Meaning-Centered Leadership: How Exemplary Technology Leaders Create Organizational Meaning

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Meaning-Centered Leadership: How Exemplary Technology Leaders
Create Organizational Meaning

A Dissertation by

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This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing wife Gail Jackson. Without her inspiration, this work would not have been conceived. Without her support, words would not have appeared on the page. Without her love and sacrifice, this work would not have been completed. She is my best day, my brightest accomplishment, and my highest aspiration.

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ABSTRACT
Meaning-Centered Leadership: How Exemplary Technology Leaders Create Organizational Meaning
by Ed Jackson

Purpose: The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. It was also the purpose of this research to identify how followers perceive that the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Methodology: This research looked at leadership through the lens of meaning making. Current leadership trends, which are driven by technological advancement and the need for constant innovation, require workplaces that foster meaning. This call for meaning-centered leadership is widely agreed upon and is often referred to as an urgent need. In order for American technology companies to compete in the global marketplace, retain and inspire followers, build and sustain their organizations, they must build organizations with high levels of trust that are purpose driven and willing to take risks. Through the identification and description of how exemplary technology leaders create organizational meaning for themselves and their followers, this research furthered the nascent research on the topic of meaning-centered leadership and its potential to impact the workplace through the creation of personal and organizational meaning.

Findings: The three exemplary technology leaders interviewed for this research described using behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and
inspiration to guide their organizations. Each leader identified vision as the most important of the five leadership elements; however, the leaders also described a complex interaction of all five of the elements. They described a clear linkage between vision and inspiration. On the other hand, the followers surveyed for this study identified all five leadership elements as impactful.

**Conclusions:** By combining the five leadership elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration, this study constructed a leadership framework for viewing how leaders and followers experience organizational meaning. The findings of this research support the need for technology leaders to behave in ways that actively communicate all five leadership elements to their followers.

**Recommendations:** Additional research should be conducted to further elucidate how leaders and followers experience the creation of organizational meaning through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.
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 university presidents create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. Exemplary leaders were selected by the team from various public, for-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. 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, chief executive officers of charter school organizations; Candice Flint, presidents or chief executive officers of nonprofits in Northern California; Frances E. Hansell, superintendents of K-12 schools in Northern California; Stephanie A. Herrera, female
chief executive officers of private-sector companies in Southern California; Sandra Hodge, chief executive officers of engineering technology organizations; Ed Jackson, exemplary technology leaders in Northern California; Robert J. Mancuso, chief marketing officers of automotive industries; Zachary Mercier, professional athletic coaches in NCAA Division I institutions; Sherri L. Prosser, chief executive officers of healthcare organizations in California; Jamel Thompson, K-12 superintendents in Southern California; and Rose Nicole Villanueva, police chiefs in California and Utah.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The need for meaning in life has been a human pursuit since the time of Aristotle. Aristotle opined that living well consisted of doing something, and that virtues are activated by lifelong activities (Aristotle, trans. 1937; Kraut, 2014). Psychologists have further described the search for meaning as the foremost motivation in life (Frankl, 2006). The current body of literature strongly indicates that there is a renewed interest in the role that meaning plays in the workplace. Meaningful work has been described as a fundamental human need and finding meaning in work is said to help people find meaning in life. It is against this backdrop that a call has sounded for leaders who are able to foster meaning (Chalofsky, 2010; Ingram, 2015; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich 2010; Yeoman, 2014).

The importance of leaders who create workplaces of meaning is underscored by a recent New York Times article, which explained that a worldwide Gallup poll found that nearly 90% of workers reported that they are not engaged with their work (Schwartz, 2015). Literature also underscores the finding that workers have reported high levels of disengagement (Blacksmith & Harter, 2011; Cowart, 2014; Nelson, 2015; Schwartz, 2015). Moreover, the disengaged worker is typically disconnected emotionally from his or her work (Goodman, 2015; Harter & Blacksmith, 2012; Schwartz, 2015). Surveys in the United States have found a 50% rate of worker dissatisfaction (Peters, 2015). The antidote to this disengagement and low performance is leaders who are able to create meaning and increase individual empowerment, while promoting organizational well-being (Varney, 2009).
According to Steenkamp and Basson (2013), a lack of meaning on the job can lead to self-esteem disconnects for the individual and for the organization. Work meaning has been shown to buffer the negative impact of stress and other depression-related symptoms (Ingram, 2015). Leadership that makes work meaningful can have a direct impact on the workplace (D. B. Smith, 2014; Varney, 2009; Ventegodt & Merrick, 2009). Varney (2009) stated that there is a direct linkage between leadership and the meaning-making process, while D. B. Smith (2014) described the important inputs that leaders have on the meaning-making process. Ventegodt and Merrick (2009) explained that quality of life is directly linked to the quality of working life and also pointed out that fellowship with management is one of the four conditions that determine the quality of working life.

Technology leaders must be cognizant of these quality-of-life issues in the workplace for themselves and their followers. Technology is a fast-paced, competitive, and ever-changing field, and leadership in this area is critically important. A recent chief information officer executive leadership summit in California described the rapid pace of change and demand for innovation, which exists in the states’ technology firms (HMG Strategy, 2014). Similarly, additional studies have reported that chief executive officers (Leaders) are struggling to keep up with the rapid pace of technology decision-making (Buyl, Boone, & Hendriks, 2014). And yet researchers have explained that despite this rapid pace, there is little research to describe how these leaders are responding to the demand (Weiss & Adams, 2011).
**Background**

**Meaning Making**

Although there is a renewed interest in the role of meaning making in the workplace, the search for meaning is not a new idea. Aristotle explained that the virtues were actualized by the lifelong activities that frame a life well lived (Kraut, 2014). In discussing happiness, Aristotle mentioned, “their chief good and excellence is thought to reside in their work” (Aristotle, trans. 1937, p. 76). However, meaning in life is more than a philosophical question. Psychologist Viktor Frankl (2006) described work as one of ways that meaning in life is discovered. Beyond philosophy and psychology is the political idea that meaningful work is a fundamental human right (Yeoman, 2014).

In the last decade, much has been written about the process of meaning making in the workplace. Meaning making has been linked to improved employee performance (Chalofsky, 2010; Varney, 2009), and improved health (Ingram, 2015). On the other hand, meaninglessness has been seen to decrease performance (Steenkamp & Basson, 2013) and impede health (Harter & Blacksmith, 2012; Steenkamp & Basson, 2013). Creating a meaningful workplace has been described as a construct that is still emerging in literature (Steenkamp & Basson, 2013). Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) stated that there is an urgent need for leaders who can foster meaning for their employees.

**The Role of Leadership**

The role of leadership in creating meaning is clearly stated by Mautz (2015), “As a leader your role in enabling and framing meaning is irrefutable” (p. 197). In fact, much has been written about leadership that relates to the construct of creating meaning. Current literature on leadership theories points toward the role of the leader and his or her
impact on the follower. It seems that the role of the leader and his or her character is significant to increasing the factors of authentic leadership (Harvath, 2013). Other leadership theories highlight the role of inspiring and connecting followers to a higher purpose.

In addition to authentic leadership, servant leadership also seeks to describe the impact of the leader. The preeminent author on servant leadership, Robert Greenleaf (2002), spoke on leadership and the idealism of the younger generation thusly, “They will insist on more determined efforts to provide significant and meaningful work to more people” (p. 85). A current author of servant leadership explained, “Servant leaders appear to greatly support and encourage follower yearnings for personal fulfillment in their workplace” (Zimmerer, 2013, p. 158). In servant leadership, engagement of the employees is seen as connected to the behaviors of leaders within the organization (Klein, 2014). A wisdom-based inquiry framework was proposed as a way for leaders to guide themselves and others to a higher purpose (Suarez, 2014). Rutsch (2015) explained that growth leadership uses growth stories that “become vehicles that engage” (p. 199). Transformational leadership is said to appeal to “higher causes than one’s own needs and self-interest” (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014, p. 4). Further literature on the romance of leadership theory suggests that insight is to be gained from understanding how followers envision the characteristics of their leaders (Arias, 2013).

As the romance of leadership theory points out, understanding the followers’ perspective offers insight. Both authentic leadership and followership theory stress the need to understand the follower in order to better understand leadership (Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2015; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). Uhl-Bien et al.
stated the belief that followership research can provide information to guide people’s understanding of the nature of leadership. According to Leroy et al. (2015), more research is needed to better understand how leadership and followership are influenced by organizational culture and climate. The literature also describes followers and followership as crucial to global growth, competitive advantage, and even survival (Carsten & Lapierre, 2014). Conyers (2013) spoke to global leadership as fostering global followership, and followership is described in terms of its ability to help individuals adopt “new ways of thinking and behaving congruently with the demands of new emerging technologies and customer needs” (Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2000, p. 49). The nature of authentic followership is to create a productive partnership between workers and leaders that will enhance the organization’s competitiveness, innovation, and growth (Carsten & Lapierre, 2014).

The Five Leadership Elements

The theoretical framework for the five elements of “meaning” explored in this research was first introduced by Dr. Keith Larick and Dr. Cindy Petersen in 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 Larick and Petersen (2015, 2016), coupled with their leadership experience as school 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 element 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 for followers. The 12 thematic studies are designed to explore Larick and Petersen’s theory to determine if exemplary leaders across a variety of professional fields have developed the leadership behaviors that fuse the five elements and actualized meaning in their organizations.

Character

Many leadership studies mention the impact of character on followers (Dennison, 2014; Hartnell, 2012; Mautz, 2015). Mautz (2015) suggested that adversity allows a leader to reveal his or her character; he added, “Through your conduct and communications, you help others find meaning in and at work” (p. 197). Hartnell (2012) described the learning that takes place vicariously through the observation of leaders’ behaviors. Character was described by Dennison (2014) as one of the traits that make the best leaders. Leavy (2015) found that leaders who demonstrate high character have been shown to generate assets at a level five times higher than leaders who are weaker in character; he described character as a trait that leaders can strengthen. As character
strengths are practiced and developed, life becomes more meaningful (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

**Vision**

The literature surrounding meaning making in the workplace overwhelmingly mentions the role of communicating a vision in the development of meaning. For example, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) wrote that vision is vital for successful change to take place within an organization. In *Make It Matter*, Mautz (2015) stated that communicating a vision can serve to strengthen community. The impact of a compelling vision well communicated is that it can inspire extraordinary achievement (Conyers, 2013), and inspire followers to adopt the vision (Webb, 2014). Still other authors suggest that having and communicating a vision effectively can play a role in the success of the group (Henderson, 2011; Lane-Schmitz, 2012). In the practice of leadership, a compelling vision clearly captures the “hearts and minds and inspires outstanding achievement” (Conyers, 2013, p. 9).

**Relationships**

Like vision, the importance of building relationships is repeated often in the literature on leadership and meaning making. In his 2010 book titled *Power*, Pfeffer spoke of relationship building as a means that allows a leader to get the resources he or she needs. Positive relationships have also been described as a path toward meaning making (Chalofsky, 2010; Fourie & Deacon, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Ventegodt and Merrick (2009) reasoned that to improve the quality of work life, a person has to improve the quality of or her relationships. In *Leadership on the Line*, Heifetz and Linsky (2002) noted that placing emphasis on relationships is “one of the distinguishing
qualities of successful people who lead in any field” (p. 75). Engaging the passions and hearts of a group is a process built through resonant relationships, a process McKee, Boyatzis, and Johnson (2008) said leads to sustaining relationships, cultures, and norms over time. Chalofsky (2010) illustrated the building of relationships as the process of meeting the self-actualization needs of others and helping them move to a higher connection. Sustaining and building relationships as a part of meaning making is more important than ever in industries that are fast paced and that demand constant change and innovation.

**Wisdom**

The role of wisdom in enhancing organizational growth has been well documented (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Najoli, 2012; Spano, 2013; Suarez, 2014). Dronnen-Schmidt found a positive correlation between scores of wisdom and leadership. Suarez claimed that a wise approach could benefit “certain leadership, management, and innovation and change skills” (p. 97). Najoli (2012) described leaders who employed a combination of wisdom traits, while engaging in altruistic behaviors. Spano (2013) explained that a commitment to do the right thing was an expression of the affective part of wisdom. In *Wisdom and Leadership*, Spano (2013) suggested that wise leaders understand themselves in relation to others. This idea is similar to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) described as the control over the conscious mind that leads to control over the quality of experience and can lead to meaning.

**Inspiration**

Similar to the impact of a leader’s wisdom on followers, recent studies on transformational leadership have shown that inspirational leadership can influence and
motivate followers beyond self-interest (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014). Inspirational leadership is a key to generating member cooperation (Kegan & Lahey, 2001), which can lead to teams drawing inspiration from the people doing the work (Denning, 2011). Inspiration comes in a number of forms; Seidman (2013) pointed out that inspirational leaders must “focus on a higher purpose. Purpose is enduring. It connects your actions to significance” (p. 38). The literature suggests that meaning making begins with the ability to communicate a compelling vision, which begins with engagement and inspiration (Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Varney, 2009).

**Technology Leaders**

Since 1957 with the launching of Sputnik, America’s investments in science and technology have been based on national security imperatives (Kay, 2013). In fact, change and innovation continue to be a pressing need in the field of technology (Cagan, 2014; Jo, Lee, Lee, & Hahn, 2015; HMG Strategy, 2014; Slimane, 2015). Consequently, if America is to maintain its role as a world leader, it needs technology leaders who are prepared to build collaborative teams (Cagan, 2014; Jo et al., 2015). Technology is a fast-evolving and exploratory field, which makes decision making uncertain (Buyl et al., 2014). Technology leaders need optimism, resiliency, and openness (Bennis, 2013), and they need to encourage work-life balance among their employees (Thomas, 2015). However, researchers have called for additional studies to better to understand the nature of technology leadership (Chen, Tang, Jin, Xie, & Li, 2014; Weiss & Adams, 2011). National security interests and competition in global marketplaces continue to drive the need for additional research in technology leadership. In the field of technology, there is a need for rapid innovation (Buyl et al., 2014; Jo et al., 2015; Slimane, 2015).
Technology leaders exist in a fast-paced and ever-changing field, and in order to survive, thrive and stay competitive, exemplary leadership is necessary. Technology impacts every facet of peoples’ lives; from travel to communication, and from banking to healthcare, technology and innovation drive today’s markets and trends. Creating a greater understanding of how leaders create meaning for themselves and others represents a key to innovation and organizational success for technology companies.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

The rapid pace of change and the demand for constant innovation places great pressure on companies that focus on the development of technology or provide technology related services. In this environment, technology executives must provide leadership that develops and sustains organizations that foster change and innovation in order to stay competitive (Slimane, 2015). Additionally, the rapid evolution of technology creates a challenging environment for technology leaders to constantly be developing the next best thing (Buyl et al., 2014; Jo et al., 2015). As such, technology leaders and their organizations face the constant challenge of understanding the quickly advancing and complex spread of information technologies and how to apply their understanding to business practices (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The demands of innovation require teams with expertise that are passionate, committed, inspired, and collaborative (Cagan, 2014). The collaboration of technology organizations is further challenged by the impact of the global marketplace.

The global marketplace requires technology leaders to employ strategic thought and actions. They must also motivate people to take risks, increase diversity in order to enhance creativity, and create psychologically safe places to work (Bouhali, Mekdad,
In order to do this, technology leaders must understand their workforce and communicate a high level of technological expertise (McCafferty, 2014). They must also be able to inspire their organization on the product vision (Cagan, 2014). A further challenge for technology leaders is the need to change continually and develop genuine buy-in from followers (Gehani, 2013).

Despite the many theories of leadership, little research exists to explain how technology leaders create meaning for their followers. Existing theories examine individual elements of leadership. However, there is limited research on the impact of the combined leadership elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. The demand for technology leaders to create meaningful workplaces is vitally important. In order for the American economy to continue to keep pace in the global marketplace, the technology industry must be able to meet the challenges of innovation and change (Cristina, 2013). Technology leaders must be able to create new knowledge, promote innovation, and serve as inspirational role models who help followers find meaning (Caridi-Zahavi, Carmeli, & Arazy, 2016). Research into the ways in which technology leaders have attempted to accomplish those tasks is limited. Additional research into how technology leaders create meaning will lead to a better understanding of the leadership required to sustain technological growth and competitiveness in the global marketplace.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships,
wisdom, and inspiration. An additional purpose of this study was 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 technology leaders 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**

It has been argued that meaningful work is a fundamental human need (Yeoman, 2014). Furthermore, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) posited that a lack of meaning is the root cause for many of the problems that businesses are faced with. The book *Make It Matter* describes a meaning-making leader as someone who creates a culture of “caring, authenticity, and teamwork” (Mautz, 2015, p. 138). The meaning-making process is often described as being centered on the leader’s constant attention to important inputs (D. B. Smith, 2014). Despite the recent resurgence in the need for meaning in the workplace, and leaders who create that meaning, little research exists to guide leaders’ efforts. This research will provide leaders with much needed information in creating meaning in their organizations.
The leadership traits of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration have been looked at as individual components of leadership in a variety of research studies (Arias, 2013; Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Hartnell, 2012; Lane-Schmitz, 2012; Spano, 2013; Suarez, 2014). However, there is little research that describes how exemplary leaders and their followers create personal and organizational meaning using all five of these leadership elements together. In fact, researchers have cited a need for studies that examine the perception of leaders and followers with regard to how they create meaning (Demirtas, Hannah, Gok, Arslan, & Capar, 2015). This study will provide information to help people better understand how exemplary technology leaders create personal and organizational meaning. Most importantly, it will provide technology leaders insight into how they can create personal and organizational meaning that leads to high achievement.

