category	# of Respondents	% of Respondents
Gender		
Female	20	60.6%
Male	12	36.4%
Unknown	1	3.03%
Age		
20-30 years	6	18.2%
31-40 years	4	12.1%
41-50 years	9	27.3%
51-60 years	10	30.3%
61+ years	2	6.1%
Unknown	2	6.1%
Years in organization		
0-5 years	18	54.5%
6-10 years	5	15.2%
11-20 years	6	18.2%
21+ years	3	9.1%
Unknown	1	3.0%
Time with current leader		
0-2 years	9	27.3%
3-5 years	11	33.3%
6-10 years	6	18.2%
11+ years	6	18.2%
Unknown	1	3.0%

Note. $N = 33$.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized to answer the study's two research questions. The following section contains a presentation of data and its analysis as it directly pertains to answering the study's research questions. Again, face-to-face interviews were conducted with female CEOs in private businesses. Leaders were considered exemplary by meeting the study's outlined criteria. Furthermore, an electronic questionnaire was distributed to the leaders' followers to gather their perceptions.

Intercoder Reliability

In order to reduce errors and produce reliable data results, intercoder reliability procedures were applied to this study. This approach ensured that there was agreement among independent coders and also addressed the potential for bias that exists in qualitative research (Lombard et al., 2010; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this particular study, 10% of the qualitative data was shared and reviewed independently by an additional expert researcher. Neuendorf's (2002) *rule of thumb* was used to determine acceptable levels of reliability. In this case, the coders experienced agreement results at the coefficient level of .90 or greater. This was determined to be an acceptable level of reliability for this thematic study (Banerjee et al., 1999; Ellis, 1994; Frey et al., 2000; Krippendorff, 1980; Popping, 1988; Riffe et al., 1998).

Data Analysis for Research Question 1

The driving question for this research study was its first research question: "What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational

meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?" The qualitative discoveries of this study follow:

Data Analysis for Meaning-Making Domains

The following section presents the common themes emerging from the compiled data of the four participant interview responses. It is important to note that this information was gathered from five of the seven interview questions. The other two interview questions asked exemplary participants which domain they saw as *most essential* or *a must have*. The exact questions were as follows:

1. Here are five leadership behaviors that research suggests are necessary in an exemplary leader. Looking at these, would you agree that these are all important?
    a. Realizing that they are all important, do any jump out as being absolutely essential?
2. Of all the things we have spoken about today—vision, relationships, character, inspiration, and wisdom—are there absolutes "must"! that you believe are essential behaviors for an exemplary leader to have?

The responses to these questions are outlined in the following subsections.

Participant A. Participant A was an exemplary female CEO from a private audio visual consulting and systems integration company located in Southern California. This first participant acknowledged the important role each one of the meaning-making domains had in being an extraordinary leader. Most essential for her of these domains was character; its most notable behaviors are ethics, integrity, and authenticity.

Participant A suggested that with these behaviors, a leader may acquire a sense of peace in his or her life and role as a leader.

Participant B. Participant B was an exemplary female CEO from a private product-based company with a focus on foldable/freezable bags. Her business is located in Southern California. Although agreeing that each meaning-making domain was important, this exemplary leader believed vision and inspiration to be the most essential qualities out of the five domains. She highlighted the importance of knowing the trajectory of the organization and exuded a passion for taking people along toward the established vision.

Participant C. Participant C was an exemplary female CEO with a private family business operating in the produce industry. Her central office and large produce warehouse is located in Southern California. Again, agreeing that all of the five meaning-making domains played a role in exemplary leadership, this CEO believed vision to be the "most preeminent." She established this through an explanation of needing to be clear about the direction of the company in order to "rally the troops." Without a vision, she believed an organization would end up just as "status quo."

Participant D. Participant D was an exemplary female CEO with a private Southern California business providing cybersecurity, technology, program management, and engineering services. She responded that all of the meaning-making domains played an important role in exemplary leadership. With that said, this participant ranked character and vision as *absolutely essential* domains, declaring that without a plan "you are lost" and without character, one has "no followers."

Summary of Data Collected for Meaning-Making Domains

All in all, exemplary female CEOs believed the meaning-making domains of vision (three of the four participants reported) and character (two of the four participants reported) to be the most essential. Three out of four participants believed vision to be extremely essential, while two out of the four believed character to also be absolutely essential. One of the participants suggested that the domain of inspiration went hand in hand with the domain of vision as being extremely essential. Again, this information was captured through two of the interview questions. The other five interview questions revolved specifically around the five meaning-making domains.

Responses to the five interview questions produced essential information for answering the study's first research question: "What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?" Each meaning-making domain highlighted four to five of the most common themes discovered by the researcher. This information is presented consistent with the order of domains outlined in the research question and is in no particular order of importance. In Table 4, the overall data are presented to demonstrate the number of occurrences out of the 384 lines of code collected by the researcher as well as the total percentages dedicated to each meaning-making domain.

Table 4

Meaning-Making Domains—Number of Occurrences/Percentages

Research question	Meaning-making domains	Number of occurrences in collected responses	Percentage from total codes collected
What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?	1. Relationships	107	27.9%
	2. Vision	78	20.3%
	3. Character	77	20.1%
	4. Wisdom	65	16.9%
	5. Inspiration	57	14.8%

Character. There were four common themes that emerged while examining the cases of the four exemplary female CEO participants. Out of the 384 lines of code gathered, 77 of them lined up within the *character* domain. This domain was ranked third of the five discussed in relation to the number of occurrences provided by the participants' responses. Some of the 77 expanded over two of the common themes. Table 5 outlines the common themes as they relate to the study's first research question and the meaning-making domain of character, plus it displays the number of occurrences noted in the responses received.

Displaying authenticity and transparency. Of the 77 lines of code related to the meaning-making domain of character, 31 of those spoke to the importance of displaying authenticity and transparency, particularly being the "same person" no matter where a person is or who he/she is with. Leaders agreed that this brought a sense of peace and freedom as they lived out their personal and professional lives. Participant A stated, "I

think it's really important to be authentic," and described how she tries "to encourage everyone here (in the organization) to be authentic" as well. Furthermore, transparency was highlighted in a variety of ways. The primary example given by participants included the need to share openly what the leaders' thought processes were, especially as they related to key financial information and times of vulnerability or crisis.

Table 5

Common Themes in Responses for the Meaning-Making Domain of Character

Research question	Common themes for character	Number of occurrences in collected responses
What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through *character*?	1. Displaying authenticity and transparency	31
	2. Creating a culture of "doing what is right"	29
	3. Demonstrating honesty, ethics, and integrity	24
	4. Leading by example	18

Creating a culture of "doing what is right." After reviewing the 77 codes related to the character meaning-making domain, 29 of them fell into the common theme of creating a culture of "doing what is right." These exemplary CEOs displayed the mindfulness associated with this theme. One participant discussed how she talks a lot with her team about "doing the right thing" and often takes the time to discuss big decisions with others in order to promote ethical decision making. Another participant explained how she set an example for her organization by helping others within her particular industry. Even though they may be competitors, it was the "right thing to do."

Demonstrating honesty, ethics, and integrity. Demonstrating honesty, ethics, and integrity was continually brought up in the exemplary participant responses. In fact, 24

codes were associated with this common theme out of the 77 total for the meaning-making character domain. One participant declared that character, for her, was a "nonnegotiable" and that without "ethics and integrity" he/she will have "no latitude" within the other domains. Another exemplary CEO believed in the philosophy of "say what you mean and mean what you say," and spoke of how key honesty was to building a trusting and open environment.

Leading by example. Of the 77 codes associated with this first domain, 18 of them resulted in the common theme of leading by example. Participants discussed their belief that promoting a positive character within their organization began with them. Exemplary leaders spoke with clarity of what their own values or foundations were and how promoting those through every action or conversation was essential to developing this domain. Participant D touted her philosophy, "say what you mean and mean what you say." She described how this philosophy "starts at the top" and permeates through the organization.

Vision. Vision had the second highest number of occurrences while reviewing the compiled data. There were 78 codes relating to the domain of vision, and some of them did cross over multiple common themes. Five common themes emerged from the interviews. Table 6 presents these common themes as well as their occurrences in the collected responses.

Spending dedicated time focused on strategic planning. Out of 78 codes linked to the meaning-making domain of vision, 30 of them were tied to this common theme. Exemplary leaders were deliberate in spending dedicated time focused on strategic planning. Leaders carved out time to review financial documents, seek feedback, and

plan, usually with a team of higher level management, for a future of at least three to five years in the future. Planning in order to create a vision that the organization could use to propel them was discussed a variety of times throughout the data collection process. Some of these planning sessions included yearly off-sites, summer conferences, and monthly meetings. Participant B commented, "You have to make a point to step out of the weeds and focus on high-level strategic planning and vision."