Technology leaders are faced with the need to create innovative and rapidly evolving organizations. Yet there is little research to indicate how technology leaders are responding to that need. For example, Weiss and Adams (2011) described the need for technology leaders to develop important skills associated with creating change in their organizations, yet they cited a lack of research in the field. Additionally, researchers have claimed that the relationship between leadership and innovation remains unclear (Chen et al., 2014). This research will help technology leaders develop a clearer understanding of how the leadership elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration are utilized in creating organizational meaning for themselves and their followers.
In summary, the significant and critical role of creating workplaces that are imbued with meaning creates the need for leaders and their followers to understand the processes that lead to personal and organizational meaning. More importantly, technology leaders must build innovative and rapidly changing organizations if they are to succeed in the global marketplace. By examining the role that character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration play in allowing technology leaders to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers, this research will provide valuable information for companies looking for ways to thrive in the competitive global marketplace.

**Definitions**

Following are definitions of terms relevant to the study. For alignment and clarity, the following definitions are presented with the theoretical definition followed by the operational definition.

**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 organizational; (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 (Ambury, n.d.; Bennis, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Frankl, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Pearson, 2015; Tredennick, 2004; 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; Moore, 2008; Quick & Wright, 2011; Sankar, 2003).

**Operational definition.** Character is alignment of a value system that 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; Méndez-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 (Bermack, 2014; Frankl, 2006; George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007; Henderson, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007, 2009; Liborius, 2014; Mautz, 2015; McKee et al., 2008; Reina & Reina, 2006; Seligman, 2002; D. L. 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, 2015; 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.

Follower

**Theoretical definition.** Follower 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, 2006).

**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 officers, assistant superintendents, directors, coordinators, chief financial officers, directors of personnel services, coordinators, administrators, sales managers, account managers, and principals.

Technology Company

For purposes of this study a technology company is defined as a business that sells technology and/or profits from the sale of scientific knowledge that is applied to a
concrete problem (Guzzeta, 2016). Technology leaders are C-suite-level leaders in technology companies.

**Delimitations**

This study was delimited to three exemplary leaders and 12 followers in technology companies in California. To be considered as an exemplary leader, the leader must display or demonstrate five of the six following characteristics:

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 their 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.

Geographical proximity and availability caused the researcher to choose a convenience sample and a purposeful sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, the study was delimited to followers of the technology leaders.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized by the following: five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I presented an overview of meaning making, including historical perspective and background information. It also included a description of the need for technology leaders to create meaning in their organizations. Additionally, the five variables: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration, were outlined. Furthermore, theoretical and operational definitions were presented. An extensive
literature review of meaning-making leadership and how it impacts technology
companies is presented in Chapter II. The research design and methodology is described
in Chapter III. Chapter III also includes information on the population and sample as
well as data gathering and data analysis procedures. An analysis and discussion of the
findings are presented in Chapter IV. Finally, Chapter V consists of the summary,
findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The concept of meaning has been discussed for thousands of years, and work is often mentioned as one of the ways individuals create meaning for themselves and others in their lives. Recently, there has been increased interest in the role that meaningful work plays in people’s lives. Authors have claimed that meaningful work can improve people’s health, increase company profits, and lead to a more satisfying life experience (Aristotle, trans. 1937; Chalofsky, 2010; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The paucity of meaning-making theories is however, not supported by research into how leaders go about creating meaning for themselves and others.

This study examined the way technology leaders create organizational meaning for themselves and their followers. The importance of an engaged workforce is particularly important in the technology field. Technology leaders must lead companies that are able to constantly innovate and improve performance. Technology has been described as a key to helping countries compete globally (Cristina, 2013). Researchers who have studied technology leaders have cited a lack of research in understanding how high performance in technology firms is created (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; O’Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, & Doerr, 2014; Weiss & Adams, 2011). This literature review provides a rich backdrop for understanding how technology leaders create meaning for themselves and their followers through the use of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

A review of the literature was conducted to provide a background for exploring the construct of how leaders create meaning in the workplace. In Section I of this review, a historical background and a theoretical construct for meaning making is presented.
Also in Section I, an overview of several theories of leadership is presented, followed by a review of followership. Section II presents background on the five elements of leadership: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. This background further develops an understanding of leadership and followership. Section III details the literature on technology companies and the demands placed on technology leaders. This review finishes with a summary.

**Meaning**

For this study, meaning is defined as a sense of purpose and fundamental human need that leads to value and significance for self and others. Meaning is the result of leaders and followers coming together for the purpose of gathering information from experience and integrating it into a process that creates significance, value, and identity within themselves and the organization (Aristotle, trans. 1937; Frankl, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Several current authors have stressed the importance of workplace meaning. Their work suggests that through finding meaningful work, a person could find a sense of purpose, belonging, and fulfillment (Mautz, 2015; Seligman 2011; Ulrich & Ulrich 2010).

**Importance of Meaning**

In 2010, Ulrich and Ulrich explained that a meaningful life is predicated by meaningful work. However, the idea that meaningful work is an important facet for developing a meaningful life has been around for centuries. Aristotle is said to have expressed that participating in activities, which are virtuous, makes life worth living (Kraut, 2014). Aristotle described the following in his book on ethics: “All who have any work or course of action, their Chief Good and Excellence is thought to reside in their
work, so it would seem to be with man, if there is any work belonging to him” (Aristotle, trans. 1937, p. 5). Aristotle clarified that happiness was found in the “workings” and not in “pastimes” (Aristotle, trans. 1937, p. 105). Aristotle’s contention regarding the connection of work and meaning was echoed 2,000 years later by Mautz (2015) who claimed, “We also find meaning in things that make us feel significant” (p. 11). Psychologists as well as philosophers share the idea that meaningful work can lead a person to a meaningful life, and some have claimed that finding meaning is the very essence of human existence (Yeoman, 2014).

Much of the modern thought about meaning echoes the earlier work of Viktor Frankl. He developed a field of psychology called logotherapy, based largely on his experiences while interned in a Nazi concentration camp. Frankl (2006) observed that the search for meaning in life is a primary motivation in life. Similarly to Frankl, Seligman (2011) expressed, “The meaningful life consists in belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self” (p. 12). Seligman described meaning as an elemental part of well-being. Seligman’s well-being theory grew out of an acknowledgement that his earlier theories did not account for the significance of meaning, engagement, and love. Both Frankl (2006) and Seligman (2011) described meaning as being created through serving a larger purpose. Seligman (2011) explained that the experience of finding a purpose larger than the solitary self is one way groups can “rise to challenges” (p. 144). Purpose, significance, and service create meaning for individuals and organizations.

In their work, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) offered that through the use of a person’s skills to serve the needs of others, his or her sense of purpose is deepened. Having the
opportunity to enact one’s values and beliefs brings about purpose in a person’s life and it allows him or her to find meaning in his or her work (Mautz, 2015). Creating a sense of value and belonging is central to developing meaning in the workplace. In his description of the markers of meaning, Mautz (2015) contended that feeling valued and feeling connected are necessary conditions for creating meaning. This notion of being valued was described earlier by Kouzes and Posner (2006): “Everyone wants to be significant” (p. 11). Adding depth to this, Sinek (2014) went into detail about the importance of feeling valued and having a sense of belonging. There exists a basic human need to feel valued for one’s contributions to the good of the larger group. One of a person’s most elemental and deepest needs is to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Sinek, 2014). In the literature, meaning has been described as connected to individuals’ sense of purpose, their sense of value and belonging, and indeed their existence. Theories of meaning, which attempt to describe the complex interplay of these fundamental human needs, are in abundance.

**Theories of Meaning**

Psychologists, philosophers, and authors have developed many theories for the process of meaning making. The modern era of theories of meaning making began with the advent of logotherapy by Viktor Frankl (2006), but the search for meaning in life has roots dating back to the time of Aristotle (trans. 1937). In Aristotle’s book of ethics, he described happiness as living well and doing well. He described that a chief good is conceived as a mere state of working (Aristotle, trans. 1937). According to Kraut (2014), Aristotle opined that virtuous activity, not virtue, is happiness. This notion that virtue involves work or struggle is explained further by Aristotle’s insistence that virtuous
activity is the highest good. Aristotle’s description of work as leading to virtuous existence is echoed in the work of others who followed him.

In his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl (2006) posited, “Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a secondary rationalization of instinctual drives” (p. 99). Frankl shared the concept of logotherapy, which is derived from the Greek word for meaning. He explained that finding the answers to life’s problems is the ultimate way to show responsibility. In support of this point Frankl stated, “What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task” (p. 105). Thus, according to logotherapy, a person’s main motivation is his or her will to find meaning in life.

Another foundational theory to be considered is Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow’s hierarchy has been foundational in psychology studies since it first appeared over 60 years ago (Winston, 2016). Maslow graphically depicted his theory in a pyramid; self-actualization is at the top of that pyramid and at the bottom of the pyramid is physiological needs. Winston (2016) reported that Maslow referred to the first four steps of the pyramid as deficiency needs, and the top level was described as growth or being needs. Maslow made the distinction that basic needs must be met prior to acting on needs related to self-actualization; those needs most closely relate to concepts such as meaning, purpose, and flow.

In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) theorized that finding flow in work and in relationships with other people can lead toward an improved quality of life. Enjoyment, he posited, can be found in going beyond
what is expected, and from that sense of accomplishment, satisfaction is created.

Csikszentmihalyi stated, “The consequence of forging a life by purpose and resolution is a sense of inner harmony, a dynamic order in the contents of consciousness” (p. 227). However, Csikszentmihalyi pointed out that personal control can only be gained by learning how to construct enjoyment into what happens every day. Work, in his view, is a part of an everyday routine and is a marker of a healthy culture. Csikszentmihalyi depicted work life as being largely under the control of the individual to transform. He suggested that as long as people believe work is “the curse of Adam,” it will be difficult for them to transform “this enormously important dimension of life” (p. 154). An individual’s optimal experience or happiness is ultimately something over which he or she exercises control. It is that yearning for happiness that led to early theories in positive psychology.

Martin Seligman (2002) is considered the father of positive psychology, a term originally coined by Abraham Maslow. In the early 2000s Martin Seligman released his book, Authentic Happiness, which proposed the authentic happiness theory. Since that time he developed a new theory: well-being theory (Seligman, 2011). The authentic happiness theory rested on how inextricably linked an individual’s report on current happiness was linked to mood (Seligman, 2011). In building from his original theory, Seligman reported, “Well-being is a construct and happiness a thing” (p. 14). Seligman explained that the construct of well-being has dimensions that can be measured. In his new theory, Seligman further deduced that well-being and not happiness was the true focus of positive psychology. Well-being has five measurable elements, which Seligman outlined using the acronym PERMA: positive emotions, engagement, relationships,
meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011). Seligman stated the goal of well-being theory is to increase the amount of flourishing by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment; he contended that flourishing could be measured. Meaning is transparently one of the five components within well-being theory, and as such, it clearly is needed in people’s personal and professional lives in order to flourish as Seligman (2011) proposed.

**Meaning and the Workplace**

Meaningful work was the focus of *Make It Matter*, by Mautz (2015). Mautz used research, interviews, and case studies to illustrate the need for leaders to create workplaces imbued with meaning. Foundational to his research was the data he shared regarding how American workers are not engaged in their work and that the numbers of disengaged workers has grown in the last several decades. Mautz indicated that the “disengaged workforce is more widespread than most of us would dream possible” (p. 8). Meaning in the workplace, according to Mautz is necessary as a solution to disengagement. Emotional, physical, and cognitive energy investment in one’s work is driven by how much meaning is attributed to that work. Mautz (2015) in *Make It Matter* focused on the facilitation of the creation of work meaning. Mautz theorized that meaning could be created at work if managers satisfy the seven markers of meaning: presented in Table 1.
Table 1

*The Markers of Meaning*

<table>
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<th>Marker</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Direction | 1. Doing work that matters.  
2. Being challenged  
3. Working with a heightened sense of competency and self-esteem  
4. Being in control and influencing decisions/outcomes (sense of autonomy) |
| Discovery | 5. Working in a caring/authentic/teambased culture  
6. Feeling connection with and confidence in leadership and the mission |
| Devotion | 7. Being free from corrosive workplace behaviors |


This table clarifies conditions present in a meaning-filled work culture that are created by meaning-making leaders. Mautz explained that the role of managers is to create meaning and fulfillment for others.

Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) described the underlying cause of problems in the business world as attributable to a deficit in workplace meaning. The authors stated, “Leaders who diagnose, invest in, and improve meaning, address underlying causes, not symptoms, so their solutions endure beyond quick-fix activities” (loc. 3019). Leaders help employees find meaning at work by applying the seven drivers of meaning including using personal value, being grounded in a purpose that leads to common good, developing relationships that lead to respect and attachment, creating productive and positive work environments, accepting challenges via innovation and growth, bouncing back from setbacks, and enjoying the day-to-day activities marked by humor, creativity, and civility. Ulrich and Ulrich were clear that more than just profits are at stake, indeed meaning ought to be available to everyone who goes to work every day, and leaders build a legacy through the application of the seven drivers to create meaning at work.
Legacy thinking is suggested as an explanation of fulfilling a search for deeper meaning. Kouzes and Posner (2006) asserted that leaders have a responsibility to go beyond success and try to help their followers live lives of significance. The best leaders display passion and enthusiasm, which serves as a contagion to inspire others. Kouzes and Posner stressed that leaders need to be “flexible on style but firm on standards” while they build teams “of individuals who can vigorously express their differences while also energetically moving in unison toward an ennobling future” (p. 47). The authors mention that trust and autonomy are key to creating resonance and motivation that will sustain top performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Inspiration, trust, autonomy, and building teams are instrumental in people’s experiences with others and help leaders create meaning.

**Experience Creates Meaning**

Through their interaction with others, people create meaning. Demirtas et al. (2015) described the need to have fellowship with management and colleagues as part of creating meaning at work. Along the same lines, Seidman (2013) mentioned that how people relate with others is of chief importance. Seligman (2011) explained that people need to serve something bigger than themselves to experience meaning. The relationships they have with others can create love, suffering, and optimism; and all three can lead to meaning.

Viktor Frankl (2006) described a personal epiphany where he realized the greatest secret of human poetry, thought, and beliefs have to impart: “The salvation of man is through love and in love” (p. 37). Frankl continued, “Love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire” (p. 37). Seligman (2011) described human flourishing as being composed of many elements; two of those elements are meaning and love.
Likewise, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) offered, “The Latin verb amare, ‘to love’ referred to a person who loved what he was doing” (p. 139). In describing how psychological meaningfulness at work is obtained, Mautz (2015) explained, “It’s human nature for people to try to do more of what they love and more of what challenges them at work” (p. 106). The impact of love on work meaning is clear in the literature. Those positive feelings are often referred to in the literature as optimism.

Positive feelings associated with work meaning are thought to drive higher performance (Hammond, 2013; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Ulrich and Ulrich described how President Abraham Lincoln communicated optimism by using stories; they mentioned that maintaining an optimistic attitude can help a leader to build personal resilience. Similarly, the idea that optimism can create positive emotion and lead to organizational meaning is foundational within the theory of appreciative inquiry.

According to Hammond (2013), appreciative inquiry is a process that builds positive and synergistic energy by focusing on what is working in an organization. Higher performance is linked to positive emotions of the team members involved (Hammond, 2013). In Make It Matter, Mautz (2015) also discussed the need to communicate with confidence in order to provide followers with a sense of community and optimism, which lead to the development of self-efficacy. While the literature supports that leading with and from the positive creates meaning, meaning is also created through adversity and challenge.