Table 6

Common Themes in Responses for the Meaning-Making Domain of Vision

Research question	Common themes for vision	Number of occurrences in collected responses
What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through *vision*?	1. Spending dedicated time focused on strategic planning	30
	2. Providing purpose and clarity in work	27
	3. Engaging others in participatory activities to contribute to the vision	19
	4. Clearly communicating the vision	12
	5. Information sharing and transparency	12

Providing purpose and clarity in work. *Providing purpose and clarity in work* was also important to exemplary CEOs. Altogether, this common theme was mentioned 27 times by participants out of 78 strands of code in this domain. One exemplary CEO reported how delivering her vision to the company, not only provided purpose and clarity for herself, but it inspired others to believe they were contributing to something greater than themselves and also had clear expectations. Another participant spoke of the fact that fulfilling the vison and upholding the values of the company allowed her and followers more time to not only find purpose in the projects they created for their clients, but in their personal life as well. This company was committed to giving employees time

to pursue personal aspirations. One way they do this is by working four 10-hours per day shifts and having Friday off every week.

Engaging others in participatory activities to contribute to the vision. All of the exemplary CEOs spoke of the collaboration aspect of creating a vision for their company, some with personal/professional coaches and others with their teams. In fact, 19 of the 78 coded responses showed that participants spoke of the importance of engaging others in participatory activities to contribute to the vision. Many spoke of activities like strategic planning sessions with consultant, scenario planning, and appreciative inquiry exercises. Regardless, all leaders were firm in the fact that they need to rely on the strengths of others and engage others as a way to develop and accomplish the vision of the organization.

Clearly communicating the vision. All exemplary CEOs expressed the importance of clearly communicating the vision. Of the 78 codes associated with vison, 12 touched on the importance of this common theme. Many of the participants discussed company-wide meetings or "town hall meetings" within the company to either deliver or reiterate the vision of the company. Another took the time to write and distribute formal addresses from the president's desk to the entire company. This was a way that she further strengthened the communication of the vision to everyone at every level in the company.

Information sharing and transparency. Information sharing and transparency had the same amount of codes as the previous common theme, 12 of the 78. Exemplary CEOs exposed their desire to share as much information and be as transparent as possible with all key stakeholders. They believed this built trust among their team, which

reinforced the commitment from others to the vision of the organization. One participant even discussed how everyone in the company knows how much money she makes and that she took the median of what all the salaries were in the business. Another example by a participant was to continuously share profits and losses with the company. In addition to building trust through transparency, she noted how it made decisions like being unable to deliver a yearly bonuses a few years ago less difficult because the team was already aware of the financial situation of the company.

Relationships. Relationships by far was determined to have the most codes when looking at the compiled data, 107 of the 384 lines of code collected. As with previous domains, some of the codes crossed into multiple themes. There were four common themes that emerged from the data as they related to the meaning-making domain of relationships. Table 7 presents those common themes and additionally displays the number of occurrences in the collected responses.

Table 7

Common Themes in Responses for the Meaning-Making Domain of Relationships

Research question	Common themes for relationships	Number of occurrences in collected responses
What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through *relationships*?	1. Taking a personal and professional interest in others in and outside of the organization	39
	2. Providing structured and unstructured activities	31
	3. Promoting trust and respect	25
	4. Coaching and mentoring	14

Taking a personal and professional interest in others both in and outside of the organization. All four of the exemplary CEOs interviewed produced multiple examples

for how taking a personal and professional interest in others both in and outside of the organization increased relationships. The meaning-making domain of relationships had 107 codes associated with it. Of those, 39 were related to this common theme. One participant spoke of the affection she had for her staff and gave multiple examples that demonstrated a sincere knowledge of individuals. Another spoke of the culture of her business being very family oriented. She spoke of opportunities families had to mingle outside of the work setting and how she sometimes got to know people more in those settings. Another CEO took the time to explain how she made a point to walk the building and chat with workers. She inferred that this not only contributes to a positive work environment, but it reinforces the relationships she has with others, always starting off any conversation with something about their personal life. She believes that everyone's personal life is what is "most important to them."

Providing structured and unstructured activities. The information provided by exemplary CEOs supports that providing structured and instructed activities builds relationships. Of the 107 codes, 31 supported this assertion. Exemplary CEOs spoke of off-site and in-house team-building activities, family barbecues, Christmas parties, scenario planning, appreciative inquiry sessions, "Yoga Fridays," summer conferences, company Olympics, monthly meetings, annual convocations, "Wine Night," and simply the structure of work. Participant C stated, "I have town hall meetings about once a quarter." Some of these activities were well-organized and highly structured, while others were organized but provided no real structure. The highly structured activities focus a lot on the cross-functional teaming of various departments. The unstructured

activities provide a comfortable and mostly casual atmosphere for individuals to get to know one another.

Promoting trust and respect. Each exemplary CEO highlighted the importance of promoting trust and respect in any relationship. Out of the 107 codes related to the domain of relationships, 25 total codes touched on this common theme. One of the exemplary CEOs discussed the importance of her followers trusting her and how important it was that she was "respected and not so much liked." She promotes the expectation of mutual respect throughout her organization, especially because of the fact that the work her company produces demands a team effort. Another participant discussed her willingness to be vulnerable, which "helps to build trust and of course that builds a relationship."

Coaching and mentoring. The common theme of coaching and mentoring was present in 14 of the 107 codes that focused on the relationships meaning-making domain. All of the exemplary CEOs discussed examples in which they were coached, provided coaching or mentoring, and promoted coaching and mentoring among their staff. None of the businesses had a formal mentoring program. One exemplary CEO raved about her own coach and a mentoring group. She further reported on the insight they provided her while having such an intense and demanding role in the company. Many discussed the conversations they were able to have with their followers and how they were able to observe their growth as a result of topics they explored together. Another participant discussed a culture of "co-mentoring" that existed. Participant C stated, "We have a culture of coaching." The CEOs were the lead and the impetus to this emphasis in

culture. They found that this enriched the relationships and added value to their environments.

Wisdom. The meaning-making domain of wisdom had 65 lines of code when compiling the participant responses, some being associated with multiple common themes. This made it the fourth ranked as it related to the amount of occurrences discovered. Four common themes were found in this compiled data. Table 8 introduces these four common themes and the total of occurrences in the collected responses.

Table 8

Common Themes in Responses for the Meaning-Making Domain of Wisdom

Research question	Common themes for wisdom	Number of occurrences in collected responses
What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through wisdom?	1. Accessing, reflecting on, and learning from prior experiences	30
	2. Tapping into the strengths of others	14
	3. Having good listening skills/seeking clarification through questions	12
	4. Utilizing knowledge base to support others and drive the organization forward	12

Accessing, reflecting on, and learning from prior experiences. All four of the exemplary CEOs expressed how they gained wisdom through accessing, reflecting on, and learning from prior experiences. There were 65 codes connected to the wisdom meaning-making domain. This common theme was brought up 30 times. Three of the exemplary CEOs discussed different situations in which they believed they gained wisdom by "learning from mistakes." Their process involved acknowledging the situation, reflecting on it, and then making adjustments or changes in the future to avoid making the same mistake.

Tapping into the strengths of others. All of the exemplary CEOs demonstrated a humbleness and sincerity when discussing that they could not accomplish anything they do without the help and support of others. Participants communicated that much of the wisdom and success they have achieved, was due in large part to tapping into the strengths of others. Of the 65 codes in this wisdom meaning-making domain, 14 were associated with this common theme. One participant explained how she calls a small team of people together when she is confronted by a complex or unclear situation, further admitting that she does not always have all of the answers. Another exemplary CEO stated that she has people on her team who have worked in the corporate world and have knowledge that she does not possess since she is an "accidental entrepreneur." In fact, Participant B stated, "I'm the first person to admit that I don't know everything and I'm willing to ask questions and find an answer."

Having good listening skills/seeking clarification through questions. Of the 65 codes linked to the wisdom meaning-making domain, 12 of them fit into the common theme of having good listening skills/seeking clarification through questions. One of the exemplary CEOs discussed the importance of "two ears and one mouth." She stated, "In a complex situation or an unclear situation, the most important thing is to understand." She said she listens and then asks, "Why, why, why, why, why?" or "Can I ask a couple of clarifying questions?" Another participant discussed that the culture is one in which it is all right to ask questions. She encourages her followers and "talks through things." She also admitted to not always having the answer or not always giving the answer right away. Doing this is a way of eliciting the answer through a series of questions she asks her followers.

Utilizing a knowledge base to support others and drive the organization forward. Three of the four exemplary CEOs discussed thoroughly how utilizing their knowledge base to support others and drive the organization forward was a big part of the wisdom meaning-making domain. Of the 65 codes in this domain, 12 of them reflected this common theme. Exemplary CEOs felt they were a "resource to others," had firsthand "knowledge in sales," and the "technical background" to support others in the organization. This knowledge base demonstrated by the CEOs increased their credibility among their teams as well as contributed to upholding the vision of each organization.

Inspiration. Inspiration was brought up least in the participant interviews. There were 57 lines of code out of the 384 established through the interview process. Again, particular codes crossed over into multiple codes. Table 9 shows the four common themes associated with the domain of inspiration and its number of occurrences collected in the participant responses.

Table 9

Common Themes in Responses for the Meaning-Making Domain of Inspiration

Research question	Common themes for inspiration	Number of occurrences in collected responses
What are the behaviors that exemplary female CEOs use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through inspiration?	1. Exhibiting admirable qualities	22
	2. Helping others feel a part of the process and success of the organization	15
	3. Revealing an outward expression of passion/emotion	14
	4. Conducting coaching and necessary conversations	13

Exhibiting admirable qualities. As the exemplary CEOs spoke about the meaning-making domain inspiration, the common theme of exhibiting admirable qualities

began to emerge. Of the 57 codes for this domain, 22 of them lined up with this common theme. These were items the participants spoke about during the interview that they believed inspired those around them. The first participant spoke of her commitment to the community and the amount of time she spends volunteering. She mentioned several cases in which her actions both in and outside the organization increased the respect others had for her as well as inspired them to action. Another participant spoke about her weekly blog and said that she has been approached by followers and community members alike to let her know how much they admire and look forward to getting her blog. Many of her followers have commented on how inspired they are by seeing that she has such creativity and is fearless.

Helping others feel part of the process and the success of the organization. For all of the CEOs, it was important to help others feel part of the process and the success of the organization. Of the 57 codes, 15 explored the ways in which participants accomplished this in their organizations. One of the exemplary CEOs discussed the need to open new inventory in the presence of others, especially when they were previously part of the process in creating designs. She (Participant B) stated, "One of the things that is really important for me is to make everyone in the organization feel a part of the process, because at the end of the day we are an organization that creates awesome products." Another participant spoke of the celebrations her organization participated in when a contract was acquired for a new job such a ringing a bell and having it video recorded in order to share with others.

Revealing an outward expression of passion/emotion. Three of the participants particularly discussed revealing an outward expression of passion/emotion whether it be

from seeing positive profit margins, acquiring new business, or seeing the growth and success of those around them. Of the 57 codes in the meaning-making domain of inspiration, 14 of those focused on the effect of their expression of the passion they have for what they do every day. The three labeled themselves as "extraverts" or the kind of person who "wears their heart on their sleeve." One even stated, "When I'm excited about something, everyone knows." The participants mentioned that this passion was contagious in the organization and truly provided a positive environment.

Conducting coaching and necessary conversations. The final common theme within the meaning-making domain of inspiration was conducting coaching and necessary conversations. Out of 57 code strands, 13 were in line with this common theme. All of the exemplary CEOs touched on the importance of coaching those in their organizations, especially with questioning techniques and suggestions from observations. Being "straightforward" was also mentioned as a way of building trust among the CEOs and their followers as well as a way of inspiring others to move in a direction more in line with the vision and values of the organization. Participant D stated,

> So inspiring them to achieve their best is more of a conversation sometimes. Sometimes, I can bring them in and I can encourage them through a very trying time. We've had people that have lost . . . even had deaths in their families. You can see the degradation of their performance.

Data Analysis for Research Question 2

The secondary driving question for this research study was, "To what degree do followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and

inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning?" This next section answers that question through the thoughtful analysis of the study's quantitative data.

This section presents quantitative data per meaning-making domain: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. A table for each domain is presented highlighting the responses collected from the exemplary leaders' followers through the electronic questionnaire. Additionally, narrative discusses each table's significance as it relates to the study's second research question. It is important to note that questionnaire participants provided feedback based on a Likert scale, identifying levels of importance as follows: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*).

Character

Table 10 presents the data results for the meaning-making domain character. There were five behaviors participants were asked to rate on the questionnaire:

- Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others.
- Actively listens when communicating with others.
- Responds to challenging situations with optimism.
- Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted.
- Actions show concern for the well-being of others.

An overwhelming amount, 98.2%, stated that these behaviors were *important* to *critically important.* The following shows the correlating percentages of responses: *important*, 18.2%; *very important*, 46.7%; and *critically important*, 33.3%. The overall mean for this domain was 5.14 out of 6.00. This demonstrates that the average degree of importance of the behaviors, based on the participant responses, is consistent with the

Table 10

Electronic Questionnaire Results for the Meaning-Making Domain of Character

Meaning-making domain: Character	Not important		Marginally important		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Critically important		Total mean
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10	30.3%	23	69.7%	5.67
Actively listens when communicating with others.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	9.1%	20	60.6%	10	30.3%	5.22
Responds to challenging situations with optimism.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	24.2%	20	60.6%	5	15.2%	4.93
Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	21.2%	15	45.5%	11	33.3%	5.19
Actions show concern for the well-being of others.	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	2	6.1%	12	36.4%	12	36.4%	6	18.2%	4.67
Overall importance	**0**	**0.0%**	**1**	**0.6%**	**2**	**1.2%**	**30**	**18.2%**	**77**	**46.7%**	**55**	**33.3%**	**5.14**

Note. 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*).

descriptor *very important*. The behavior within this domain that stands out as *very important* (33.3%) and *critically important* (69.7%) is "behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others." This behavior received the highest mean of all of the behaviors listed, 5.67. Next was "actively listens when communicating with others" (5.22). Closely followed by that was "actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted" (5.19). The last two behaviors, "responds to challenging situations with optimism" (4.93) and "actions show concern for the well-being of others" (4.67), which had the lowest means within those listed.

Vision

The respondents' results for the meaning-making domain of vision are displayed in Table 11. The total mean for this domain was 4.6 out of 6.00. Of participant responses, 92% ranked this domain *important* to *critically important*; 29.4% ranked it *important,* while 45.4% indicated that it was *very important*, and 17.2% responded that it was *critically important*. The highest mean behavior within this domain was "communicates the organization's vision in a way in which team members support it" (5.00). Close behind was "demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions" (4.89).

Relationships

Table 12 presents the data results for the meaning-making domain relationships. Five behaviors were displayed on the questionnaire:

- Continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose.

Table 11

Electronic Questionnaire Results for the Meaning-Making Domain of Vision

Meaning-making domain: Vision	Not important		Marginally important		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Critically important		Total mean
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Communicates the organization's vision in a way in which team members support it.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	5	15.2%	20	60.6%	7	21.2%	5.00
Engages team members in creating a vision for the future.	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	3	9.1%	12	36.4%	12	36.4%	5	15.2%	4.56
Behavior reflects organizational vision when making decisions.	0	0.0%	3	9.1%	1	3.0%	10	30.3%	14	42.4%	5	15.2%	4.48
Promotes innovation that aligns with the organization's vision.	0	0.0%	2	6.5%	0	0.0%	14	45.2%	12	38.7%	3	9.7%	4.33
Demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	7	21.2%	16	48.5%	8	24.2%	4.89
Overall importance	0	0.0%	6	3.7%	7	4.3%	48	29.4%	74	45.4%	28	17.2%	4.65

Note. 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*).

Table 12

Electronic Questionnaire Results for the Meaning-Making Domain of Relationships

Meaning-making domain:	Not important		Marginally important		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Critically important		Total
Relationships	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	mean
Continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	12.1%	14	42.4%	15	45.5%	5.44
Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	11	33.3%	20	60.6%	5.59
Behaves in a way that shows she/he cares about the team members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	21.2%	21	63.6%	5	15.2%	4.89
Communicates in a clear, meaningful way.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	7	21.2%	17	51.5%	7	21.2%	4.93
Encourages team members to share leadership when performing tasks.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10	30.3%	11	33.3%	9	27.3%	3	9.1%	4.19
Overall importance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	7.3%	31	18.8%	72	43.6%	50	30.3%	5.01

Note. 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*).

- Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization.
- Behaves in a way that shows she/he cares about the team members.
- Communicates in a clear, meaningful way.
- Encourages team members to share leadership when performing tasks.

On the submitted electronic questionnaires, 92.7% marked this domain as *important* to *critically important*; 18.8% indicated that it was *important*, 43.6% stated that it was *very important*, and 30.3% marked it as *critically important*. The behavior that stands out on top of others in this domain was "creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization" with a mean value of 5.59 out of 6.00. The only other behavior that scored an average above a value of 5.00 was "continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose" (5.44). The other remaining behaviors had mean values between 4.19 and 4.89.