Adversity and challenges can lead to meaning. Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) succinctly described the increased value of meaning during difficult times; the meaning-making experience can allow an individual to see the good in any situation. Mautz
made the case that adversity could help a person reveal the strength of his or her character. A stark example of this was articulated by Viktor Frankl (2006), “In the Nazi concentration camps, one could have witnessed [that] those who knew there was a task waiting for them to fulfill were more apt to survive” (p. 103). He also quoted Nietzsche: “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how” (p. 103). This suggests that meaning can allow one to endure, but also that suffering may force one to find deeper meaning or perish. Today’s leaders are often expected to help their followers endure by helping them find a higher purpose that helps them endure tough times (Seidman, 2013). That higher purpose can be envisioned as meaning, and those who find meaning in their work are said to be able to ameliorate the negative impact of stress more effectively (Ingram, 2015). Today’s leaders are challenged to create organizational meaning and clarity regardless of or in spite of difficult circumstances.

Leadership and Meaning

Leadership and meaning appear inextricably linked throughout the literature. For example, many authors have described a link between being mindful and becoming a leader who is capable of creating meaning for him or herself and others (Drath & Palus, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Varney, 2009). Literature also suggests that leaders help others discover significance through their leadership practices (Chalofsky, 2010; Cowart, 2014; Demirtas et al., 2015; Frauenheim, 2015; Goodman, 2015; Seidman, 2013; Steenkamp & Basson, 2013). Building a legacy is also cited as a way that leaders create meaning for themselves and their followers (Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Mautz, 2015; Sinek, 2014). The literature strongly links leadership to creating meaning in the workplace.
The process of meaning making has been described as a personal process of integrating information and creating knowledge that is recognizable (Varney, 2009). More straightforwardly, leadership has been described as a process of personal values clarification so that words and deeds are aligned with behavior (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Meaning making rests upon the leader’s ability to understand his or her role, not only as an individual but also as a social being (Drath & Palus, 1994). Great leaders, it would seem, are those who are able to align organizational values with their true individual values (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). This alignment of values can be witnessed as the expression of genuine caring that is rooted in deeply held personal beliefs and through which leaders help others find a greater sense of meaning (Mautz, 2015). Throughout the literature, meaning making is described as a leadership activity.

Several authors have dramatically stated the importance of the leader’s role in creating meaningful workplaces. Cowart (2014) explained that leaders play an important role in helping others find significance and staying engaged at work. An individual’s relationship with his or her immediate supervisor is one of the primary ways work identity is established; therefore, moving others toward self-actualization means a leader must move toward a higher connection with others (Chalofsky, 2010). Building on Chalofsky’s work, Demirtas et al. (2015) described a growing need for leadership to promote meaningful work. Meaningful work, as described by Demirtas et al., has the potential to deepen employee engagement and organizational identification. Leadership plays a key role in helping others find meaning in their work.

There is an increased awareness on a global scale that the workplace must change to meet the needs of its workers (Frauenheim, 2015). Leaders, now more than ever, are
being called on to help their followers find significant value in the work they do (Seidman, 2013). When workers are engaged through purpose and significance, they are 87% less likely to leave an organization (Goodman, 2015). Multiyear research of excellent managers conducted by Gallup found, “Great managers continually strive to help employees understand how the company's mission or purpose directly relates to individual duties. This relationship helps employees find a connection between the company's values and their own” (“Item 8: My Company’s Mission or Purpose,” 1999, para. 5). This research highlights the important role of leadership in helping others connect deeply to their work. On the other hand, if leadership fails to help others build a sense of significance at work, they play a role in workers developing alienation and meaninglessness (Steenkamp & Basson, 2013). Without purpose, direction, and meaning, individuals and organizations lose sight of their significance and their impact on the world.

Just as leaders help others find significance, the leadership journey has also been described as a journey toward finding personal significance via a lasting legacy (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Legacy thinking, according to Kouzes and Posner, “means dedicating ourselves to making a difference” (p. 5). According to Mautz (2015), when an individual is engaged in legacy work, he or she unleashes energy and pride that improves his or her performance; working with a deep commitment toward a purpose, such as a legacy, is the “first marker of meaning” (p. 66). The work of creating a legacy as a leader involves humility and the distribution of power throughout the organization (Sinek, 2014). Kouzes and Posner (2006) expressed their description of a legacy as a “legacy of many” (p.11). Next, the impact of meaning on organizations is examined.
Meaning Creates Successful Organizations

If people are engaged in work they find meaningful, the organizations they work in are strengthened (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Varney (2009) intoned that meaningful work creates loyalty and commitment and helps people to give maximum effort. Meaningful work has also been described as a panacea to the physical impact of stressful work. For example, Ingram (2015) posited that meaningful work creates a buffer to the deleterious impact of workplace stress. However, Mautz (2015) declared, “Far too many of us feel our hours at work don’t count” (p. 5). He cited Gallup research, which found that 71% of the American workforce is not engaged in their work. In addition, he noted a 2014 survey that found that only “47.7% of Americans are satisfied with their jobs, down 61.1% [from] when the survey was first conducted in 1987” (Mautz, 2015, p. 5). Mautz claimed that the solution for worker disengagement is “the provision of meaning” (p. 8).

Throughout the literature review, creating organizational meaning was described as a leadership activity. In order to better understand the behaviors leaders use to create organizational meaning, a review of leadership theories was conducted. An overview of several leadership theories follows.

Theoretical Framework of Leadership

In describing the desire that people have to find personal fulfillment, purpose, and meaning at work, Crowley (2011) claimed, “People now are seeking more from their work than perhaps ever before” (p. 4). Against this backdrop, today’s leaders are challenged to demonstrate behaviors that serve to promote follower job satisfaction and workplace engagement (Akdol & Arikboga, 2015; Klein, 2014). Leaders are also asked to help their followers foster meaning (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). In order to foster
meaning, leaders are called on to create workplaces rich in authenticity, teamwork, and caring (Mautz, 2015). The approaches to leadership are as varied as the challenges that leaders face. For example, wisdom-based leadership focuses on ethical decision making, while servant leadership is driven by the leader’s desire to serve followers (Spano, 2013; van Dierendonck, 2011). On the other hand, several theories share much in common. Transformational leadership and authentic leadership are often described as values-based leadership. This section presents a brief overview of several of these theories.

**Wisdom-based leadership.** Several authors cited the wisdom-based framework of leadership. Spano (2013) described wisdom as the ability to know how to balance ethical considerations with appropriate actions in order to meet the greatest good. Spano further suggested that wisdom is shown by one’s commitment to doing the right thing. Organizations that use a wisdom-based approach to leadership “develop an ethos that focuses on value to society” (Suarez, 2014, p. 196). A wisdom-based framework for guidance and development can lead to the flourishing of self and others. Kaipa (2014) expressed that making the right decision is a fundamental aspect of leadership, and leaders today need to be prepared to make wise decisions. Making wise decisions requires the use of emotional wisdom, values wisdom, and critical as well as creative thinking (Kaipa, 2014). A more in-depth look at wisdom is included later in this chapter.

**Servant leadership.** The term servant leader has been around for at least 4 decades; the most definitive definition of servant leader is attributed to Robert Greenleaf. A servant leader puts the needs of others ahead of his or her own; a servant leader makes sure others’ highest needs are met (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf described a servant leader as a person who is able to see goals that others cannot see, yet can point the way.
He explained that servant leaders elicit trust by listening first and empathizing. Central to the ability of a servant leader is the ability to use foresight, intuition, and creativity. Researchers who have studied Greenleaf’s theory have concluded that servant leadership is the need to serve plus the motivation to lead (van Dierendonck, 2011). Van Dierendonck suggested that no single theoretical framework exists for servant leadership; however, due to the demand for this type of leadership, “It may, therefore, be a leadership theory with great potential” (p. 1229). The desire to serve others is central to the servant leadership model; it is also one of the factors in transformational leadership theory.

Transformational leaders have been described as able to transform the identity of their followers (Denning, 2011). Others have described transformational leadership in terms of affective commitment and shared beliefs and values (Dixon, 2013; Vardaman, 2013). However, it is the early work of James MacGregor Burns, who stated that all leadership is either transactional or transforming, that influenced Bernard Bass’s transformational/transactional model of leadership (Flynn, 2015). In 1993, Bass and Avolio set forth the four factors of transformational leadership, which serve as the foundational beginnings of this theory. Bass and Avolio (1993) explained that idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration are the four factors of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders use charisma, which can be thought of as a combination of inspirational motivation and idealized influence (Vardaman, 2013). Bass and Avolio (1993) maintained that transformational leadership creates an environment where the followers operate under the assumption that the full development of all members of the organization is a desired goal. They further claimed that transformational leaders assume responsibility for their
followers. Finally, Bass and Avolio expressed the belief that transformational leadership helps to create an environment that promotes the ability to take risks, experiment, solve problems, and be creative.

**Authentic leadership.** Authentic leadership theory shares several traits with other leadership theories that are considered value based. Similar to transformational leadership, authentic leaders are said “to convey to others, oftentimes through actions, not just words, what they represent in terms of principles, values and ethics” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, pp. 329-330). Also, authentic leaders are said to focus on self-clarity and they gain their insights through internally formed factors (Fusco, O’Riordan, & Palmer, 2016). Like romance of leadership theory, it has been stated that authentic leaders energize their followers through the creation of meaning and the construction of a positive reality for their followers and themselves (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Researchers agree that authentic leaders communicate to followers in such a way that the followers are positively impacted (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Fusco et al., 2016; Harvath, 2013).

**Romance of leadership theory.** One factor that distinguishes the romance of leadership theory is the focus on the follower (Arias, 2013; Bligh & Kohles, 2012; Felfe & Schyns, 2012). Arias (2013) explained that the followers’ beliefs about the leaders’ characteristics are the focus of the romance of leadership theory. Felfe and Schyes (2012) noted that the follower-centric perspective of the romance of leadership theory challenged the traditional-leader-centric perspectives of leadership. Bligh and Kohles (2012) claimed that the romance of leadership theory, first introduced by Meindhl and Erlich in 1987, was one of the earliest follower-centered approaches to leadership.
Meindhl, Erlich, and Dukerich (1985) described the romance of leadership as attributed to followers’ sense-making processes that over idealize the impact of the leader. Meindhl et al. (1985) concluded, “The romanticized conception of leadership suggests that leaders do or should have the ability to control and influence the fates of the organizations in their charge” (p. 96). In a more recent study, Arias (2013) described the romance of leadership theory as focused on how followers envision the characteristics of their leaders. According to Arias, the romance of leadership theory “provided insight into the followers’ perceptions of leadership” (p. 130). A closer look at followership takes place in the next section.

**Followership**

Theories of leadership are replete with descriptions of leader and follower interactions. However, the authentic leadership theory makes a strong connection between leader and follower. For example, Avolio and Gardner (2005) claimed,

> We believe authentic leadership can make a fundamental difference in organizations by helping people find meaning and connection at work through greater self-awareness; by restoring and building optimism, confidence and hope; by promoting transparent relationships and decision making that builds trust and commitment among followers; and by fostering inclusive structures and positive ethical climates. Moreover, we have adopted a developmental focus as we seek to understand and explain how authentic leadership, authentic followership, authentic leader–follower relationships, and positive organizational climates promote sustained and veritable performance. (pp. 331-332)
Followership, however, is not an idea that belongs solely to authentic leadership theory. Servant leadership is also heavily follower focused. Zimmerer (2013) presented a description of followers being transformed into servant leaders through the influence of their servant leaders. The followers in Zimmerer’s study reported being empowered to become decision makers because they were treated with understanding and respect. Additionally, transformational leaders have been described as able to help their followers “gain confidence and a clear sense of self-efficacy” (Denning, 2011, p. 127). Researchers have explained that leadership theories are incomplete without considering the follower (Carsten & Lapierre, 2014). In addition, the increasing demands of the workforce call for an understanding of followership because it aids in the understanding of what it means to be both a follower and a leader (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

The Five Leadership Elements

In this section, the theoretical framework for the five leadership elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration, as introduced by Dr. Keith Larick and Dr. Cindy Petersen during a 2015 Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) conference, are explored. An in-depth exploration of each of the five elements is presented. The behaviors of leaders are highlighted to inform this study. Additionally, a leadership behavior matrix is included at the end of this section.

Character

In this study, the following theoretical definition of character was co-defined by the researchers: The moral compass by which a person lives his or her life. The co-created operational definition for character is the alignment of a value system that
promotes ethical thoughts and actions based on principles of concern for others through optimism and integrity while being reliable, transparent, and authentic.

**Leadership and character.** Throughout the literature, the role of character has been reported as an important facet of a leader’s ability to be successful (Collins & Porras, 2002; Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Howard, Korver, & Birchard, 2008). Others have reported on the important role that character plays in creating personal and organizational meaning (Chalofsky, 2010; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Several synonyms for character, such as trust and values, were described as important for leaders, their followers, and the organizations they serve (Hartnell, 2012; Klein, 2014; Sinek, 2014; D. B. Smith, 2014). This section provides a review of the literature on the importance of character and the behaviors of leaders, which impact that trait.

**Ethical code.** Howard et al. (2008) mention throughout their book the word ethics instead of morals. The distinction they drew was based on their belief that morals are connotative for following behavior customary of society, while ethics refer to doing the right thing regardless of the cultural norms. In their book, *Ethics for the Real World*, Howard et al. (2008) outlined a three-step process for drafting an ethical code to guide decisions and cause reflection when temptations are presented. The importance of this code was stated: “We need to know how to clarify the ethical issue, create alternatives, and choose not just the right action, but the best action to build character and strengthen relationships” (Howard et al., 2008, p. 88). The role of character as a moral compass can also be seen in the work of Collins and Porras (2002). They cited the importance of ongoing organizational character as vital to creating a great company and that
organizational culture begins with an understanding of and the ability to act on that culture through individual character.

**Values and optimism.** Leaders need to be aware of their behavior, because they are sending constant signals to their followers about the valued behavior of the organization (Hartnell, 2012). Behaviors are modeled by leaders; “Unit members thus learn vicariously from observing leaders’ actions” (Hartnell, 2012, p.12). Along these same lines, D. B. Smith (2014) discovered that the values of an organization begin with the values of the leader: “The leaders’ continual personal attention to values, self-discipline, and consistency seem to be the important inputs into the firms’ ongoing interpretation and meaning making process around values and culture” (p. 80). One of the leadership behaviors mentioned repeatedly throughout the literature is the ability to communicate optimism. The role of optimism is clearly indicated in Seligman’s well-being theory; positive emotion is preeminent in that it is listed first in the PERMA acronym of the theory (Seligman, 2011). Recent developments in the field of leadership have seen an increased emphasis on the use of optimism. The role of optimism is also clearly expressed in the tenets of transformational leadership; Dixon (2013) claimed that there was evidence “of a significant positive relationship between a project manager’s affective commitment and transformational leadership use” (p.93). In *Make It Matter*, the idea that optimism matters in leadership was clear: “You’ll help create a sense of community as optimism translates into pride of being involved in an organization with promise” (Mautz, 2015, p. 186). Ulrich and Ulrich (2011) believed that leaders who are faced with great challenges should employ optimism. They added that leaders who are optimistic are resilient and can more clearly see opportunities amid dramatic change.
Kouzes and Posner (2006) explained a leader’s need to have the ability to uplift and engage followers. Along with optimism, leaders need to be trusted.

Trust. Central to leadership theories is the idea that trust must be established as a prerequisite to building credibility that enables success (Avolio et al., 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1993; Covey & Merrill, 2006; Klein, 2014; Sinek, 2014). Covey and Merrill (2006) argued that the ability to extend, establish, and grow and restore trust is vitally important to interpersonal and personal well-being. Speaking of trust, Covey and Merrill claimed, “It is the key leadership competency of the new global economy” (p. 1). In his book, Leaders Eat Last, Sinek described the need for leaders to create a circle of safety for their groups. According to Sinek, the more people trust others around them, the more they can focus their energies and pull together as a team. He used the U.S. Marine Corps training program to emphasize the need for trust and integrity: “Leadership, the Marines understand, . . . is about integrity, honesty and accountability, all components of trust” (Sinek, 2014, pp. 149-150). Sinek explained the importance of honesty by describing that becoming a true leader starts with telling the truth. He further defined integrity: “When our words and deeds are consistent with our intentions” (Sinek, 2014, p. 150). Inspiring trust is said to be one of the keys for great leadership (McKee, Boyatzis, & Johnston, 2008). McKee et al. (2008) described the process of becoming a resonant leader as including the ability to compel others toward an optimistic vision of the future. Integrity, honesty, and trust allow a leader to build a base for creating organizational optimism (McKee et al., 2008; Sinek, 2014).