Wisdom

Unlike the other domains, the meaning-making domain of wisdom had 10 listed behaviors on the electronic questionnaire. The decision to have more behaviors listed was due to the complexity of the domain. When looking at all of the outlined behaviors, 92.5% of the participants described its overall importance as *important* to *critically important*; 29.1% stated that it was *important* while 47% marked it as *very important*, and 16.4% indicated that it was *critically important*. Three behaviors stood out as having means greater than 5.00 out of 6.00. These include the following:

- When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations, 5.04.

- Demonstrates compassion toward team members, 5.11.
- Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization, 5.41.

The remaining seven behaviors all had mean values between 4.04 and 4.85. Table 13 displays a comprehensive view of the data collected through online participant submissions.

Inspiration

There were five behaviors listed on the questionnaire correlating with this domain. They included the following:

- Works with team members in a way that generates enthusiasm within teams.
- Recognizes achievements of teams and team members.
- Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization's leading edge.
- Engages in activities that build confidence among team members.
- Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving.

The total mean of this domain was 4.59 out of 6.00. This fell between the descriptors of *important* and *very important*. Of the total responses, 85.5% noted this domain as being *important* to *critically important*; 27.3% stated that it was *important*, 47.9% responded that it was *very important*, and 10.3% indicated that it was *critically important*. When contrasted with the other domains, this domain did not present any behaviors gaining a mean value over 5.00. Table 14 presents the data results for the meaning-making domain inspiration.

Table 13

Electronic Questionnaire Results for the Meaning-Making Domain of Wisdom

Meaning-making domain: Wisdom	Not important		Marginally important		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Critically important		Total mean
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	21.2%	16	48.5%	10	30.3%	5.04
Elevates the quality of decision making by discussing similarities of past situations with team members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	16	48.5%	13	39.4%	3	9.1%	4.56
Demonstrates compassion toward team members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	18.2%	19	57.6%	8	24.2%	5.11
Behavior reflects an understanding of life's complexities.	2	6.1%	2	6.1%	5	15.2%	9	27.3%	14	42.4%	1	3.0%	4.04
Integrates personal values with organizational values when interacting with team members.	1	3.0%	1	3.0%	4	12.1%	12	36.4%	13	39.4%	2	6.1%	4.30
Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	9.1%	14	42.4%	16	48.5%	5.41

(table continues)

Table 13 (*continued*)

Meaning-making domain: Wisdom	Not important		Marginally important		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Critically important		Total mean
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Takes action by doing the "right thing" in a variety of organizational settings.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	9.1%	13	39.4%	15	45.5%	2	6.1%	4.52
Displays expertise when working in a variety of situations within the organization.	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	3	9.1%	11	33.3%	13	39.4%	5	15.2%	4.59
Considers past experiences when responding to complex situations within the organization.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	27.3%	21	63.6%	3	9.1%	4.85
Shows concern for others.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	10	30.3%	17	51.5%	4	12.1%	4.74
Overall importance	3	0.9%	4	1.2%	18	5.5%	96	29.1%	155	47.0%	54	16.4%	4.72

Note. 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*).

Table 14

Electronic Questionnaire Results for the Meaning-Making Domain of Inspiration

Meaning-making domain: Inspiration	Not important		Marginally important		Somewhat important		Important		Very important		Critically important		Total mean
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Works with team members in a way that generates enthusiasm within teams.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	10	30.3%	18	54.5%	4	12.1%	4.78
Recognizes achievements of teams and team members.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	9.1%	10	30.3%	16	48.5%	4	12.1%	4.63
Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization's leading edge.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	18.2%	6	18.2%	19	57.6%	2	6.1%	4.59
Engages in activities that build confidence among team members.	0	0.0%	1	3.0%	5	15.2%	7	21.2%	16	48.5%	4	12.1%	4.63
Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving.	0	0.0%	2	6.1%	6	18.2%	12	36.4%	10	30.3%	3	9.1%	4.30
Overall importance	0	0.0%	3	1.8%	21	12.7%	45	27.3%	79	47.9%	17	10.3%	4.59

Note. 1 (*not important*), 2 (*marginally important*), 3 (*somewhat important*), 4 (*important*), 5 (*very important*), and 6 (*critically important*).

Major Findings Related to the Five Meaning-Making Domains

This study's major findings reflect each meaning-making domain (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration). The researcher established that common themes emerging within the qualitative data with 20 or more references would be considered a major finding. The researcher further established that quantitative data from follower survey responses with an overall mean of at least 5.00 out of 6.00 would be considered a major finding as well. A 5.00 represents *very important* and a 6.00 signifies *critically important.* Finally, the researcher compared the qualitative and quantitative results, which produced two additional major findings.

Exemplary female CEOs created personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through the following meaning-making behaviors:

Character (Qualitative)

1. CEOs displayed authenticity and transparency throughout their organizations, which represented 40.3% of the total responses in the character meaning-making domain.
2. CEOs demonstrated honesty, ethics, and integrity within their organizations, which represented 31.2% of the total responses in the character meaning-making domain.

Vision (Qualitative)

3. CEOs spent dedicated time focused on strategic planning for their organizations, which represented 38.5% of the total responses in the vision meaning-making domain.
4. CEOs provided purpose and clarity in work, which represents 34.6% of the total responses in the vision meaning-making domain.

Relationships (Qualitative)

5. CEOs took a personal and professional interest in others in and outside of their organizations, which represented 36.4% of the total responses in the relationships meaning-making domain.
6. CEOs provided structured and unstructured activities for their followers, which represented 29.0% of the total responses in the relationships meaning-making domain.
7. CEOs promoted trust and respect in their organizations, which represents 23.4% of the total responses in the relationships meaning-making domain.

Wisdom (Qualitative)

8. CEOs accessed, reflected on, and learned from prior experiences, which represents 46.2% of the total responses in the wisdom meaning-making domain.

Inspiration (Qualitative)

9. CEOs exhibited admirable qualities, which represents 38.6% of the total responses in the inspiration meaning-making domain.

Character (Quantitative)

10. Followers perceived character as *very important* to *critically* through the following leadership behaviors listed on the survey (overall mean of 5.14):
    - Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others.
    - Actively listens when communicating with others.
    - Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted.

Relationships (Quantitative)

11. Followers perceived relationships as *very important* to *critically important* through the following leadership behaviors outlined in the survey (overall mean of 5.01):

- Continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose.
- Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization.

Meaning-Making Domains in Concert (Qualitative/Quantitative Comparison)

12. CEOs provided the highest number of qualitative references for the meaning-making domain of relationships; however, when asked which domain was most essential, both character and vision were discussed most frequently. Follower quantitative results also found the character domain to be most important (98.2% of followers stated that behaviors within the character domain were *important* to *critically important*). The relationships domain followed the character domain with 92.7% of followers stating that this domain was *important* to *critically important*.
13. CEOs' responses provided major qualitative findings from each of the five meaning-making domains. Similarly, follower perceptions from quantitative data also displayed an importance for leaders to operate in each of the five meaning-making domains (85.5% of followers reported that behaviors within each of the meaning-making domains were *important* to *critically important*).

Summary

Throughout this fourth chapter, qualitative and quantitative data were presented to fulfill the purpose of this study as well as answer to the study's two research questions. Qualitative data were based on interviews conducted with exemplary female CEOs. These data were coded, cross-checked, and synthesized in order for the researcher to present 21 common themes spanning over the five meaning-making domains.

Quantitative data were collected via electronic questionnaires submitted by the exemplary female CEOs' followers. This information was collected in order to triangulate the overall data for this study. Finally, this chapter closed with the 13 major findings related to the meaning-making domains. These major findings, as well as conclusions, implications, and recommendations, are further explored in the next and final chapter, Chapter V.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings, conclusions, and recommendations are delivered in this study's final chapter. A presentation of the study's major findings, as well as its unexpected findings, begin this chapter's discussion. Additionally, the researcher provides an overview of her conclusions gathered through the research. Implications for actions provide actual steps others can take as a result of the study's conclusions. Implications for action and recommendations for further research are outlined within this chapter as well. These recommendations indicate how future studies may play a role in expanding on this study offering a deeper understanding of the topic. This chapter closes with the researcher's concluding remarks and reflections.

Methodology Review

As a review, this study had both primary and secondary research questions.

1. What are the behaviors that exemplary female chief executive officers use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?
2. To what degree do followers perceive the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning?

An exploratory mixed-methods case study design was applied to answer these questions. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews of four female chief executive officers (CEOs) who were considered exemplary in creating personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded with the leaders' permission. The responses were then transcribed, entered

into NVIVO, cross-referenced, and analyzed to look for common themes. Following the leaders' interviews, 12 of their followers were asked to provide feedback through an online questionnaire in order to measure the degree to which they rated the importance of outlined meaning-making behaviors. Followers submitted the 30-question questionnaire anonymously. The goal of this mixed-methods design was to triangulate the data while providing validity and reliability to the study (Wargo, 2013).