Resilience. Personal resilience has been described as the ability to overcome defeat (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Ulrich and Ulrich expressed that a resilient leader sees
opportunity during difficult times and yet maintains an optimistic attitude. They also
detailed three principles for creating organizational resilience: “Principle 1: Make the
Unspeakable Speakable,” “Principle 2: Turn What we Know into What we do,”
“Principle 3: Make Change a Pattern Not an Event” (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010, loc. 2596-
2632). In summarizing the leadership actions that are needed for the facilitation of
learning, growth, and resilience, Ulrich and Ulrich stressed again the need for a positive
attitude. They further explained that resilience training is a central tenet of positive
education. The idea that resilience can be taught is echoed in the work of Angela
Duckworth (Useem, 2016). She used the term grit (a single passion coupled with
perseverance) to describe the important role that resiliency plays in creating success
(Useem, 2016). Another view on the importance of resilience is seen in the work of
Carol Dweck. According to Dweck (2009), having a growth mindset allows individuals
to deal with setbacks and remain resilient.

**Authenticity.** The authentic leadership model depends on leaders who are both
transparent and authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Fusco et al.,
2016). Mautz (2015) offered a code of conduct for authentic leaders to follow. He
summarized, “All in all, promoting an atmosphere of authenticity and creating caring
environments help yield norms of behavior that forge strong, meaningful bonds and
produce vastly stronger results” (p. 164). Mautz also mentioned that transparency
requires vigilance and he cautioned that leaders could undue “years of goodwill with just
one unintentional slip” (p. 163). Collins and Porras (2002) discovered in their research
that authenticity and consistent alignment with ideology was of greater importance than
the contents of the ideology.
Vision

The following theoretical definition for vision was cocreated for this study:
Vision is 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. In addition to this theoretical definition of vision, the following operational definition was also cocreated: Vision is foresight demonstrated by a compelling outlook of the future shared by leaders and followers who are engaged to create the future state.

Leadership and vision. The literature review found agreement from multiple authors that having a vision is essential to success for leaders and their followers (Cagan, 2014; Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Mautz, 2015; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014; Suarez, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Webb, 2014; Yukl, 2012). The literature consistently agrees that vision is important, but there remains rich variety in their reasoning. Vision plays a role in creating capacity for innovation. The expression of vision is a behavior that a leader uses to provide followers with a challenging and inspirational vision of a future state (Sinek, 2014). While vision is painting a picture of the future, visions are tools to be used in the present (Senge, 2004). Often vision is a tool that allows a leader to inspire followers around a product (Cagan, 2014). A closer look at the leadership behaviors associated with vision explores the above-mentioned variety of opinions with how vision is used.

Vision as an antecedent. Authors and researchers cite a variety of reasons to create and use a vision. One of those reasons is to be a precursor to action. A vision can be product aligned, as Cagan (2014) described, or used as a practical tool as Senge (2004)
explained. However, vision is generally thought of as an opportunity for a leader to engage followers (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Henderson, 2011; Lane-Schmitz, 2012). Lane-Schmitz (2012) suggested that a vision allows followers to labor in the direction of a sought after outcome. According to Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001), “There is no greater accelerator of change than people who have a shared vision they are collectively committed to creating” (p. 171). When leaders are open about their visions, their companies are generally described as being a great place to work (Henderson, 2011). The literature review found agreement that leaders use vision as an antecedent to desired action and outcomes.

**Vision as a tool.** A vision is described in the research as a tool leaders use to guide and inspire their followers, while simultaneously strengthening the community (Collins & Porras, 2002; Mautz, 2015; Senge, 2004). In order for a vision to have this impact, it must empower followers, build commitment, and create a social context (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Lane-Schmitz, 2012; Yukl, 2012). A vision sets forth detailed goals, focused values, and straightforward action steps (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The effective use of communication can create organizational meaning and is a necessary component for vision. For a vision to be effective, it must have the characteristics that serve to bring a team together around a new future that both excites and empowers them in a meaningful way, while providing clarity of purpose (Collins & Porras, 2002). A leader who clearly and passionately communicates the organization’s vision moves the organization forward with purpose toward a common, compelling, and tangible future.

**Clarity and organizational commitment.** Vision is often described as leading the organization and individuals toward a new future (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Lane-
Visions are statements of deep purpose that drive present behavior (Senge, 2004). Leaders need to put forth an unclouded and engaging vision of what has yet to be achieved (Yukl, 2012). Sinek (2014) suggested, “To really inspire us, we need a challenge that outsizes the resources available. We need a vision of the world that does not yet exist” (p. 211). A predecessor to successful transformation is often a sense of urgency, and a vision with urgency makes members inside an organization feel extraordinary and promotes a sense that work is meaningful (Mautz, 2015). An engaging, inspirational, and urgent mission that is in close alignment with the organization’s values, which are articulated in the vision, builds a close organizational identity for its members (Mautz, 2015). Collins and Porras (2002) described a visionary company as being able to simultaneously stimulate change, while holding to a core ideology that guides the organization. Moreover, the process of creating and communicating a vision was reported to lead followers to find inspiration, alignment and expression of values, and meaning in their work (Mautz, 2015). In particular, when workers form an identity that aligns with the organization’s identity, they find meaning in their work (Mautz, 2015). Vision can strengthen and inspire followers, and align their identity and membership with the organization and its values as well as help them create a sense of meaning in their work.

**Creating a vision and involving stakeholders.** The literature is clear that the leader is responsible for having a vision and sharing it with followers (Cagan, 2014; Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Mautz, 2015; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014; Webb, 2014; Yukl, 2012). However, Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001) described a process of developing a vision that was shared, wherein the followers had multiple opportunities to
hear the message, ask questions, and have concerns addressed. These are not mutually exclusive; a leader can co-create the shared vision and still be responsible for “having” it and sharing it with followers. Another important component for the leader is to connect and communicate how the followers’ work aligns with the organization’s broader goals (Mautz, 2015). Mautz further described how followers’ feelings of self-efficacy are enhanced by connecting tasks to broader goals as part of creating a vision that inspires others. An exemplary leader is able to create a vision that leads to enhanced follower production, creativity, and self-efficacy (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Mautz, 2015).

Acknowledgments and Anderson (2001) offered a clear description of this shared process, “Our recommendation is that stakeholders be involved in building the vision of their future, along with executive guidance” (p. 171). They pointed out that leaders who develop the vision on their own slow down the process of developing collective ownership of the new vision (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001). In terms of vision and innovation, Yukl (2012) suggested that leaders should use change-oriented behaviors to drive teams to innovative practices; those innovative teams then become the co-creators of new technologies. Innovative products, which have not yet been discovered, are created through true collaboration (Cagan, 2014). As early as 2004, Senge theorized that future leadership would be driven by teams acting as the collective leadership. After creating and or cocreating a vision with followers, the vision must be communicated.

*Using story to communicate the vision.* Savage (2012) discovered that leaders could use story to “set the vision of the future” (p. 113). Savage offered that leaders use stories to gain transparency with followers and help set the vision. It is by telling stories
that the leader is able to build resiliency, create hope, and develop meaningfulness (Mautz, 2015). Denning (2011) echoed this idea; “Stories appeal to the heart as well as the mind and make reasons memorable” (pp. 85-86). Stories appeal, but communicating the core purpose and values of the organization in a variety of ways is more important than creating the perfect story (Collins & Porras, 2002). Collins and Porras described that leaders should create a vivid description of the envisioned future for their followers, and they should use emotion, passion, and conviction as components of that description. Vision statements should be written in the present tense so people will act as if the vision is already true and become excited by the challenges expressed (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001).

**Communicating the vision.** The literature review solidly supports the notion that leaders must use the process of creating and communicating a vision in order to achieve exemplary results. Leadership is responsible for communicating inspiring and compelling visions (Cagan, 2014; Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Collins & Porras, 2002; Mautz, 2015; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Yukl, 2012). Creating a vision is essential to driving commitment, growth, and innovation (Collins & Porras, 2002; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014). A true leader inspires the organization around a vision (Cagan, 2014). The articulation of an inspirational vision is one of the behaviors leaders use to develop a team’s collective knowledge and embolden their innovative capacities (Yukl, 2012). Sinek (2014) agreed, leadership needs to use vision to create inspiration. On the other hand, Senge (2004) described visions as practical tools leadership uses to ensure purpose in day-to-day work. Along those lines, Collins and Porras (2002) depicted visions as the way leadership expresses goals for the future that convey passion
and emotion that will motivate others. In brief, the literature clearly described that leadership has a strong role in communicating a vision.

**Effects of vision on followers.** The impact of vision on followers was found throughout the literature. To illustrate, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) insisted that engagement and commitment grow when followers are employed in a company with a vision. Another case in point, Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2010) pronounced that a vision “should act like a fuel injector for people’s excitement” and that when a vision is written in the present tense it can “mobilize positive momentum for action” (p. 172). Collins and Porras (2002) suggested that pursuing the vision leads to stimulating followers toward progress of the future that is envisioned, while Mautz (2015) suggested that communicating a vision can lead to a strengthening of the community. Careful articulation of purpose through the use of vision leads to clarity for followers and assists them in the meaning-making process (Varney, 2009). Several authors described the powerful impact of vision on creating meaning for followers.

**Meaning and vision.** Having and expressing a vision has been described as central to the role of creating meaning for followers (Mautz, 2015; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). A vision often serves to challenge followers to strive for a future state. It is that striving that Frankl (2006) posited was what one needs to find meaning in life. By creating a vision that inspires and challenges followers, leaders assist them in creating meaning in their work, and in their lives (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Meaning making has been described as a process of gathering and integrating information into knowledge structures (Varney, 2009). To that end, by providing a vision, leaders give followers information and help them integrate that information through a process that involves
inspiring them and challenging them to a future state. Consider this, Mautz (2015) declared that the first marker of meaning is doing work that matters. He added that this work must be significant and reflect one’s values (Mautz, 2015). It is that inspiration and challenge that Sinek (2014) identified as the purpose of a vision.

**Relationships**

The following theoretical definition of relationships was co-created by the team of researchers: Relationships are the bonds that are established between people through encouragement, compassion, and open communication, which lead to feelings of respect, trust, and acceptance. In addition, the following is the co-created operational definition: Relationships are authentic connections between leaders and followers involved in a common purpose through listening, respect, trust, and acknowledgement of one another.

Building relationships with others is a basic human need (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Mautz, 2015; Seligman, 2011). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explained, “We are biologically programmed to find other human beings the most important objects in the world” (p. 164). Csikszentmihalyi further described that people’s happiness depends on how they manage their relationships with others. Similarly, Seligman reported that positive relationships are fundamental to well-being; in fact, he described the prefrontal cortex as a machine that functions to facilitate effective human relationships. Additionally, Mautz (2015) corroborated the importance of relationships by citing research that pointed to relationships as rich sources of meaning. Relationships have been described as both an antecedent and a path toward meaning making (Fourie & Deacon, 2015).

**Leadership and relationships.** Leadership has been described as requiring a strong connection over things that are deeply meaningful (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). With
regard to work relationships, Savage (2012) explained that both the leader and the follower crave more social experience in their work relationships. Along those lines, Henderson (2011) discovered that closeness through relationships was a key for building camaraderie in an organization, while Mautz (2015) claimed that a caring undercurrent was one of the four traits of a meaning-making leader. It is through that caring that connections deepen and both leaders and followers find meaning. Mautz opined that meaning is greatly improved by quality relationships and meaning leads to greater individual personal development. Likewise, Fourie and Deacon (2015) stated that relationships could lead followers to the development of meaning.

Sinek (2014) explained that positive relationships help to reduce the harmful effects associated with stress. He further posited that in building positive relationships, people help their bodies release hormones that promote well-being and improved health. Similarly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) mentioned that relationships help mitigate stress and improve the quality of people’s lives. K. K. Brown (2012) claimed that leaders could help contribute to the well-being of followers by being in a relationship with them. Moreover, Mautz (2015) opined that meaning is greatly improved by quality relationships and meaning leads to greater individual personal development. Some of the benefits of relationships, according to Ulrich and Ulrich (2010), are that followers are able to take difficult feedback, work creatively, take intelligent risks, and persevere if they have connections at work.

**Building and managing relationships.** The importance for leaders to develop relationships was found throughout the literature (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Henderson, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Savage, 2012; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). For example,
Kouzes and Posner (2006) stated, “No discussion of leadership is complete without considering the quality of leader-constituent relationship” (p. 47). By focusing on creating opportunities to teach followers, leaders allow the relationship to rise to a level where more profound interactions take place (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). To add, Heifetz and Linsky (2002) expressed that the quality of human connections is the most important factor in creating positive results. Along these lines, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) suggested that good work relationships improve teamwork and create conditions conducive to accomplishing difficult tasks; they stated,

When leaders help their organization “families” move beyond the superficialities of getting along to struggling through conflict so they can understand one another’s strengths and weaknesses, they can approach the kind of synergy that occurs in the best of human relationships. (loc. 668)

Leaders build trust when they build relationships (Anderson, 2015; Henderson, 2011; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). In fact, Anderson (2015) described how a series of organizational development workshop were able to help a team develop trust and belonging by focusing on relationships. Accordingly, Henderson (2011) explained that trust could only be experienced in a relationship marked by two-way interactions. Meanwhile, Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) explained that exemplary leaders create passionate teams that are marked by trusting connections. Conversely, Sinek (2014) depicted a low trust environment as a place where relationships are weak and stress and anxiety are high. Leaders must not only build relationships, they must also manage them. An effective leader is someone who can mediate problems and build good work relationships that lead to good business (Ulrich & Ulrich 2010). The ability to talk about high-stakes issues...
promotes strong relationships (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012).

Patterson et al. explained that the ability to have crucial conversations could have a dramatic impact on relationships. They further described that a person skilled at crucial conversations is able to get emotional, risky, and controversial information out for open discussion (Patterson et al., 2012). Another example of leaders managing difficult relationships was illustrated by Heifetz and Linsky (2002): “The challenge of leadership when trying to generate adaptive change is to work with differences, passions, and conflicts in a way that diminishes their destructive potential and constructively harnesses their energy” (p. 101). This is accomplished, according to Heifetz and Linsky, by creating a network of relationships that allows people to take on tough problems.

**Leading change and relating to followers.** Finally, the need for leaders to build relationships in the management of change was clearly spelled out by Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001); they described building optimal relationships as a first-level change effort. Successfully leading change in an organization has been said to deliver extraordinary results (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001). On the other hand, change has also been described as able to induce feelings of stress, pain, and frustration, or it can be full of excitement and learning (Anderson, 2015). Mautz (2015) aptly described the need for change, “Without continual learning, we’ll soon fall behind” (p. 94). Leaders must successfully use change behaviors to help followers adapt to external changes (Yukl, 2012). Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) explained that high-performing teams that have mentoring relationships, friendships, and positive networks are able to solve complex problems such as change.
Klein (2014) opined that leaders should note the research pointing to the role of building a foundation with each employee and its impact on follower engagement. Likewise, Avolio et al. (2004) illustrated the positive impact on the leader/follower relationship when networks of collaborative relationships were present. Leader/follower engagement is thought to drive and sustain engagement (McKee et al., 2008). Lastly, the need for leaders to connect with followers is central to the followership theory of leadership. In fact, followership has been described as a process where strong relationships help create meaning for the leader, the follower, and the organization (Denning, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Zimmerer, 2013).

**Meaning and relationships.** The impact of leader/follower relationships on workplace meaning is a central theme in the literature (Chalofsky, 2010; Drath & Palus, 1994; Mautz, 2015; Steenkamp & Basson, 2013; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Varney, 2009). Darth and Palus (1994) described meaning making as having a community orientation. The leader’s role is articulating common purpose as part of the process of meaning making (Varney, 2009). Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) stated that workplace relationships are a component of leadership that helps build workplace meaning for followers. One of the four traits of a meaning-making leader, detailed by Mautz (2015), is the ability to “emit a caring, connective undercurrent” (p. 176). Mautz further asserted that leaders through their communications and behavior could create connections. Similarly, Sinek (2014) asserted that leadership is not about numbers; it is about being responsible for others.

Mautz (2015) cited research that concluded that deep sources of meaning could be found in relationships. From this finding, Mautz elaborated that without an affirmative social identity, workplace meaning is absent. Mautz claimed that meaningful
connections are produced when people invest in professional relationships. Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) acknowledged the role of leadership in helping followers experience positive work relationships, thus increasing their feelings of meaning and abundance. Mautz (2015) suggested that relationships are too important to ignore; a relationship playbook was included to help leaders guide followers to deeper workplace connections. In the same way, Sinek (2014) used the concept of “A Circle of Safety” to describe how leaders can develop trusting relationships at work to drive a culture that is strong and protective. Finally, Sinek described the need for people to maintain connection with one another or risk meaninglessness.