The population for this study was CEOs of private California businesses. The target population included female CEOs in private Southern California businesses with 20 or more employees and the sample was made up of four female CEOs. All four participants met the criteria established by the thematic research team, defining them as exemplary leaders: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers; (b) evidence of leading a successful organization; (c) have a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession. (d) have published, or presented at conferences or association meetings: articles, papers, or other written materials; (e) peer recognition; and (f) membership in professional associations in their field.

Major Findings

The researcher identified major findings through the selection of common themes referenced by exemplary female CEOs 20 or more times in the qualitative data. All domains were represented. Three of the major findings referred to character, two referred to vision, four referred to relationships, one referred to wisdom, one referred to inspiration, and two referred to the meaning-making domains in concert.

Exemplary female CEOs created personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through the following meaning-making behaviors:

Character (Qualitative)

1. CEOs displayed authenticity and transparency throughout their organizations, which represented 40.3% of the total responses in the character meaning-making domain.
2. CEOs demonstrated honesty, ethics, and integrity within their organizations, which represented 31.2% of the total responses in the character meaning-making domain.

Vision (Qualitative)

3. CEOs spent dedicated time focused on strategic planning for their organizations, which represented 38.5% of the total responses in the vision meaning-making domain.
4. CEOs provided purpose and clarity in work, which represents 34.6% of the total responses in the vision meaning-making domain.

Relationships (Qualitative)

5. CEOs took a personal and professional interest in others in and outside of their organizations, which represented 36.4% of the total responses in the relationships meaning-making domain.
6. CEOs provided structured and unstructured activities for their followers, which represented 29.0% of the total responses in the relationships meaning-making domain.
7. CEOs promoted trust and respect in their organizations, which represents 23.4% of the total responses in the relationships meaning-making domain.

Wisdom (Qualitative)

8. CEOs accessed, reflected on, and learned from prior experiences, which represents 46.2% of the total responses in the wisdom meaning-making domain.

Inspiration (Qualitative)

9. CEOs exhibited admirable qualities, which represents 38.6% of the total responses in the inspiration meaning-making domain.

The degree to which followers perceived meaning-making behaviors as important was captured with the study's quantitative data. Two meaning-making domains produced a 5.00 out of 6.00 overall mean or higher: character and relationships. The domain of character had three behaviors on the survey that had individual mean scores over 5.00; the relationships domain had two. Following are the major findings from the quantitative data as well as the most significant behaviors outlined:

Character (Quantitative)

10. Followers perceived character as *very important* to *critically* through the following leadership behaviors listed on the survey (overall mean of 5.14):
    - Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others.
    - Actively listens when communicating with others.
    - Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted.

Relationships (Quantitative)

11. Followers perceived relationships as *very important* to *critically important* through the following leadership behaviors outlined in the survey (overall mean of 5.01):
    - Continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose.
    - Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization.

As a final point, the researcher compared the qualitative and quantitative results which produced two additional major findings.

Meaning-Making Domains in Concert (Qualitative/Quantitative Comparison)

12. CEOs provided the highest number of qualitative references for the meaning-making domain of relationships; however, when asked which domain was most essential, both character and vision were discussed most frequently. Follower quantitative results also found the character domain to be most important (98.2% of followers stated that behaviors within the character domain were *important* to *critically important*). The relationships domain followed the character domain with 92.7% of followers stating that this domain was *important* to *critically important*.
13. CEOs' responses provided major qualitative findings from each of the five meaning-making domains. Similarly, follower perceptions from quantitative data also displayed an importance for leaders to operate in each of the five meaning-making domains (85.5% of followers reported that behaviors within each of the meaning-making domains were *important* to *critically important*).

It is important to note the interdependence expressed by the exemplary female CEOs of meaning-making behaviors during their interviews, as well as the frequency of occurrences applied to each meaning-making domain. As mentioned previously, exemplary female CEOs highlighted both character and vision most as being absolutely essential, but in many ways acknowledged the need for all of the domains to work in harmony in order to achieve organizational goals. An example of this is the crossover observed with displaying authenticity in the character meaning-making domain. It was also highlighted in the domains of relationships and inspiration. There were several

situations that demonstrated this cross-connectedness throughout the investigation, which is an enlightening element of the study's findings. Additionally, the quantitative data results gathered by perceptions of the exemplary CEOs' followers support the assertion that all five meaning-making domains were important to some degree. Exemplary leaders and followers alike produced data showing a higher degree of importance placed on the domains of character and relationships. Both data samples showed the lowest degree of importance placed on the domain of inspiration. These observations validate the framework proposed by Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016) that while each domain has merit, it is the interaction of the domains that support the making of meaning in organizations.

Unexpected Findings

There were two unexpected findings the researcher made note of during this investigation. The first is associated with the recurring theme of displaying authenticity and transparency. Examples associated with these behaviors seemed to weave their way through each one of the meaning-making domains while exemplary female CEOs were interviewed. It was surprising for the researcher to report on the level of authenticity and transparency throughout the exemplary leaders' organizations when it came to profits and losses, salary sharing, admitting to simply "not having an answer," being straightforward while taking a personal/professional interest in others, and the peace of being the "same person" no matter the setting. The four exemplary CEOs interviewed were humble and very candid as they *authentically* and *transparently* shared their wealth of knowledge and backgrounds. They were true examples of what they expressed as important in their interviews.

The second unexpected finding revolved around the meaning making variable of *inspiration*. It was interesting for the researcher to interview four exemplary female leaders with such distinct personalities and differing takes on this domain. In terms of importance, the meaning-making domain of inspiration always came in at the bottom, be it the responses of the interview participants or the follower questionnaire. From what the researcher gathered, it did not always appear that the leaders saw themselves as inspirational, especially by a preconceived perception of inspiration. In fact, their answers supported that they were indeed inspirational based on the operational definition of this study. This was based on the behaviors divulged to the researcher during their interviews. The operational definition was that "inspiration is the heartfelt passion and energy that leaders exude through possibility-thinking, enthusiasm, encouragement, and hope to create relevant, meaningful connections that empower." All four female exemplary CEOs gave responses indicating they displayed behaviors consistent with this definition.

Conclusions

The findings of this study helped to form the six conclusions on how female CEOs create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. This section explores all six of the study's conclusions with supporting evidence for each listed.

Conclusion 1

It was concluded that CEOs who wish to create meaning for themselves and their organization must make authentic decisions based on a strong moral compass (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; B. George and Sims, 2007; Goleman, 1995). As B. George and Sims

(2007) noted, these "authentic leaders are genuine people who are true to themselves and to what they believe. Rather than letting the expectations of others guide them, they are prepared to be their own person and go their own way" (p. 205).

The following evidence supports this first conclusion:

1. Exemplary female CEOs produced responses demonstrating behaviors consistent with the character meaning-making domain, such as displaying authenticity through ethical decision making and organizational practices.
2. Exemplary female CEOs' followers reported the character domain to be the most important of all of the meaning-making domains with an overall mean of 5.14 of 6.00.

Conclusion 2

It was concluded that CEOs who were interested in galvanizing others to action around a proposed vision should invest in planning sessions tailored around an envisioned future for their organizations. Kouzes and Posner (2012) and Peterson (2016) mentioned this form of forward thinking as visionary and a way to truly impact the systems and culture of the entire organization. The organizational vision becomes an action plan backed by strategy. With intentional strategy sessions, leaders become focused on the possibilities of the future, rather than the problems of today (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The following evidence supports this second conclusion:

1. Exemplary female CEOs conducted strategic planning sessions that helped in shaping the vision of their organizations.
2. Exemplary female CEOs recruited organizational team members that would uphold the company values to participate in the strategic planning sessions.

3. Exemplary female CEOs' followers (92%) indicated that the meaning-making domain of vision was *important* to *critically important* in online quantitative results.

Conclusion 3

It was concluded that CEOs who have a desire to create trusting, respectful, and authentic relationships with individuals in and outside of their organization should take a personal and professional interest in others, especially through providing both structured and unstructured activities for followers. Relationship building may provide more meaning through the transparency of divulged personal thoughts, feelings, and aspirations in these situations (Crowley, 2011; B. George & Sims, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Authentic interactions additionally help in connecting meaningfully with others through trust building (Marrow, 2015). These meaningful connections can inspire followers to great levels of achievement (Crowley, 2011).

The following evidence supports this third conclusion:

1. Exemplary female CEOs gave responses of the behaviors consistent with building authentic relationships throughout the organization, specifically by promoting cultures of coaching, managing by walking around (MBWA), and taking the time to ask followers questions about their personal and professional interests.
2. Exemplary female CEOs provided examples of how they offered structured and unstructured activities in order to focus on building relationships with individuals in- and outside of the organization. These activities included weekly/monthly/quarterly meetings, town hall meetings, strategy sessions, off-site planning sessions, summer family barbeques, and holiday parties.
3. Exemplary female CEOs' followers reported the relationships domain to be the

second most important of all of the meaning-making domains with an overall mean of 5.01 of 6.00.

Conclusion 4

It was concluded that CEOs who wish to tap deeper into their inner wisdom should set aside time for reflection and introspection. B. George and Sims (2007) referred to this as part of a process in which leaders can increase their self-awareness. Quoting Randy Komisar, former CEO of LucasArts, B. George and Sims (2007) included that "the ability to face reality and acknowledge that you can fail and still feel good about yourself is an important turning point in your self-awareness" (p. 80). The following evidence supports this fourth conclusion:

1. Exemplary female CEOs shared many stories of their "lessons learned"; they were transparent about their setbacks, but optimistic about their growth from those experiences.
2. Exemplary female CEOs stated they took time to reflect on personal and organizational progress; many stated they had a personal/professional coach who often probed them into higher level thinking and reflection.
3. Exemplary female CEOs' followers (92.5%) indicated that the meaning-making domain of wisdom was *important* to *critically important* in online quantitative results.

Conclusion 5

It was concluded that CEOs who wish to inspire followers and gain their admiration and respect, must take time to develop themselves personally and/or professionally, then share their stories or passions with their followers. This form of inspiration must be heartfelt and sincere while encouraging positive emotions and

igniting the passion to unlock human potential (Crowley, 2011; Gallo, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mautz, 2015). When individuals unlock their human potential and become more self-actualized, they have the ability to find a greater sense of meaning in their work and overall sense of satisfaction (Kaufman, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The following evidence supports this fifth conclusion:

1. One exemplary female CEO was admired by her staff for her commitment to the community and education; she also has a doctorate from a prestigious Southern California university.
2. One exemplary female CEO was touted as inspiring for writing a weekly online/published blog that gets sent out to hundreds all over the United States.
3. One exemplary female CEO is an ordained minister; she has had the opportunity to minister to many within her company.

Conclusion 6

It was concluded that CEOs who want to create significantly more meaning, both personally and professionally, for themselves and their followers need to implement a combination of behaviors stemming from all five of the meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration). Larick and Petersen (2015) proposed that leaders displaying behaviors in the domains of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration have the integral skills to create personal and organizational meaning. The following evidence supports this sixth conclusion:

1. All four exemplary female CEOs were able to produce responses demonstrating behaviors they exhibited from each of the five meaning-making domains.

2. All four exemplary female CEOs made mention of a combination or relationship of the domains they utilized at one time and how much overlapping existed among the domains.

Implications for Action

Implication for Action 1: Character

Training for CEOs and aspiring CEOs should have a strong focus on ethics and character development. The five dimensions of authentic leadership can be used as a platform by professionals or students in this area of study. The five dimensions of authentic leadership were developed by B. George and Sims (2007): (a) pursuing purpose with passion, (b) practicing solid values, (c) leading with heart, (d) establishing connected relationships, and (e) demonstrating self-discipline. These topics are also available for self-study as well. Mentors, coaches, and consultants of aspiring CEOs would also benefit from this training. Additionally, ethics training should be provided to all employees throughout organizations as a commitment to fair and ethical business practices. Upon attending this training, CEOs and aspiring CEOs should also create a personal code of ethics by which they will live.

Implication for Action 2: Vision

CEOs should make planning sessions focusing on vision work a priority in their organizations, carving time out of the year to focus on developing a strategic action plan aligned with the vision of the organization and trends in the marketplace. If CEOs are not confident in providing these kinds of sessions, especially in the beginning, there are many professional organizations, consultants, and coaches who are dedicated to this work.

Implication for Action 3: Relationships

CEOs and aspiring CEOs should commit to making relationships a priority. This is in the way work is designed with teams and projects, structured meetings and activities, or casual unstructured gatherings. This will give CEOs and aspiring CEOs the opportunity to make authentic connections with individuals both in and outside the organization. This will also allow for more storytelling to occur and the opportunity for the leader to reveal more about him/herself increasing trust in relationships across the organization.

Implication for Action 4: Wisdom

CEOs and aspiring CEOs should participate in training or self-study to improve their overall emotional intelligence (EQ). All four areas of EQ (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) will help leaders to become more reflective and less reactive, especially strengthening the affective domain of wisdom. Businesses and professional organizations should consider building EQ into their training programs and universities should offer EQ development in their leadership degree or certificate programs.

Implication for Action 5: Inspiration

CEOs and aspiring CEOs should make time to invest in personal and/or professional development. This promotes work-life harmony and provides inspiration to others in the organization as the CEO leads by example and promotes individuals' overall growth and development as simply part of its culture.

Implication for Action 6: Meaning-Making Domains in Concert

Mentors, coaches, and consultants of CEOs should commit to making the development of the five meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration) a priority training or topic for CEOs and aspiring CEOs. This will increase overall meaning making and contribute in large part to increased employee performance and engagement creating a competitive advantage for the organization.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are a variety of ways that researchers may use this study as a springboard for future research around meaning-making leadership or the five meaning-making domains (character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration). The following are what the researcher recommends for future areas of study:

1. This study focused on exemplary female CEOs from private businesses with 20 employees or more in California. Further research could replicate this study, but with a different population, perhaps public companies that have over 100 employees where there may be more expected obstacles in creating meaning.
2. This research used exemplary female CEOs as participants. A similar study using exemplary male private business CEOs may provide unique results related to gender-based responses.
3. This study was conducted in California. Various locations in the country or perhaps other countries should be used to conduct future studies, giving a unique perspective on how those leaders in different geographical regions create personal and organizational meaning.

4. This study's design was a mixed-methods case study, employing interviews for exemplary leaders and an online questionnaire for their followers. Additional research could utilize a pure qualitative design approach to further the depth of the follower responses while impacting the overall depth of the study.
5. This study produced 21 common themes from exemplary female CEOs responses. Studies should be conducted to further explore the emerging themes and give a better and more in-depth understanding of particular strategies leaders commonly use.
6. This study further added to the very limited research available on meaning-making leadership. Future quantitative studies should be conducted to add to the body of knowledge on this particular type of leadership.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

This last section of this final chapter closes with my final remarks and reflections on the research process. *Exemplary Leadership: A Mixed-Methods Case Study Discovering How Female Chief Executive Officers Create Meaning* changed my life in every way. After the overwhelming amount of time and dedication to this project, I have a newly gained respect for anyone who embarks on and completes the dissertation process. I have incredible admiration for the team of professors who worked day after day to bring light to a topic that was so near and dear to them. I have a newfound esteem for the remarkable female CEOs who lead companies across the world. It was enlightening and so inspiring to spend time with four incredibly humble and authentic leaders who went out of their way to give back by sharing their stories. All four leaders were selfless, transparent, and true exemplars in the business world. The entire process from start to finish was such a growth experience, one I will always treasure.

I considered it a great honor to be part of a thematic group of researchers embarking together, with our fearless leaders, into uncharted leadership territory. Meaning-making leadership is in its early stages of development and has very few individuals blazing the trail. With the framework of meaning-making trailblazers Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016), I am hopeful that the 12 thematic research studies designed to examine the five meaning-making domains shed light on the topic and in the end help leaders to get a step closer to creating personal and organizational meaning for all. We all desire meaning in what we do—whether it is at work or in our personal life—it is what engages us and emotionally connects us to one another. This body of work was a labor of love that challenged me to the core and engaged me beyond my imagination. This investigation brought me tremendous meaning and inspired me to continue the quest for meaning as I lead at home, at work, and in my community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Stephanie Herrera**
Date: Mon, Jan 16, 2017 at 10:31 PM
Subject: Follow-up
To: Participant A

Dr. Participant A,

I cannot express my gratitude for your willingness to reach out to your colleagues. These women look amazing**!** This means the world to me and I am greatly indebted to you...thank you, thank you**!**

Just an update...I'm transcribing the interview myself, so I'm about half way done.

If you'll approve, I'd like to have the following message sent out to your employees:

...

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is Stephanie Herrera and I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I'm part of a team conducting research to determine what behaviors are used by exemplary leaders to create effective organizations. What is it they do to create positive work environments, healthy cultures, and bring meaning to their organizations?

We are asking that you go to the following link to select descriptors that come closet to your feelings about the importance of leadership behaviors in developing meaning in your organization: ***surveymonkey.com/r/BrandDiss*** *. Prior to submitting your responses, you will be asked for your consent and that you enter in a researcher's code. Specifically, the survey states, "Please enter the code provided to you by the researcher". My code is* ***SH16****.*

Link - ***surveymonkey.com/r/BrandDiss***
Code - ***SH16***

I thank you in advance for your participation and look forward to receiving your submissions.