**Wisdom**

The following co-created theoretical definition of wisdom was developed for this research: Wisdom is the ability to utilize cognitive, affective, and reflective intelligences to discern unpredictable and unprecedented situations with beneficial action. Additionally, an operational definition was co-developed: 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. In general, the research revealed that wisdom is often thought of as balance and integration of information in order to maximize benefit for all (Aristotle, trans. 1937; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gardner, 2007; Senge, 2004; Sternberg, 1998). Still widely ascribed to, is the Aristotelian view of wisdom providing guidance in the absence of definite rules toward mutual benefit for all. Spano (2013) defined wisdom as the ability to take appropriate actions balancing what is known, and in the process, staying focused on a consideration for the greater good. Spano further explained that wisdom finds expression “via a
commitment to do the right thing” (p. 151). Sternberg (1998) claimed that a big role of wisdom is identifying good for all and then convincing others of pursuing that path. Senge (2004) described wisdom as an integrative process that is enhanced by the alignment of spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental states.

In contrast to the agreement of balance and integration, the literature showed divergent themes with regard to the source of wisdom. For example, Frankl (2006) described a moment of epiphany when he discovered that wisdom is love. In contrast, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggested that control over consciousness is what is needed for wisdom to be emancipated from the accumulation of human experience. On the other hand, Crowley (2011) suggested that research points to the “wisdom of the ages” as being centered in people’s hearts (p. 51). Crowley claimed that the heart and not the mind drive human achievement. Others described age and experience as related to the individual acquiring knowledge and obtaining wisdom (Glück & Bluck, 2013; Najoli, 2012; Sternberg, 1998).

The rapid rate of change taking place is not being matched by a commensurate change in the growth rate of wisdom (Gardner, 2007; Senge, 2004). Senge (2004) described wisdom as being in a state of atrophy. Senge further called for finding ways to enhance and develop human wisdom so people can better understand the complexity of their world. Similarly, Gardner (2007) cited the need for integrating the vast and varied sources of knowledge into a coherent whole; he stated, “The amount of accumulated knowledge is reportedly doubling every two to three years (wisdom presumably accrues more slowly!” (p. 46). Researchers who have studied and measured wisdom seem to
echo Gardner and Senge with regard to the importance of the development of wisdom (Brown & Greene, 2006).

**Theories of wisdom.** Researchers have attempted to measure and describe wisdom in a variety of ways. In order to further develop the topic of wisdom, the literature reviewed several theories of wisdom. Baltes and Staudinger (2000) developed the Berlin wisdom paradigm. Glück and Bluck (2013) developed a theory, which suggests that there are four resources for wisdom development. Sternberg (1998) authored the balance theory of wisdom, and Browne and Greene (2006) developed a scale for measuring wisdom development. They are outlined next in the review.

Baltes and Staudinger (2000) developed the Berlin wisdom paradigm through their research conducted at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany. They presented an empirical research paradigm for the study of wisdom. They reported empirical findings in six separate categories, and they introduced work on the potential to understand how wisdom can impact human development. Baltes and Staudinger opined that when applied to human development, “wisdom makes explicit the goal of orchestrating the mind and virtue toward human excellence and the common good” (p. 132). They pronounced the need to explicate the attributes of wisdom into a useable heuristic method when considering the optimization of human development. Lastly, Baltes and Staudinger claimed that the power of wisdom is in its ability to benchmark the quest for excellence.

Glück and Bluck (2013) offered a theory, which stated that there are four resources that enable the development of wisdom. Those four resources are mastery, openness, reflectivity, and emotion regulation/empathy; in short, MORE. Mastery was
described as how an individual trusts his or her abilities to handle challenges. Openness explains that wise individuals view change in positive terms and show interest in new experiences. Reflectivity offers that wise people reflect on experience and seldom see things as good or bad. Emotion regulation/empathy states that wise individuals have the ability to understand the emotions of others as well as their own, and they are concerned with the welfare of others. Finally, Glück and Bluck offered the MORE life experience model as a model that conceptualizes the development of wisdom.

The balance theory of wisdom offered by Sternberg (1998) declared that the idea of balance as a theory of wisdom is not new, but the uniqueness of the balance theory is related to the elements that are balanced. For example, Sternberg explained balance as “intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests balanced to achieve a common good” (p. 358). Sternberg further stated that this balance must take place over the short term as well as the long term and must show shaping and adapting attributes in existing environments as well as the selection of new environments. Additionally, Sternberg described wisdom as partly attitudinal, for an individual must decide to use knowledge for the benefit of others. Finally, Sternberg offered the suggestion that schools place too much emphasis on intelligence, when it is intelligence, creativity, and wisdom that schools should be developing.

S. C. Brown and Greene (2006) created a Wisdom Development Scale (WDS). Through exploration and factor analysis S. C. Brown and Greene built on K. K. Brown’s earlier model of wisdom development, which listed six factors of wisdom. The WDS research yielded the following definition of wisdom: “Wisdom is defined as a multidimensional construct with seven dimensions: Self-Knowledge, Emotional
Management, Altruism, Inspirational Engagement, Judgment, Life Knowledge and Life Skills” (p. 15). S. C. Brown and Greene further showed the content validity of the WDS through a comparison of existing theoretical constructs of wisdom. In their concluding remarks, S. C. Brown and Greene claimed that the WDS provides a framework for viewing the changes students go through during their college years. Also, they explained that confirmatory and exploratory analyses found the scores of the WDS to be valid and reliable.

**Wisdom and leadership.** Practical wisdom, according to Aristotle (trans. 1937), has the capacity for commanding and taking the initiative. The opinion expressed by Aristotle that wisdom and leadership are connected was expressed throughout the literature (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Mauz, 2015; Najoli, 2012; Spano, 2013; Sternberg, 1998; Suarez, 2014). In addition, wisdom was found throughout the literature to have an impact on followers and followership (Harvath, 2013; Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2000; Klein, 2014; Rutsch, 2015; Zimmerer, 2013). Leaders who choose to use wisdom have the opportunity to express their values and influence the development of meaning among followers (Mauz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010).

**Choosing the wise approach.** In order to sustain the health of an organization over the long term, a wisdom-based approach by executives has been recommended (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013; Suarez, 2014). When an executive chooses to use a wise approach, he or she creates opportunities to build organizational trust and synergy, according to Kolodinsky and Bierly (2013). They explained that these organizational opportunities are created when the executive attends with sensitivity “to morality and universal principles” (Kolodinsky & Bierly, 2013, p. 19). Executives who possess
necessary knowledge and moral maturity, use a reflective decision-making process that is future looking, and manage uncertainty well, are more likely to help sustain the effectiveness of their organizations (Kolodinky & Bierly, 2013). Similarly, Suarez (2014) suggested that executives use an inquiry model that is wisdom based in order to allow an organization where leaders and followers both can flourish.

Using wisdom. When leaders fail, it is usually due to a failure in wisdom not intelligence (Sternberg, 1998). Spano (2013) found that leaders can use wisdom to create policy, plan strategies, and set procedural changes in place. Along those lines, Najoli (2012) found that by employing wisdom, leaders were able to impact followers’ organizational citizenship behavior. When leaders scored higher on wisdom and knowledge, they also scored higher on transformational leadership, and those scores also were found to be predictive of a leadership style that is inspirational and motivational (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014). Mautz (2015) described the necessity of learning in organizations that is driven by senior leaders sharing wisdom and knowledge. Through knowledge sharing, policy creation, and planning, leaders can use wisdom to impact their followers (Mautz, 2015; Spano, 2013).

Expressing wisdom. Zimmerer (2013) explained that the followers in his study expressed that a leader’s deeply held values can be expressed, so they lead them to empowerment. Klein (2014) found that the leader’s behaviors deeply influence follower engagement. Also, Rutsch (2015) explained how leaders use growth stories to build foundational follower engagement. The expression of values, behaviors, and use of stories in these three studies are elements of the construct of wisdom found in WDS put forth by S. C. Brown and Greene (2006). For example, inspirational engagement and
emotional management were put forth by WDS as elements leaders expressed in each of the studies that found increased follower engagement. Using storytelling to communicate an inspirational future has been described as a “central task of leadership” (Denning 2011, p. 230). The leader’s role in expressing wisdom is central to the meaning-making process.

**Meaning and wisdom.** Creating meaning at work has been described as fundamental to the human experience (Yeoman, 2014). In addition, the need for leaders to create meaningful workplaces has been described as urgent (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Mautz (2015) outlined the following four traits of the meaning-making leader:

1. Have a passion for potential.
2. Emit a caring, connective undercurrent.
3. Possess framing finesse.
4. Create an atmosphere of relaxed intensity. (p. 176)

Mautz used case studies to describe the behaviors successful leaders use in each of these four areas. He described that leaders demonstrate a passion for potential when they energize their followers through challenge and growth that is matched with reassurance and autonomy. Mautz further explained that a caring, connective undercurrent is established when leaders show respect and demonstrate genuine care for their followers. In discussing framing finesse, Mautz illustrated how leaders help to build meaning through daily reminders to followers that their work matters. Finally, Mautz mentioned that leaders who create an atmosphere of relaxed intensity use humor and focus on having fun along the way. To add, leaders are thought to use wisdom to inspire, engage, and motivate followers (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Klein, 2014; Najoli, 2012). It is exactly
those behaviors that Mautz (2015) and Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) explained lead to meaning making for followers. Strong values and culture impact the process of organizational meaning making (Chalofsky, 2010; Mautz, 2015; D. B. Smith, 2014). Several studies stated that the process of creating and communicating the values and culture of the organization start with the leader (Najoli, 2012; Spano, 2013). Moreover, studies have pointed to leaders applying wisdom or a wise approach to impact organizational culture and follower behavior (Najoli, 2012; Suarez, 2014). Culture, values, and leader behavior help create the process of organizational meaning making (D. B. Smith, 2014). Additionally, Mautz (2015) described the importance and impact of sharing wisdom as an opportunity to meaningfully impact followers and create organizational meaning.

**Inspiration**

The following theoretical definition of inspiration was co-created for this research: A source of contagious motivation that resonates from the heart, which transcends the ordinary and drives leaders and their followers forward with confidence. In addition, the operational definition of inspiration co-created for this research is as follows: The heartfelt passion and energy that leaders exude through possibility-thinking, enthusiasm, encouragement, and hope to create relevant, meaningful connections that empower followers. The role of inspiration in guiding performance, innovation, organizational commitment, and personal meaning was well documented in the literature (Collins & Porras, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Mautz, 2015; McKee et al., 2008; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014). The theme of the inspirational leader and inspired followers was prevalent in the research. Bass and Avolio (1993) described inspirational motivation
as one of the four key factors in transformational leadership. Recent researchers also described the role of inspiration of leadership in creating an atmosphere conducive to innovation and high performance (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Webb, 2014).

The research pointed to agreement that followers are inspired by a challenge that is articulated in the form of organizational purpose (Collins & Porras, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Mautz, 2015). Collins and Porras (2002) described a core ideology as providing inspiration and guidance to followers. The core ideology helps to define the purpose and values of the organization, which serve to inspire followers. In support of this idea of purpose driving inspiration, Mautz (2015) exclaimed, “Purpose is the Profound Why” (p. 37). Mautz further offered that meaningful work is derived from the sense that a person is engaged in a worthy mission. Similarly, Kouzes and Posner (2006) decreed, “People commit to causes, not to plans” (p. 89). They described principles and purpose as the things that empower leaders to take action and create commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

**Inspiration and leadership.** Leadership literature is replete with suggestions on how and why leaders and organizations create inspiration. Inspiration has been described as the way leaders establish goals and align performance toward innovative outcomes (Webb, 2014). The behavior of leaders has been discussed as a way followers gain organizational inspiration and meaning (D. B. Smith, 2014). The literature also found that the way inspiration is created in the workplace varies. For example, Crowley (2011) described the role of intuition and individual acknowledgement, while Sinek (2014) explained the need for people to feel challenged, and Denning (2011) cited storytelling as a way workplace inspiration can be built. Even though authors suggested different routes
to inspiration, there was agreement that the leader’s task is to inspire the individual follower.

*Inspiring the individual.* Workplace inspiration has been described as a matter of the heart (Crowley, 2011). Crowley (2011) mentioned that people use their hearts to gain a sense that they and their contributions are valued. This heartfelt intuition creates motivation and leads to exceptional performance. According to Crowley, people are seeking meaning from their work, and they will only be engaged if they sense that their needs are being met. Crowley advocated for leadership that acknowledges individuals. Crowley further advanced the idea that failure to create a caring leadership style would fail to inspire and would ruin follower engagement. The acknowledgement of individuals and their contributions, according to Crowley, inspires excellent performance. In fact, Crowley (2011) claimed that genuine expressions of gratitude are “the most powerful and essential leadership practice of all” (pp. 115-116).

*The vision as inspiration.* The role of vision is often described when explaining how followers gain inspiration (Conyers, 2013; Sinek, 2014). Conyers (2013) explained that a vision that compels others can inspire great achievement. Sinek (2014) described that the challenge presented in a vision can inspire followers to pursue that which does not yet exist. Sinek explained that the challenge is more than an organizational goal, it is “a reason to come to work” (p. 211). Sinek predicted that if organizational leaders give their people a challenge, they will give their all. People need a leader who gives them a reason to commit to one another; he stated, “Human beings have thrived for fifty thousand years not because we are driven to serve ourselves, but because we are driven to
serve others” (Sinek, 2014, p. 213). Central to the role of vision is the ability to communicate.

**Storytelling as inspiration.** The importance of how a leader communicates is a theme throughout the literature. Denning (2011) expressed this idea clearly in the following statement: “Storytelling can translate those dry and abstract numbers into compelling pictures of a leader’s goals” (p. 19). Denning asserted that the use of narrative could allow a leader to expand his or her capabilities and become an interactive leader. Denning further pronounced that an interactive leader using narrative would be able to communicate in ways that people would come to know and respect. Similarly, Greenleaf (2002) stated that leaders are able to convince others of the direction they should pursue, and they are able to do this while challenging followers to work for something that is currently out of reach. However, Greenleaf cautioned that leaders should not fail to listen because listening can build bonds with other people.

**Integrity as inspiration.** The ability of a leader to communicate is central to his or her ability to inspire followers. Inspired leadership has been described as able to help followers find membership with organizational goals and values (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). Kegan and Lahey (2001) offered, “All leaders are leaders of language communities” (p.117). This idea connects to the notion that a leader must be able to articulate a credible, yet realistic, future and must be aware of what and how he or she communicates (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016). Collins and Porras (2002) implied that followers pick up on signals in their organizations, and those signals give them information on how they should act. In the same way, Sinek (2014) stated that a leader’s integrity is revealed by the consistency of his or her words matching his or her deeds. D. B. Smith (2014)
explained that leadership needs to be aware that their personal attention to consistency, values, and discipline are important inputs for followers.

**Meaning and inspiration.** The most advantageous thing a leader can do is use communication to inspire followers to actively implement complex new ideas (Denning, 2011). Mautz (2015) described the role leaders play in using communication to help followers find meaning at work. It is in the pursuit of complex tasks that meaning can then be found (Frankl, 2006). Helping followers find meaning is tied to creating meaning by communicating the importance of the work being done (Sinek, 2014). The literature suggests that leaders can use inspiration to help followers create workplace meaning by challenging them and supporting their belief in the purpose of their work. Leaders can also help promote workplace meaning by creating autonomy in the workplace (Cowart, 2014; Gladwell, 2008). To illustrate, Deci and Ryan (2015) mentioned that workers who were high in autonomous motivation had more productive work outcomes. They explained that in cultures of both the East and the West, autonomy is necessary for strong psychological wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2015). Senge (2004) explained that institutions, networks, and communities would be the co-creative leaders of the future, further suggesting autonomy as central to the complex work environments of the future. Finally, Zimmerer (2013) explained how a follower-focused work environment allows leaders to empower their followers toward autonomy through expressions of understanding and respect.

When leaders inspire followers to discover the deeper purpose of their work, they move them toward meaningfulness (Denning, 2011). The research of Ventegodt and Merrick (2009) led them to claim that personal meaning is enhanced by good work.
Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) offered that leaders could assist followers in the creation of meaning by helping them see opportunities when challenges are present. Ulrich and Ulrich also explained that when followers are challenged by a personal goal that aligns with the organizational goal, meaning could be enhanced.