Have a wonderful week,

Stephanie

Stephanie A. Herrera
Brandman University
Doctoral Candidate
619-847-1050

APPENDIX B

Field Test

Thematic Interview Protocol Field Test Draft

"My name is _____ and I *(brief description of what you do)*. I'm a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I'm a part of a team conducting research to determine what behaviors are used by exemplary leaders to create effective organizations. What is it that you do to create a positive work environment, a healthy culture, and to bring meaning to your organization?

Our team is conducting approximately 36 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you provide, along with the information provided by others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of the thoughts and strategies that exemplary leaders use to create effective organizations and will add to the body of research currently available. We are also inquiring from a sample of your management level team using a survey instrument to obtain their impressions as well.

Incidentally, even though it appears a bit awkward, I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating exemplary leaders will be conducted in the most similar manner possible.

Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)

I would like to remind you any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

You received the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights in an email and responded with your approval to participate in the interview. Before we start, do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started, and thanks so much for your time.

1. "Here are five leadership behaviors that research suggests are necessary in an exemplary leader. Looking at these, would you agree that these are all important?" *(display on a 3 x 5 card). Give the card to the leader so that it can be referred to at any time.*

VISION: The leader exhibits foresight with a compelling outlook of the future.

RELATIONSHIPS: The leader communicates a common purpose through listening, respect, trust, and acknowledgement of one another.

CHARACTER: The leader displays a moral compass of ethics and integrity while being reliable, transparent, and authentic.

INSPIRATION: The leader empowers followers by exuding enthusiasm, encouragement, and hope.

WISDOM: The leader accurately interprets and responds to complex, ambiguous, and often unclear situations

If "Yes" "Realizing that they are all important, do any jump out as being absolutely essential?" V R C I W *If any selected*: "What is about those you selected that would place them a bit above the others?"	If "No"... "not really"... or they hedge, ask: "Which of them do you believe do not fit into the group of important behaviors?" V R C I W "Why do you think it/they do not belong in this group of important behaviors?"

2. *The first behavior on the list is Vision (pointing to Vision on the card). Based upon the success of your leadership, it is clear that you have established a vision for your organization. Are there things that you recall having done to develop vision for yourself and your organization?"*

    - "Are there some that seemed to work better than others?"
    - "Why do you think they (it) worked as well as they (it) did?"
    - "Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative, from the use of that particular strategy?"
    - "How do you ensure that your team buys into your vision?"

3. *"The second item on the card is Establishing Relationships. This involves being a good listener and establishing trust among your team members. Are there specific things you have done to develop relationships among the members of your organization?"*

    - "Are there some that seemed to work better than others?"
    - "Why do you think they (it) worked as well as they (it) did?"
    - "Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative, from the use of that particular strategy?"

4. *"If you take a look at the card, one of the five important leadership behaviors is character and leading with a moral compass. This includes integrity…reliability…authenticity.* "What kinds of things do you do to demonstrate your character as the leader of your organization?"

    - *"What behaviors do you look for in your peers or employees that demonstrate their character?*
    - "How do you communicate the importance of these behaviors to your staff members?"
    - "Are there challenges that you face as you deal with these issues on a daily basis?"
    - "Are there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative, from the use of a particular strategy?"

5. *"As stated on the card, an inspirational leader empowers staff by exuding enthusiasm, encouragement, and hope. Tell me about some of the things you do to inspire your staff to be all they can be."*

    - "Are there some things that seemed to work better than others?"
    - "Why do you think they (it) worked as well as they (it) did?"
    - "Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative, from the use of any particular strategy?"

6. *"The fifth item on the card is Wisdom. As the card states, responding effectively to unclear, complex issues is called for here. Can you describe a time when your organization faced a very complex or unclear situation?"*

    If yes:

    "What did you do or what strategies did you put in place to clarify the situation so that progress was possible?"

    If no:

    "If a situation like this did arise in the future, how do you think you would you go about clarifying the situation to put your staff's mind at ease and feel ready to go?"

    - "Are there some strategies that seemed to (or you think would) work better than others?"
    - "Why do you think they (it) worked (would work) well?"
    - "Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative, from the use of that particular strategy?"

7. *"Of all the things we have spoken about today – vision, relationships, character, inspiration and wisdom - are there absolute 'musts!' that you believe are **essential** behaviors for an exemplary leader to have?"*

   If yes: "What are those behaviors and why do you believe they are so critical?"

"Thank you very much for your time. If you like, when the results of our research are known, we will send you a copy of our findings."

GENERIC PROBES THAT CAN BE ADDED TO ANY QUESTION TO PRODUCE MORE CONVERSATION:

1. "Would you expand upon that a bit?"
2. "Do you have more to add?"
3. "What did you mean by …"
4. "Why do think that was the case?"
5. "Could you please tell me more about…."
6. "Can you give me an example of ...."
7. "How did you feel about that?"

Suggest you put these generic probes on a card so you can use them any time you need to encourage an interviewee to say more about a question you have asked.

APPENDIX C

Field-Test Participant Feedback Questions

Field Test Participant Feedback Questions

While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview ask your field test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation**. Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.

Before the brief post interview discussion, give the interviewee a copy of the interview protocol. If their answers imply that some kind of improvement is necessary, follow up for specificity.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked? If the interview indicates some uncertainty, be sure to find out where in the interview it occurred.

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview... (I'm pretty new at this)?

Remember, the key is to use common, conversational language and very user friendly approach. Put that EI to work😊

APPENDIX D

Draft Survey

Thematic Edited Purpose

Purpose

The purpose of this **mixed method case study** was to **identify and describe** the **behaviors** that **exemplary** (name your leader sectors e.g. University Presidents) use to create **personal and organizational meaning** for **themselves** and their **followers** through character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration.

In addition, it was the purpose of this study to **determine the degree of importance** to which **followers perceive the behaviors related to** character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Research Questions

1. What are the **behaviors** that exemplary (name your leader sectors e.g. University Presidents) use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration? Interview

2. **To what degree** do followers perceive the **behaviors** related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning? Survey

Survey of Leadership Behaviors That Contribute to Personal and Organizational Meaning

Introduction: The success of any organization may depend in large part on the quality of interactions among the leader and the team members and associates. The purpose of this inquiry is to seek your perceptions of the importance of leadership behaviors in five areas: ***vision*** *for the organization;* ***relationships*** *between the leader and team members;* ***character*** *of the leader;* ***inspiration*** *the leader provides;* ***wisdom*** *of the leader.*

Completing this survey will take approximately 10 minutes. Please choose to become a part of this important undertaking.

It is important to read the following consent information carefully and click the agree box to continue. The survey will not open until you agree.

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMATION ABOUT: The degree of importance regarding a leaders' behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.
RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Student Name, Highest Earned Degree [Doug DeVore, Ed.D.]

THE FOLLOWING WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY:
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Doug DeVore, Ed.D., a doctoral student from the School of Education at Brandman University. *The purpose of study is to* ***identify and describe*** *the* ***behaviors*** *that leaders use to create* ***personal and organizational meaning*** *for* ***themselves*** *and their* ***followers*** *through character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration.*
Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this electronic survey, you can withdraw at any time.
The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential. The survey questions will pertain to your perceptions.
Each participant will use a three-digit code for identification purposes. The researcher will keep the identifying codes safe-guarded in a locked file drawer to which the researcher will have sole access. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.
No information that identifies you will be released without your separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There

are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.
I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

If you have any questions about completing this survey or any aspects of this research, please contact Doug DeVore at *student email* or by phone at 925.548.7931; or Dr. your chair, Advisor, at *chair email*.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate.
If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.
The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

☐ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

☐ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey

LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Part 1 Directions: For purposes of this study and survey, meaning is defined as the result of leaders and followers coming together for the purpose of gathering information from experience and integrating it into a process which creates significance, value and identity within themselves and the organization.
Listed below are behaviors that research suggest that leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning. Using the following descriptions, which one comes the closest to your feelings about the importance of the leadership behavior in developing meaning in your organization.

1 = Not important in our organization; it's absence would have no effect upon the leader's overall effectiveness nor our organization's culture.

2 = Marginally important to have but not necessary in our organization; its absence would have little effect upon the leader's effectiveness or the cultural health of our organization.

3 = Somewhat important for a leader in our organization; this is a leadership behavior that would have a positive effect upon how we function and would contribute in some positive ways to our organizational culture.

4 = Important for a leader in our organization; this is a leadership behavior that is good for the organization and its absence in the leader would be a definite deterrent in the organization's overall effectiveness as well as culture.

5 = Very important for a leader in our organization; would contribute significantly to our overall effectiveness and enhance our organizational culture in some very positive ways.

6 = Critically important in our organization; an absolute must; its absence would severely inhibit the leader's effectiveness and the overall health of our organizational culture.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose. (relationships)						
2. Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization. (relationships)						
3. Behaves in a way that shows she/he cares about the team members. (relationships)						
4. Communicates in a clear, meaningful way. (relationships)						
5. Encourages team members to share leadership when performing tasks. (relationships)						
6. Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others. (character)						
7. Actively listens when communicating with others. (character)						

8. Responds to challenging situations with optimism. (character)						
9. Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted. (character)						
10. Actions show concern for the well-being of others. (character)						
11. Works with team members in a way that generates enthusiasm within teams. (inspiration)						
12. Recognizes and honors achievements of teams and team members. (inspiration)						
13. Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization's leading edge. (inspiration)						
14. Engages in activities that build confidence among team members. (inspiration)						
15. Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving. (inspiration)						
16. Demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions. (vision)						
17. Communicates the organization's vision in a way in team members enthusiastically. (vision)						
18. Engages team members in creating a vision for the future. (vision)						
19. Behavior reflects organizational vision when making decisions. (vision)						
20. Promotes innovation that aligns with the organization's vision. (vision)						
21. Elevates the quality of decision making by discussing similarities of past situations with team members. (wisdom)						
22. Demonstrates compassion with team members. (wisdom)						
23. Behavior reflects an understanding of life's complexities. (wisdom)						
24. Integrates personal values with organizational values in decision making. (wisdom)						
25. Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization. (wisdom)						
26. Considers past experiences when responding to complex situations within the organization. (wisdom)						
27. Displays expertise when working in a variety of situations within the organization. (wisdom)						
28. Shows concern for others in a variety of organizational settings. (wisdom)						
29. When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations. (wisdom)						
30. Takes action by doing the "right thing" in a variety of organizational settings. (wisdom)						

Part 2 Directions: Please supply the following information. The information will be used only to assist in understanding the results of this inquiry.

1. Your gender: ◯ Female ◯ Male
2. Your age category: ◯ 20-30 ◯ 31-40 ◯ 41-50 ◯ 51-60 ◯ 61 or over
3. Your time with the organization: ◯ 0- 5 yrs. ◯ 6-10 yrs. ◯ 11-20 yrs. ◯ 21 years or over.
4. Your time with the current leader: ◯ 0-2 yrs. ◯ 3-5 yrs. ◯ 6-10 yrs. ◯ 11 yrs. Or over.

When Completed..... (directions for what to do)
Thank you for your time. It is very much appreciated

APPENDIX E

Survey

Thematic Edited Purpose

Purpose

The purpose of this **mixed method case study** was to **identify and describe** the **behaviors** that **exemplary** (name your leader sectors e.g. University Presidents) use to create **personal and organizational meaning** for **themselves** and their **followers** through character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration.

In addition, it was the purpose of this study to **determine the degree of importance** to which **followers perceive the behaviors related to** character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Research Questions

1. What are the **behaviors** that exemplary (name your leader sectors e.g. University Presidents) use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration? Interview

2. **To what degree** do followers perceive the **behaviors** related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning? Survey

Survey of Leadership Behaviors That Contribute to Personal and Organizational Meaning

Introduction: The success of any organization may depend in large part on the quality of interactions among the leader and the team members and associates. The purpose of this inquiry is to seek your perceptions of the importance of leadership behaviors in five areas: ***vision*** *for the organization;* ***relationships*** *between the leader and team members;* ***character*** *of the leader;* ***inspiration*** *the leader provides;* ***wisdom*** *of the leader.*

Completing this survey will take approximately 10 minutes. Please choose to become a part of this important undertaking.

It is important to read the following consent information carefully and click the agree box to continue. The survey will not open until you agree.

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RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Student Name, Highest Earned Degree [Doug DeVore, Ed.D.]

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Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this electronic survey, you can withdraw at any time.
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Each participant will use a three-digit code for identification purposes. The researcher will keep the identifying codes safe-guarded in a locked file drawer to which the researcher will have sole access. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.
No information that identifies you will be released without your separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, you will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.

I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher. I understand that I may refuse to participate in or I may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

If you have any questions about completing this survey or any aspects of this research, please contact Doug DeVore at *student email* or by phone at 925.548.7931; or Dr. your chair, Advisor, at *chair email*.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate.
If you do not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.
The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

☐ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

☐ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey

LEADERSHIP SURVEY

Part 1 Directions: For purposes of this study and survey, meaning is defined as the result of leaders and followers coming together for the purpose of gathering information from experience and integrating it into a process which creates significance, value and identity within themselves and the organization.
Listed below are behaviors that research suggest that leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning. Using the following descriptions, which one comes the closest to your feelings about the importance of the leadership behavior in developing meaning in your organization.

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3 = Somewhat important for a leader in our organization; this is a leadership behavior that would have a positive effect upon how we function and would contribute in some positive ways to our organizational culture.

4 = Important for a leader in our organization; this is a leadership behavior that is good for the organization and its absence in the leader would be a definite deterrent in the organization's overall effectiveness as well as culture.

5 = Very important for a leader in our organization; would contribute significantly to our overall effectiveness and enhance our organizational culture in some very positive ways.

6 = Critically important in our organization; an absolute must; its absence would severely inhibit the leader's effectiveness and the overall health of our organizational culture.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Continuously promotes our team's moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose. (relationships)						
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12. Recognizes and honors achievements of teams and team members. (inspiration)						
13. Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization's leading edge. (inspiration)						
14. Engages in activities that build confidence among team members. (inspiration)						
15. Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving. (inspiration)						
16. Demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions. (vision)						
17. Communicates the organization's vision in a way in team members enthusiastically. (vision)						
18. Engages team members in creating a vision for the future. (vision)						
19. Behavior reflects organizational vision when making decisions. (vision)						
20. Promotes innovation that aligns with the organization's vision. (vision)						
21. Elevates the quality of decision making by discussing similarities of past situations with team members. (wisdom)						
22. Demonstrates compassion with team members. (wisdom)						
23. Behavior reflects an understanding of life's complexities. (wisdom)						
24. Integrates personal values with organizational values in decision making. (wisdom)						
25. Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization. (wisdom)						
26. Considers past experiences when responding to complex situations within the organization. (wisdom)						
27. Displays expertise when working in a variety of situations within the organization. (wisdom)						
28. Shows concern for others in a variety of organizational settings. (wisdom)						
29. When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations. (wisdom)						
30. Takes action by doing the "right thing" in a variety of organizational settings. (wisdom)						

Part 2 Directions: Please supply the following information. The information will be used only to assist in understanding the results of this inquiry.

1. Your gender: ◯ Female ◯ Male

2. Your age category: ◯ 20-30 ◯ 31-40 ◯ 41-50 ◯ 51-60 ◯ 61 or over

3. Your time with the organization: ◯ 0- 5 yrs. ◯ 6-10 yrs. ◯ 11-20 yrs. ◯ 21 years or over.

4. Your time with the current leader: ◯ 0-2 yrs. ◯ 3-5 yrs. ◯ 6-10 yrs. ◯ 11 yrs. Or over.

When Completed……. (directions for what to do)
Thank you for your time. It is very much appreciated

APPENDIX F

Informational Letter

BRANDMAN University Chapman University System

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

INFORMATIONAL LETTER SAMPLE FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS

November 25, 2016

Dear *Study Participant*:

My name is Stephanie A. Herrera and I am currently the Vice Principal at SOAR High School. I am also a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am part of a team conducting research to determine what behaviors are used by exemplary leaders to create effective organizations. What is it that you do to create a positive work environment, a healthy culture, and to bring meaning to your organization?

Our team is conducting approximately 36 interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you provide, along with the information provided by others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of the thoughts and strategies that exemplary leaders use to create effective organizations and will add to the body of research currently available. We are also inquiring from a sample of your management level team using a survey instrument to obtain their impressions as well.

We are asking your assistance in the study by participating in an interview, then a subsequent survey for twelve of your followers. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be set up at a time convenient for you. If you agree to participate in the interview, and your followers in the survey, you may be assured that they will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview. All information will remain in locked files accessible only to the researchers. No agencies or entities will have access to the interview or the survey information. You will be free to stop the interview, or your followers from the survey, and withdraw from the study at any time. Further, you may be assured that the researchers are not in any way affiliated with any outside agencies. This is purely for research purpose in order to build on a body of literature.

My advisor, Dr. Patricia Clark White, is available in Brandman University's School of Education at 949-842-5041to answer any questions you may have regarding this research. Your participation would be greatly valued.

Sincerely,

Stephanie A. Herrera, M.Ed