Purpose inspires an individual to recharge commitments and reach further than before. Mautz (2015) claimed, “Operating with a sense of purpose shapes our work life (and life in general) and gives it intentionality, providing great clarity of direction like an internal compass” (p. 37). Mautz asserted that purpose contributes to increased production and can have a transformative impact on an organization and an individual. Likewise, Collins and Porras (2002) explained that the main role of purpose is to provide workplace inspiration and guidance. Sinek (2014) stated the leader’s role in providing a fascinating reason and central purpose as to why someone should work and make sacrifices. Finally, Mautz (2015), Collins and Porras (2002), and Sinek (2014) all suggested that by accentuating purpose, leaders can inspire followers to work harder and create better work outcomes. Table 2 highlights leadership behaviors associated with the five elements.

**Technology Leaders**

Leaders of technology firms are under constant pressure to lead effective workplaces (Bouhali et al., 2015; Jo et al. 2015; Slimane, 2015). One reason for this pressure is competition within a global environment that requires technology leaders to be innovative (Bouhali et al., 2015). Technology and innovation have been described as key factors for the economic progress of a country (Cristina, 2013). Also, technological
Table 2
*The Leadership Behaviors Associated With the Five Elements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Wisdom</th>
<th>Inspiration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a code of ethics</td>
<td>Co-create with followers</td>
<td>Build connections</td>
<td>Use reflective decision making</td>
<td>Acknowledge individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Future oriented</td>
<td>Build trust</td>
<td>Manage uncertainty well</td>
<td>Express gratitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Empower others</td>
<td>Mediate tough situations</td>
<td>Create policy</td>
<td>Challenge others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an inner circle</td>
<td>Clarify purpose</td>
<td>Build relationships</td>
<td>Plan strategy</td>
<td>Be consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be resilient</td>
<td>Challenge others</td>
<td>Create friendships</td>
<td>Share knowledge</td>
<td>Be disciplined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be reliable</td>
<td>Guide teams</td>
<td>Mentor others</td>
<td>Implement code of ethics</td>
<td>Future oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest</td>
<td>Use storytelling</td>
<td>Demonstrate caring</td>
<td>Use Storytelling</td>
<td>Guide teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be transparent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Optimism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Innovation has been mentioned as a key to the long-term performance of an organization (Makri & Scandura, 2010). Innovation is a way that value is added to an organization, and quality of life for workers is improved (Slimane, 2015). Technology industries have been described as being dependent on innovation (Jo et al., 2015). Despite the stated need for innovation in technology companies, innovation can be elusive and difficult to sustain (Christensen, 1997). Christensen further pointed out that a company must avoid becoming complacent or risk averse if it hopes to innovate. Technology leaders must be able to innovate while fostering meaning, to prevent what Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) described as a common problem in business today, a lack of meaning. One of the ways technology leaders can increase meaning and create high-performing teams is through the development of strong work relationships (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). However, the
literature described several ways in which leaders can drive high performance that may lead to innovation and meaning.

In order for leaders to be exemplary leaders they must “conduct themselves as role models that serve to inspire their followers” (Webb, 2014, p. 17). Cagan (2014) stated that an organization must be inspired by a product vision. Similarly, recent research described the leader’s role in creating and communicating a vision that creates an environment conducive to the promotion of innovation (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016). Bammens (2016) suggested that the development of caring relationships could enhance the work of followers. Also, Suarez (2014) described the role of wisdom in guiding an organization toward long-term success. Finally, courage was listed as one trait leaders could demonstrate to empower their followers (Akdol & Arikboga, 2015). Ak dol and Arikboga (2015) conducted research on the effects of leader behavior on technology workers; they found that humility and empowerment had a high effect on follower satisfaction. In addition, Dennison (2014) described humility as one of the traits that help make someone a great leader. D. Roberts and Watson (2014) described humble leaders as more likeable. In discussing empowerment, Varney (2009) described empowered followers as those poised to act on their beliefs and to do their best.

The literature review found agreement that technology leaders need to have a technological orientation and technological expertise in order to generate new knowledge. Caridi-Zahavi et al. (2016) explained that when leaders communicate a vision for innovation, they establish a context for facilitating the exchange, application, and combining of activities conducive to innovation. Bennis (2013) pointed out the need for technology leaders to have a belief that digital technologies can change the ways
leaders lead and manage. Leaders who possess a technological orientation can impact entrepreneurship in the company (Chen et al., 2014). Cagan (2014) further stated that innovation requires deep expertise. The leader does more than encourage innovation, he or she must also stimulate his or her followers’ “thinking with concrete ideas” (Peng et al., 2016, p. 222). Makuri and Scandura (2010) offered that a leader who creates new knowledge internally is likely to have a greater impact on productivity.

Leadership has been linked to creating meaning for followers by many authors (Cowart, 2014; Drath & Palus, 1994; Peng et al., 2016; Schwartz, 2015; Seidman, 2013; Varney, 2009). For technology leaders, the meaning-making process has been linked to intellectual stimulation. For example, Peng et al. (2016) found that CEO intellectual stimulation inspired meaningfulness among followers. Varney (2009) described leadership and the ability to create meaning as vital to organizational health and well-being. Here is seen meaning making and purpose connected to the leader’s ability to stimulate followers’ intellect.

Despite the constant demand placed on technology leaders, research to guide leaders is unclear and more is needed (Bammens, 2016; Demirtas et al., 2015; Morgan & Farsides, 2009; O’Reilly et al., 2014; Weiss & Adams, 2011). Research on the role of technology leadership has failed to clearly describe relationships between leadership and the key markers of performance (O’Reilly et al., 2014). Weiss and Adams (2011) explained that while there are calls for role changes in the role of technology leadership, research does not explain whether or not leaders are responding to that call. Finally, Caridi-Zahavi et al. (2016) found that scant research has been done to explain the tools that technology leaders use to create high-performing teams.
Summary

The demand to create meaningful workplaces has launched many leadership theories. A common theme in those theories points toward leadership that is meaning centered (Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Studies indicated that leaders use the leadership traits of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration to help their followers gain meaning and purpose from their work. Furthermore, the literature pointed toward the need for technology leaders to be able to create meaning and lead effective organizations. Current leadership studies have examined how leaders create connection with their followers in ways that inspire and connect them to their work. In fact, leadership has begun to be described in terms of followership, leading with heart, and being authentic. This has placed greater emphasis on determining how leaders become makers of meaning for themselves and their organizations. Additionally, meaning making has been described as a process wherein leaders build a culture marked by teams that authentically care for one another (Mautz, 2015).

The need for meaning-centered leadership was found throughout the literature. Leaders are being asked to develop teams of followers who are committed and passionate about their work. Studies indicate that leaders use character traits such as wisdom and courage to develop vision and inspire their followers. In the process, they create meaningful relationships that further drive organizational commitment and create personal meaning. Moreover, meaningful work is said to lessen the impact of workplace-related stress and improve one’s quality of life (Ingram, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Some have even called meaningful work a fundamental human need (Yeoman, 2014).
Leaders of technology companies are especially challenged to be meaning-centered leaders. They are called to inspire their organizations to a product vision that requires teams of passionately inspired individuals to collaborate on innovation that compels deep expertise (Cagan, 2014; Yukl, 2012). However, despite the call for technology leaders who can create meaning and innovation, research on how that is accomplished is insufficient (Buyl et al., 2014; Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Weiss & Adams, 2011). This research is a response to that call.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

According to C. M. Roberts (2010), the purpose of the methodology chapter is to explain how the study was conducted. The qualitative portion of this mixed-methods study allowed the words of exemplary technology leaders to fully illustrate the ways they perceived that the use of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration create organizational meaning for themselves and others. The quantitative portion allowed this researcher to capture data from a larger number of followers using a survey instrument developed for this study. This chapter begins with the purpose statement and the research questions. Next, the rationale for the research design is discussed; then, the population and sample are described. Following the population and sample, instrumentation used, data collection, and data analysis procedures are detailed. This chapter closes with an explanation of the limitations and a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. An additional purpose of this study was 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 technology leaders 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

A mixed-methods case study was used to describe and identify the behaviors exemplary technology leaders use in creating personal and organizational meaning. According to C. M. Roberts (2010), the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data allows the researcher to combine “what with a possible why” (p. 145). C. M. Roberts explained that the mixed-methods approach adds depth and breadth allowing the researcher to explain the data in a more rich and powerful way. Similarly, Creswell (2005) suggested that using both qualitative and quantitative data helps researchers to understand the research problems better than by just one type of data. Researchers express agreement that using both qualitative and quantitative data helps the researcher to get a clearer picture of the topic being studied, rather than just using one type of data (Creswell, 2005; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010; C. M. Roberts, 2010).

The qualitative portion of this mixed-methods case study was completed via face-to-face interviews with exemplary technology leaders. Sociology researchers have made extensive use of the case study since the 1920s (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010).
Creswell (2005) explained, “A case study is an in-depth exploration” (p. 439). Creswell further described, “The case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (p. 439). Patton (2015) offered that a case study is a story, which is rich and detailed and stands on its own. Case studies are able to make complex issues comprehensible. Case study research is focused on “obtaining thorough knowledge of an individual” (Patten, 2012, p. 9). Case studies have been used to develop important theories in clinical psychology (Patten, 2012). A researcher chooses a case study design when he or she wishes to provide deeper exploration and a more thorough understanding of a research problem (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). The quantitative data for this case study were gathered via electronic survey. The survey was comprised of closed-ended questions that explored perceptions of followers of the importance of the five elements of leadership. The questions sought to understand how followers perceive that leaders use character, vision, relationships, inspiration, and wisdom to create organizational meaning for themselves and their followers. After the qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed, the results were interpreted. Figure 1 graphically depicts the research design of this mixed-methods study.

**Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research can be described as naturalistic research. It is the “study of how people construct meaning” (Patton, 2015, p. 5). Patton (2015) pointed out that qualitative research uses stories to build an understanding of perspectives; it uses data in the form of interviews. Since fieldwork is the central activity of qualitative research, the researcher, according to Patton (2015), must maintain neutrality, empathy, and mindfulness. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that qualitative researchers
gather data in the form of words on natural occurring phenomena. Qualitative research is appropriate for use when little is known about a subject.

Figure 1. Graphical representation of a mixed-methods study.

Quantitative Research

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), quantitative research is a field of inquiry in which objectivity is emphasized. A quantitative researcher measures and describes phenomena by using numbers and statistics. McMillan and Schumacher described two types of quantitative research: experimental and nonexperimental. Experimental quantitative research includes true experiments, quasi-experimental studies, and single subject studies. Nonexperimental designs include descriptive, correlational, comparative, survey, ex post facto, and secondary analysis. Patten (2012) described quantitative research as a deductive process. The research begins with a review of the
literature and then the researcher deduces possible explanations to be tested. The researcher then attempts to measure and analyze relationships between identified variables. Quantitative inquiry is appropriate when the researcher wishes to make generalizations from the study population to the population in general.

**Mixed Methods**

Mixed-methods research is inquiry that features both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Explanatory mixed-methods research design, according to Patton (2015), is a form of inquiry that features the gathering of quantitative data first, and then qualitative data are collected in an attempt to explain the quantitative data. Another type of mixed-methods design presented by Patton is exploratory design. Exploratory design uses an initial small sample qualitative inquiry to identify themes to inform a larger quantitative design. Patton described a third type of mixed-methods design, wherein the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously. This method is called triangulation. Creswell (2005) stated, “Mixed methods research is a good design to use if you seek to build on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 510). This study uses a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data. Patton described triangulation as an ideal form of inquiry. The general picture supplied by the quantitative data is refined and extended by the qualitative data (Creswell, 2005).

**Method Rationale**

The team of 12 peer researchers, four faculty members, and the instrument expert who conducted this thematic study chose a mixed-methods case study design. This research was undertaken throughout a multidisciplinary group of organizations. Those
organizations included police departments, healthcare organizations, athletic coaches in NCAA Division I institutions, automotive organizations, private sector companies, K-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, charter schools, nonprofit universities, and technology firms. Throughout this research, all 12 peer researchers identified studies that examined the character traits of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration separately, but little evidence of their collective use was found.

Qualitative research, in the form of open-ended interview questions with three exemplary technology leaders, was used to explore the words of the leaders. Creswell (2005) explained that the words of the participants in the qualitative portion of a mixed-methods design “provide a complex picture of a situation” (p. 510). In addition, this study sought to identify the extent to which the behaviors of leaders help followers create personal and organizational meaning; therefore, quantitative data in the form of survey data were gathered from 12 followers of each exemplary leader. Creswell (2005) described that the quantitative portion of a mixed-methods study provides the researcher with an opportunity to gather data from a greater number of people. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that one advantage of a mixed-methods study is the ability to bring together the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research. To add, a mixed-methods study can minimize the weaknesses and maximize the strengths of the qualitative and quantitative data collected (Creswell, 2005; Klassen, Creswell, Clark, Smith, & Meissner, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Finally, a mixed-methods approach was the methodology chosen because using two data sources can lead to drawing more accurate inferences (Venkatesh et al., 2013).
Population

The population of a study has been described as the “total group to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). Additionally, Creswell (2005) explained that a population consists of the individuals who possess characteristics that set them apart from others. This study focused on exemplary technology leaders and their followers. Alex Payne, co-founder of Simple, described a technology company as a business that sells technology and/or profits from the sale of scientific knowledge that is applied to a concrete problem (Guzzeta, 2016). This study sought exemplary leaders and their followers of companies that fit the above definition of a technology company. Technology leaders must inspire their companies toward constant innovation while competing in the global market. There are currently over 100,000 software and information technology companies operating in the United States of America (Selectusa, 2016). There are an estimated 14,682 technology companies operating in California. Because of the large number of technology companies in California, it was not possible to include all technology companies due to time constraints, geography, and monetary considerations. Therefore, in order to identify a manageable population, a target population was identified.

Target Population

The total collection of individuals selected from an overall population of a study is referred to as the target population. Survey findings are said to be generalizable to the population that is defined by the target population. Great importance is placed on clearly identifying the target population in research studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Due to time or cost constraints, it is not typically feasible for large groups to be studied.
For this reason, population samples were selected from larger groups by the peer researcher. Exemplary technology leaders and their followers in Northern California were the target population of this study. Exemplary leaders were defined for this research as being distinguished from their peers for displaying five of the following six characteristics:

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 their 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 target population was further limited by geography, but the sample was considered representative of exemplary technology leaders in other regions of the United States. Creswell (2005) mentioned that probability sampling “is the most rigorous form of sampling” (p. 146). According to Creswell, probability sampling allows the researcher to assert generalizations from the target population to the sample. Therefore, the target population consists of exemplary technology leaders and their followers from Northern California. It should be noted that BusinessDictionary.com has defined the geographic area of this research as the hub of technology for the entire United States (“Silicon Valley,” 2016). Furthermore, the geographic area is referred to as the Silicon Valley, and it has been described as a global cluster of innovation (Engel, 2015). Due to the fluctuating number of companies, an exact number was difficult to come by. At the time
of this study, Northern California was estimated to have almost 7,000 (6,997) technology companies in operation.

Sample

Creswell (2005) explained that a sample is selected by a researcher for purposes of making generalizations about the target population. The sample for this research was three exemplary technology leaders who work in Northern California and 12 of their followers. To add, a sample is described as the group of participants who the data are collected from (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A variety of sampling techniques are available for a researcher to consider. This study considered purposeful sampling and convenience sampling. Creswell (2005) defined purposeful sampling as the intentional selection of sites and people in order to understand the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) said that purposeful sampling involves the selection of particular elements of the population that inform the research topic. On the other hand, convenience sampling allows the researcher to focus on participants who have availability and willingness to participate. A convenience sample allows the researcher to find information that is useful to answering the research questions (Creswell, 2005). By using convenience sampling, the researcher was able to respond to time and cost limitations associated with the study. By selecting technology leaders in Northern California, the researcher was able to access the leader in person at minimal expense. However, it is the purposeful selection of exemplary leaders and their followers that informed this research (see Figure 2).
Figure 2. Population, target, sample.

**Qualitative sampling.** The qualitative portion of this mixed-methods study required the study of information-rich cases. Patton (2015) noted, “Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding” (p. 264). According to Patton, the researcher is able to illuminate the research question by selecting information-rich cases. Patton pointed out that rules for qualitative sample size do not exist. In fact, Patton explained, “The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected” (p. 313). Three exemplary leaders informed this research with their insights. In order to identify exemplary leaders, a search of top-performing leaders in California was conducted. This was done by having conversations with professionals in the technology field as well as examining a list of top-performing technology companies in California.
After establishing a brief list of potential participants, a list of prospective participants was generated.

**Quantitative sampling.** It should be noted that this research identified 12 followers of each leader for the quantitative survey. Working with each leader and the human resources departments of their organizations, 12 followers of each leader were identified to be invited to participate in the study. Creswell (2005) pointed out that the selection of participants who are said to be representative of the population allows the researcher to make generalizations about that population. A group of followers who manage different levels of the organization with the leader was targeted for the quantitative data collection in this study.

**Sample Subject Selection Process**

Upon completion of the Institutional Review Board assessment of the proposal of this study, technology leaders who met the convenience and purposeful criteria for selection were contacted from a list of likely participants who have exhibited exemplary leadership skills. The researcher used snowball sampling during the sample subject selection process. Snowball sampling was used to generate names of potential participants. The researcher then assessed whether or not they met five of the six characteristics established for a leader to be included in this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), snowball sampling is the process by which the researcher solicits participant referrals from each successive participant; snowball sampling is frequently used for in-depth interviews. The following process was used for communicating with likely participants:
1. Technology leaders were contacted via phone so the researcher could describe the purpose of the study as well as the risks and benefits of participation. Additionally, the researcher explained participant anonymity and responded to all questions that were asked. A letter of information was then sent to participating leaders (see Appendix A).

2. After each of the leaders agreed to participate, a meeting—not to exceed 60 minutes—was scheduled.

3. In order to allow the leaders to be adequately prepared to adhere to the agreed-upon time frame, the following documents were sent via e-mail: (a) Research Participant’s Bill of Rights (Appendix B), (b) Invitation to Participate letter (Appendix C), (c) Thematic Interview Protocol (Appendix D), (d) Informed Consent form to be signed and collected at the time of the interview (Appendix E), and (e) Audio Release form to be signed and collected at the time of the interview (Appendix F).

**Instrumentation**

A mixed-methods case study using quantitative and qualitative data was the instrumentation of this study. Creswell (2005) explained that a mixed-method study, which uses both qualitative and quantitative data, could be useful in several ways. For example, Creswell mentioned that using both types of data might allow the researcher to better understand the research problem. A survey for quantitative data collection and an interview guide for qualitative data collection were developed. The peer researchers, working with the faculty, and instrument development expert Dr. James D. Cox, developed a quantitative survey to be deployed with SurveyMonkey and a qualitative interview guide for use with the exemplary leaders. Dr. Cox coauthored the 2008 book,
Your Opinion Please: How to Build the Best Questionnaires in the Field of Education (Cox & Cox, 2008). His expertise and the guidance of the faculty aided the peer researchers during the instrument development phase of the study.

**Researcher as an Instrument of the Study**

According to Patton (2015), “In qualitative inquiry, the person conducting interviews and engaging in field observations is the instrument of the inquiry” (p. 33). During the qualitative portion of this mixed-methods case study, the researcher was an instrument of the study. The researcher prepared for this role by building background knowledge during university course work. In addition, the researcher participated in a field test of the interview and received feedback from an observer who was a marketing analyst and regularly conducted interviews and focus groups. Additionally, the pilot participant also provided feedback. That participant was a technology leader from the Silicon Valley of California and was considered representative of the exemplary leaders targeted for this research. Throughout the data gathering and analyzing process, it was essential that the researcher openly and honestly capture and reflect events as they took place. It was necessary for the researcher to be reflective with regard to personal background and experiences that could have impacted interpretation of the data. For example, the researcher is an educator not a technology professional; this fact could have impacted the researcher’s interpretations of the data. In addition, the researcher brought biases associated with past experiences that could have impacted the study.

**Qualitative Instrument**

The qualitative instrument designed for this study was an interview driven by open-ended questions asked by the researcher. According to Patton (2015), one of the
contributions of qualitative methods comes from “the openness of inquiry: asking open-ended interview questions” (p. 11). Interview questions were based on the literature and developed in concert with the co-researchers, faculty, and instrumentation expert. The interview design included an opening introduction to the research and the researcher. The participants were given adequate background to understand the nature of the interview questions. Next, a series of open-ended questions and discussion prompts were used to elicit adequate depth to each of the questions.

Prior to conducting the interviews, each participant received and signed an informed consent document. Additionally, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought prior to conducting the interviews. The interview questions developed for this study were developed with the peer researchers, who were guided by university professors in an iterative process. The peer researchers developed the questions after an extensive review of literature. In addition, each individual researcher conducted a trial interview with someone with a similar position to that of exemplary leaders, while being observed by a knowledgeable researcher. The trial interview and ensuing feedback provided the researchers with additional information for conducting interviews with the case study participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

**Interview Instrument Development**

The interview script developed for the interviews was informed by a thorough review of the literature on the five leadership elements: character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. In addition, the literature review informed the researcher on the topics of leadership, followership, and meaning making. The review of the literature revealed that each of the five variables is often mentioned in studies attempting to
describe outstanding leadership and performance. Moreover, the literature on creating meaning theorized the role leaders play in helping followers create personal and organizational meaning. The literature review also illustrated a need for further research to examine how technology leaders incorporate current leadership theory into their leadership practices. After completing the review of the literature, the peer researchers worked together to develop questions. The 12 peer researchers worked in teams of three in a collaborative process to identify themes from the literature. Each team developed questions on two of the variables. Next, the peer researchers met with the faculty to discuss and evaluate each question. With the aid of Dr. Cox and the faculty, the 12 peer researchers chose questions to be used in the pilot study.

The peer researchers conducted a pilot of the interview instrument. This researcher interviewed a technology leader. During that interview, an expert in market research observed and provided feedback via the completion of an evaluation. In addition, the pilot participant was given the opportunity to provide feedback at the end of the interview. Based on feedback from all 12 peer researchers, a final version of the interview instrument was approved by the faculty and Dr. Cox.

**Conducting the interviews.** Upon gaining agreement and the completion of all necessary documentation, the interviews were conducted. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the researcher some flexibility with question prompts to elicit information. An on-line transcription service was used to transcribe the questions and responses. Next, the text was analyzed and coded using the text from the transcribed interviews. Themes, patterns, and common categories were identified and analyzed.
Validity. According to Patton (2015), “Validity in qualitative research refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomenon and the realities of the real world” (p. 330). Patton explained that there are strategies for enhancing the validity of qualitative research. One of those strategies, mechanically recorded data, was used in this research. Each interview was recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. After transcription, the data were prepared for analysis. After an initial reading of the transcriptions, codes were developed. The codes were grouped to form categories. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that categories are the researcher’s first level of induction. The categories were then examined to discover patterns. A second strategy mentioned by Patton (2015), participant review, was also used. Prior to analysis, the transcription of the interview was sent to the participants to provide an opportunity for any clarifications. Criterion validity was addressed by establishing that the participants were technology leaders who met the criteria of exemplary leaders in Northern California.

Reliability. The pilot testing and ensuing observer and participant feedback, along with the advice of the faculty and Dr. Cox helped the peer researchers to develop a reliable instrument. The thorough development of the questionnaire helped the researcher avoid data collection bias. The field testing allowed the researcher to practice and receive feedback that helped ensure uniformity in the interview process.

Quantitative Instrument

Quantitative research involves using an instrument to extract numerical data that relate to some facet of the subjects of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Creswell (2005), the researcher faces several decisions in the process of
collecting quantitative data. Dr. James D. Cox, a renowned expert in the field of developing research instruments, guided the peer researchers in the process of developing the quantitative survey. Four faculty members further guided the peer researchers.

**Survey Development**

The peer researchers collaborated in the development of a quantitative survey. The development of the survey was informed by the literature review. The peer researchers worked in four teams of three, and they were assigned two variables each. The teams identified themes from the literature review as they co-developed survey questions. Each team submitted questions to the faculty and the instrumentation expert for development into a survey. The peer researchers, faculty, and expert then collaborated to create a final survey. The survey was then entered into SurveyMonkey, a tool for online surveys. The final survey was then pilot tested by a select group of peer researchers.

**Test-retest reliability.** The survey designed for use in this study used test-retest to assess for reliability. Creswell (2005) stated, “A goal of good research is to have measures and observations that are reliable” (p. 162). The survey was given twice to the pilot participants, 5 to 7 days apart to test for reliability. The survey results were sent via SurveyMonkey. Participants in the pilot test also completed a questionnaire to inform the peer researchers on the quality of the survey. The faculty members and the instrument expert reviewed the pilot participant questionnaires. After another round of revisions, a final quantitative survey and electronic consent was readied for use in conducting the surveys with the followers of the exemplary technology leaders selected for this study.
(see Appendix G). Based on this process, the peer researchers, faculty, and instrument expert determined that the survey for this study was reliable.

**Validity.** According to Creswell (2005), an instrument in a study must be determined to be valid as well as reliable. Creswell described three types of validity: content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. To ensure content validity, Creswell stated, “Ask experts if the questions are representative of the area of concern” (p. 165). Dr. Cox provided feedback throughout the process to help ensure content validity. In determining construct validity, Creswell explained that researchers need to be able to safely generalize the scores from the instrument. The faculty, the instrumentation expert, and the peer researchers were aided in determining construct validity through the gathering of feedback from pilot participants. The iterative process of developing this survey helped the peer researchers determine that the instrument met the criteria for validity.

**Data Collection**

The data for this study were collected only after the IRB of Brandman University granted permission (see Appendix H). Additionally, all informed consent documents were on hand prior to the collection of any data. In order to ensure the protection of all data and the privacy of the participants, all the data were kept on a secure computer and all printed documents were kept in a locked office safe.

The data collection in a mixed-methods study contains quantitative and qualitative data. Data in the form of electronic survey results and transcribed interviews were collected for this research.
Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data in this study were collected via transcribed interviews with three exemplary technology leaders. Patton (2015) mentioned that qualitative results are based on three kinds of data, one of which is in-depth, open-ended interviews. Patton explained that interviews produce direct quotes from people about their experiences. The interviews were conducted in person and used the open-ended questions created by the peer researchers, faculty, and Dr. Cox. The three participants signed an audio-recording release prior to the beginning of the interview. After recording the interviews, an on-line transcription service transcribed the questions and answers. Prior to analyzing the data, the transcribed interviews were sent to each leader for review.

Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative data collected for this research were collected electronically. The peer researchers designed a professionally reviewed survey instrument in concert with the faculty and instrumentation expert. That survey instrument was disseminated electronically via a secure password-protected SurveyMonkey account. Twelve followers of each exemplary technology leader were selected for participation. The 12 participants received an e-mail detailing the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their participation. Prior to launching the survey, each participant signed an informed consent form, which then triggered the launch of the survey.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used for this research. The quantitative data were in the form of survey data collected through SurveyMonkey. The qualitative data used for this research were the transcribed interviews with three
exemplary leaders of technology companies. After the surveys and interviews were completed, both forms of data were examined to inform the study.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

The process of analyzing qualitative data demands that the researcher understand how to interpret text to inform the research (Creswell, 2005). After recording the interviews with each of the three technology leaders, an online transcription service was used to prepare a narrative of the questions and answers. The transcript was coded to organize and interpret the data. The raw data from the transcription yielded useful information regarding categories and patterns. Categories and patterns were also reviewed as to strength and frequency. This information was used to answer the first research question, which sought to understand how exemplary technology leaders create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. Each interview provided qualitative data that helped to answer the above research question with regard to how exemplary technology leaders create personal and organizational meaning for themselves. It was necessary to analyze and interpret both the qualitative and quantitative data to gain an understanding of how the leaders create meaning for themselves and their followers. Interrater reliability was established by working with a peer researcher during this phase of the study. The peer researcher coded the transcribed interviews and provided the analysis to the researcher in order to establish interrater reliability.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

A total of 36 surveys were deployed and 31 were returned and used for the quantitative data of this research. Twelve followers of each of the three exemplary
technology leaders participated. Descriptive statistics were used to describe and analyze the quantitative data for each of the followers. The survey was deployed to the leaders’ followers. The researcher used descriptive statistics when analyzing the quantitative data collected. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated, “Descriptive statistics are used to transform a set of numbers or observations into indices that describe or characterize the data” (p. 149). Summaries about the data can be obtained using descriptive statistics. According to McMillan and Schumacher, descriptive statistics and graphic analyses can be combined to understand results and display data in quantitative research studies.

Central Tendency

There are three measure of central tendency: mean, median, and mode. A different type of information about the distribution of scores is provided by each of the three measures. The most commonly used type of average is the mean. The mean can also be described as the point where the sum of deviations equals zero. The midpoint of a set of data is referred to as the median. The value or score occurring most often is the mode (Salkind, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the mean and the frequency were used in the quantitative data analysis.

Limitations

Limitations of a study can impact the researcher’s ability to generalize the results. C. M. Roberts (2010) suggested that all studies have limitations and that clearly describing those limitations is essential. The major limitations of this study were time, researcher as an instrument of the study, sample size, and geography. Each of these areas was considered during this study and a complete description appears in the following sections.
Time

The peer researchers in this study were guided by university faculty in establishing a time frame for the completion of this study. All 12 of the peer researchers used the same instrumentation over an approximately similar time frame. The deadlines that were agreed upon did change throughout the study. However, the flexibility in terms of time frames for data collection and analysis was impacted by the group agreements. Also, data collection could not begin until approval from the IRB was granted. As a result, the time frame for data collection was constrained to the fall and winter months of 2016. In addition, it was important that both the quantitative and qualitative instruments be deployed as simultaneously as possible. The passage of time between those deployments could have impacted the researcher’s ability to make accurate statements about the data.

Geography

Each of the 12 peer researchers in this study had geographic constraints. This study was constrained to technology leaders in Northern California. That being said, the Silicon Valley of California has been described as one of the global clusters of technology innovation (Engel, 2015). Therefore, the geographic constraints did not prevent the researcher from having access to a considerable number of exemplary technology leaders. However, it is noteworthy that exemplary technology leaders outside of the state of California were not considered for this study.

Sample Size

The sample size for this research was developed in agreement with the 12 peer researchers and the university faculty advisors. Purposeful sampling was used to identify
three exemplary leaders in each of the 12 fields of focus. Patton (2015) suggested that the term purposeful sampling suggests that the researcher is studying information-rich cases that will provide a depth of understanding. Furthermore, a sample of 12 followers of each leader was also agreed upon. The sample of followers could be impacted by biases of those being interviewed with regard to their preconceived ideas of the role of leadership in creating workplace meaning. Despite the purposeful sampling, and assurances of anonymity, this small sample size could be impacted by the research and thus limit the generalizability of the study.

**Summary**

Mixed-methods research allows the researcher to use the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative inquiry. This allows the researcher to create a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This research used a mixed-methods case study methodology. According to Patton (2015), “The case study stands on its own as a detailed and rich story about a person, organization” (p. 259). This chapter started with an overview of the research methodology. The purpose statement and research questions were then reiterated. Next, the researcher presented background information on research methods; that was followed by the method that was chosen for this study. Then, the population, target population, and sample were presented. After that, a thorough description of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis was listed. Lastly, this chapter listed the limitations of the study and this summary.

This study is one of 12 being done by a team of 12 peer researchers, four Brandman University faculty advisors, and one expert in research instrument
development. All of the methods described in this chapter were the work of this team working in a collaborative and iterative fashion. The team designed a mixed-methods case study that allowed each of the 12 peer researchers to generate insight into the way exemplary leaders create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers by the use of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. The next chapter of this study contains a detailed description of the quantitative and qualitative data that were gathered on exemplary technology leaders and their followers. Following that, Chapter V presents an analysis of the data, significant findings, conclusions, and recommendations as well as recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This chapter explains the research methodology used in this study. Additionally, this chapter describes the qualitative data collected from the three exemplary technology leaders chosen for the study and the quantitative data collected from 12 followers of each leader. The qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire designed for this study. Similarly, a survey designed for this study was used to collect the quantitative data. The first research question was answered using the qualitative data, and the second research question was answered using the quantitative data. This chapter begins with a review of the purpose statement, research questions, population and sample, and methodology. Next, the chapter presents a review and an analysis of the data. A narrative description of the qualitative data collected and data tables were used to present the data gathered to answer the first research question. This format is then repeated with the quantitative data to answer the second research question.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. An additional purpose of this study was 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 technology leaders 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?

Methodology

A mixed-methods case study was the methodology used to describe and identify the behaviors exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning. The qualitative portion of the study was completed with three exemplary technology leaders in face-to-face interviews. The co-created interview instrument developed for this research (presented in Chapter III) was sent via e-mail to each participant 48 hours prior to the interviews. Each interview was scheduled for 1 hour. After the interview was completed, the researcher used a web-based transcription service to transcribe the recorded interview. The researcher then checked each transcript against the actual recording to correct any errors in the transcription. The corrected and accurate transcript was then sent to each participant for an accuracy check. Next, the transcribed interview was coded for categories and patterns that explained the behaviors exemplary technology leaders used to create personal and organizational meaning. A peer researcher provided an interrater reliability check during the coding process. Following each interview, the exemplary technology leaders provided the names and e-mail addresses of 12 of their closest followers. Then the researcher sent an invitation to
participate in the survey co-created for this research. The results of those surveys were then analyzed to determine how the followers of exemplary technology leaders perceived the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration helped to create personal and organizational meaning.

**Interrater Reliability**

Interrater reliability is used often in research that involves making professional judgments (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This strategy has also been described as useful in establishing reliability in traditional qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2015). For this study, the researcher worked with a peer researcher to help reduce the potential for bias. The peer researcher was given transcribed interviews and was asked to code them, identifying categories and patterns. A high degree of consistency was noted between the researcher’s codes, patterns, and categories, and those of the peer researcher. The researcher and the peer researcher identified nearly equal percentages of responses in each of the main categories. This process was repeated for each interview, and each time a high degree of agreement was noted between the peer researcher’s findings and the researcher’s findings.

**Population**

The population of a study has been described as the “total group to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). Additionally, Creswell (2005) explained that a population consists of the individuals who possess characteristics that set them apart from others. This study focused on exemplary technology leaders and their followers. The total collection of individuals selected from an overall population of a study is referred to as the target population. Survey findings are said to be
generalizable to the population that is defined by the target population. Great importance is placed on clearly identifying the target population in research studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Due to time or cost constraints, it is not typically feasible for large groups to be studied. For this reason, population samples were selected from groups by the peer researcher. Exemplary technology leaders and their followers in Northern California were the target population of this study. Exemplary leaders were defined for this research as being distinguished from their peers for displaying five of the following six characteristics:

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 their 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.

Sample

Creswell (2005) explained that a sample is selected by a researcher for purposes of making generalizations about the target population. The sample for this research was three exemplary technology leaders and 12 of their followers who work in the Northern California region known as the Silicon Valley. To add, a sample is described as the group of participants from whom the data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A variety of sampling techniques are available for a researcher to consider. This study considered purposeful sampling and convenience sampling. Creswell (2005) defined
purposeful sampling as the intentional selection of sites and people in order to understand the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) said that purposeful sampling involves the selection of particular elements of the population that inform the research topic. On the other hand, convenience sampling allows the researcher to focus on participants who have availability and willingness to participate. A convenience sample allows the researcher to find information that is useful to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2005). By using convenience sampling, the researcher was able to respond to time and cost limitations associated with the study. By selecting technology leaders in Northern California, the researcher was able to access the leader in person at minimal expense. However, it is the purposeful selection of exemplary technology leaders and their followers that informed this research.

Demographic Data

Exemplary Technology Leaders

Snowball sampling was employed to identify potential participants. Snowball sampling is useful in situations where the potential participants are scattered within the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher solicited names of potential participants from each interviewee, starting with the technology leader who participated in the field test. Additionally, the researcher sought referrals from individuals with contacts in the technology industry. From this method, seven potential participants were identified. From that group of seven, three were selected to receive an invitation to participate. The four potential participants who were not included did not meet the criteria established for inclusion as an exemplary technology leader as defined by this study. An analysis of web-based information was used to guide the researcher’s selection
of potential participants. For example, the researcher reviewed company profiles to determine the geographic area of operation of each leader. Additional web resources identified the length of time in leaders’ current positions, industry accolades, publications and presentations, and follower relationships. Also, the referring individuals identified the potential leaders by identifying exemplary qualities. For example, Leader 1 received personal accolades for his relationships from the individual who informed the researcher of his potential participation in the study. Leader 2 was identified by an individual with knowledge of the individual’s impact within the organization, and someone with knowledge of his or her work identified Leader 3. The researcher did not solicit feedback from the leaders with regard to the exemplary leadership criteria, so lack of evidence does not necessarily mean the participant did not meet the criteria. Each of the three exemplary technology leaders chosen to participate met at least five of the six criteria for inclusion in the study. The participants had an average time of 10 years of experience in their positions as a group, and all participants were male. Table 3 summarizes the demographic data of the three participating leaders. The qualifying criteria of the three exemplary technology leaders interviewed in this study are summarized in Table 4.

Table 3

*Exemplary Leader Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years in Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader 1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader 2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Exemplary Leader Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary leader criteria</th>
<th>Leader 1</th>
<th>Leader 2</th>
<th>Leader 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Evidence of successful relationships with followers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evidence of leadership behaviors promoting a positive and productive organizational culture.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Have 5 or more years of experience in the profession or field.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recognized by peers as a successful leader.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Membership in associations or groups focused on their field</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Followers

The peer researchers designed a survey instrument in concert with the faculty and instrumentation expert. That survey instrument was disseminated electronically via a secure password-protected SurveyMonkey account. Twelve followers of each exemplary technology leader were selected for participation. The 12 participants received an e-mail detailing the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their participation. Prior to launching the survey, each participant signed an informed consent form, which then triggered the launch of the survey. The survey asked each of the followers to respond to questions about the degree of importance to which they felt that the leadership domains of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration helped to create personal and organizational wisdom. Thirty-one of the 36 followers who received an invitation e-mail participated; 65% of the respondents reported being with their current leader 0-2 years and roughly 2/3 of the followers are male. The demographic data of the participating followers are presented in Table 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic information</th>
<th># of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time with current leader (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data by Research Question

Research Question 1

*What are the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration?*

Three exemplary technology leaders participated in the qualitative interviews presented in this research. The interviews were conducted in person and used the open-ended questions created by the peer researchers, faculty, and Dr. Cox. The three
participants signed an audio-recording release prior to the beginning of the interview. After recording the interviews, an online transcription service was used to transcribe the questions and answers. The transcription was then sent to each participant to allow the leader to check the accuracy of the transcription. The researcher listened to the audio recording of the interviews while reading the transcription and made any necessary corrections where the transcription misinterpreted any of the spoken words. This corrected transcription was shared with a co-researcher to provide an interrater reliability check that is covered later in this chapter.

During each of the interviews, the researcher followed the thematic interview protocol co-developed for this study. To ensure accuracy from interview to interview, the researcher followed the script exactly as it appears in Appendix D. The only variation within the interviews was the researcher’s use of the following probes:

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?”

Prior to asking the first question, each participant received a 3 x 5 card containing the following terms and definitions (see Figure 3):
Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership element</th>
<th>Number of codes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The card was referenced throughout the interviews. The recorded responses were later transcribed and coding was done to analyze patterns and themes related to the research questions. The researcher identified a total of 139 coded responses from the three interviews. All of the responses fell into one of the five categories of leadership behavior that are the focus of this study. Additionally, 20 responses were seen as essential to the participants. Those essentials are discussed later in the narrative. Table 6 contains a summary of the number of codes that fell into each category of leadership behavior.
A breakdown of each individual participant’s coded responses is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

*Individual Participant Codes Numbers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership element</th>
<th>Number of codes</th>
<th>Leader 1</th>
<th>Leader 2</th>
<th>Leader 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), data coding starts by identifying comprehensible segments of data. Repeated reading and analysis of the data allowed the researcher to assign codes to each identified segment. McMillan and Schumacher added that “a code is a name or phrase that is used to provide meaning to the segment” (p. 371). After identifying and refining the codes, the codes were grouped into categories. During this process, the researcher applied iterative analysis to ensure that the codes were grouped into the appropriate categories. Finally, the researcher applied deductive reasoning to identify patterns from within the categories. Figure 4 illustrates the process used to examine the qualitative data.
Figure 4. Process of creating patterns of meaning.

A sampling of codes, along with the identified categories, and patterns that emerged in this qualitative data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Sample Codes, Categories, and Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership element</th>
<th>Sample codes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>V+I=D, V=S, V+I, Wh</td>
<td>Creates direction, active, whyness</td>
<td>Vision and inspiration are intertwined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>ER, RC, PC</td>
<td>Engagement, communication, trust</td>
<td>Build and sustain for success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>C+LE, C=BI, CF</td>
<td>Integrity, attributes, fundamentals</td>
<td>Active in character development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>LS, IF, WI</td>
<td>Communication, active engagement</td>
<td>Linked to vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>W+G, OW, MW</td>
<td>Sound principles, fiscally conservative, experience, organizational</td>
<td>Active in developing organizational wisdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patterns emerged in each of the five leadership elements. Each of the three leaders described the impact of a vision that inspired followers. In describing the interrelatedness of vision and inspiration, Leader 3 said, “People want to know where they are going.” Similarly, Leader 2 offered, “People have to understand the vision of
why what they do is important.” Along those lines, Leader 1 suggested, “It’s the vision that really creates direction for everyone.” This process of using codes to generate categories to expose patterns was used to generate the patterns illustrated in Table 8.

**Vision.** Each leader answered “yes” to the first question: “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?” Leader 1 responded, “Yes absolutely.” Leaders 2 and 3 both answered, “Yes.” Following the research protocol, the researcher followed up with the question: “Realizing that they are all important, do any jump out as being absolutely essential?” Each leader identified vision as being of primary importance. Leader 2 stated, “Vision really is a combination of them all.” However, Leader 3 identified vision and inspiration as being coequals from the list, “Vision and inspiration are particularly important.” Next, the researcher prompted each leader to explain why he selected those above the others. Leader 3 mentioned that value to humanity and “whyness” is communicated using vision and inspiration in tandem. Similarly, Leader 2 explained that vision creates direction, which leads to inspiration. Along those lines, Leader 2 explained that vision communicates importance, “the why.” Each leader identified this pattern of vision and inspiration being closely intertwined in the process of creating an inspiring and ennobling view of the company’s direction. Similarly, the literature suggested that leadership is responsible for communicating inspiring and compelling visions (Cagan, 2014; Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016; Collins & Porras, 2002; Mautz, 2015; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010; Yukl, 2012). The second question prompted the leaders to recall things they have done to develop a vision for themselves and their organizations. Leaders 1 and 3 described vision
as an action. Leader 3 declared, “They need a vision to be actionable.” Leaders 1 and 3 further described leading by example as a means of communicating the vision. Leaders 2 and 3 mentioned that they use processes and procedures to help guide the vision, while Leader 1 described creating a culture of trust and doing the right thing to guide the vision; he stated, “People work with you because they trust you.” The leaders’ description of vision as tools for guiding day-to-day work aligns with the definition of vision offered by Senge (2004). Each of the leaders clearly articulated the need for communicating a clear vision that communicates direction, strategy, and value.

**Relationships.** Trust was a common theme from all three leaders when asked the following question: “Are there specific things you have done to develop relationships among the members of your organization?” For example, Leader 1 described treating everyone with equal respect in order to create trusting relationships: “It’s a trust relationship, so it creates a very healthy environment.” Likewise, Leader 2 claimed, “Relationships come from trust.” Also, Leader 3 explained, “The personal approach is more impactful.” This description of trust as a necessary precursor to strong relationships was found throughout the literature (Anderson, 2015; Henderson, 2011; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). All three also expressed the role that relationships play in creating an environment that promotes optimal conditions for growth, change, and innovation. Leader 1 expressed that failure was acceptable in his company because it leads to an innovative environment. However, without trusting relationships, there is a fear of failure. Leader 2 described actively coaching teams to communicate effectively, while Leader 3 detailed a process of ongoing team building and using story to build relationships as a part of a strategy to build a disruptive company. Another thread that
connected all three leaders with regard to relationships was engagement. Leader 1 simply said, “Everyone speaks.” Leader 2 declared, “Relationships lead to engagement.” Leader 3 elaborated, “We have to engage people and make them feel welcome, like they’re part of the family.” All three leaders agreed that building and sustaining relationships is a necessary and important part of their leadership.

**Character.** Item 3 on the interview protocol asked the leaders questions related to how they demonstrate their character as the leader of the organization. All three leaders had divergent answers. Leader 1 described leading by example and being authentic. Leader 2 explained that the leader’s role was to build the character of the teams, and that is accomplished by being transparent and providing the necessary information. On the other hand, Leader 3 described a process of using a moral compass and fundamentals of human decency. When asked what behaviors they look for in their employees that demonstrate character, all three leaders again had divergent responses. Leader 1 expressed a desire to have authentic employees, so second guessing them is unnecessary. Leader 1 added, “Being authentic is number one.” In contrast, Leader 2 indicated that character was expressed through effective collaboration, flexibility, and communication. Leader 2 suggested that it starts by “getting people to communicate in real human terms that aren’t email that aren’t meetings.” Leader 3 mentioned celebrating good character when it occurs and described two different scenarios. In one scenario, an employee was celebrated for making a sacrifice for the benefit of the company. In the other scenario, a subordinate spoke up for a team member. Both scenarios were described as opportunities to celebrate character. One area of agreement was found when Leaders 1 and 3 both mentioned the importance of integrity. Leader 3 described integrity as a synonym for
character. One overarching similarity with each leader’s answer to the character question is that leaders all look for some behaviors that can be described and identified as demonstrating character, and they all feel they have a role in developing the character of their teams. All three leaders appeared to reflect an acknowledgment of their role as the leader to develop character within the organization, a theme that was noted in the literature (Collins & Porras, 2002; Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Howard et al., 2008).

**Inspiration.** When asked to describe some things they do to inspire their staff, all three leaders described using communication. However, there was great variety in the forms of communication used. “Inspiring others is what differentiates leaders,” said Leader 1. Leader 1 further noted that he used real-life stories to inspire his followers. He described a story where grit was required for the company to survive, as one story that is shared with followers. Leader 1 also described using stories from the field to communicate how the work of followers impacts the customer. Leader 2 mentioned using the touch points of relationships and having fun as a way to inspire his followers. Leader 3 described celebrating small wins and being judicious in his enthusiasm to ensure the articulation of a “future version of our truth.” Leader 3 also indicated that humility could play a role in inspiring followers. Leaders 2 and 3 expressed that their teams gained additional inspiration from their teammates. One pattern that was clearly expressed by all three leaders was the way in which they felt actively engaged in creating inspiration among their followers. The literature described a process whereby followers are inspired by a vision (Conyers, 2013; Sinek, 2014). Similarly, each leader suggested that vision and inspiration are often linked.
**Wisdom.** The leaders were asked to consider the definition of wisdom and then recall a time where they faced a complex or unclear situation. All three had ready examples and widely divergent responses, but there were some areas where common patterns emerged. For example, Leaders 1 and 3 identified being conservative and following a sound business process as a wise process. However, Leaders 2 and 3 both spoke of organizational wisdom. Leader 2 expressed that when relationships, inspiration, character, and vision are aligned, wisdom comes from the organization. Leader 2 added that processes and procedures “take stress from me and it takes stress off everybody.” Leader 3, on the other hand, described organizational wisdom as being supplied by mentors. He noted that each member of his management team is required to have two mentors. Also, Leaders 1 and 3 mentioned that wisdom comes from experience. Leader 1 reasoned, “Experience informs practice,” while Leader 3 proclaimed, “Wisdom is derivative of experience.”

**Essentials.** Each of the participants identified elements of leadership that were repeated throughout the interview. For example, Leader 1 identified grit, willingness to grind, providing incentives, and careful resource management as essentials. Leader 2 detailed the need for recognition and reward, for empowerment, to simplify and focus, and for autonomy and optimism. Leader 3 expressed the need to follow policy and procedure, to have mentors, to manage resources carefully, and to live the experience with his followers. Each leader referred to procedure, fundamentals, or an underlying structure that guides leadership. To illustrate, Leader 1 said, “If you go back to the fundamentals and apply the fundamentals then I think generally you’ll be successful.” Similarly, Leader 2 described using a structuring device for daily briefings and biweekly
Along those lines, Leader 3 explained how the company relied on policy and procedure to guide the actions of the team. All three leaders mentioned some form of recognition and/or reward. All three also mentioned the need to manage resources effectively.

**Summary.** In summary, the three exemplary technology leaders interviewed for this research, referred to as leaders in this chapter, expressed answers that led to the identification of several common patterns in each of the leadership domains that were identified for this study. First, all five elements of leadership were confirmed to be important by all three leaders. Next, all three leaders identified vision as the most important element. Each leader described the role that vision plays in giving direction to followers. There were some differences in how they described the behaviors they used to guide the vision; however, there was a consensus that they are actively involved in communicating that vision and engagement is essential. Similar patterns were found in the leadership domain of relationships. All three leaders mentioned trust, communication, and engagement. It is worth noting that the leaders expressed that trusting relationships, which draw out the voices of followers and create a culture where they can take risks, are essential for change, innovation, and growth. In the domain of character, integrity was expressed as a synonym, and all three leaders described taking active roles in developing character within the organizations they lead. Inspiration was seen as linked to vision. Each leader reflected that vision communicates importance, and to that end, it is, or should be inspiring. In the domain of wisdom, leaders expressed that experience plays a role in developing wisdom, but they also mentioned that they develop organizational wisdom by through a variety of leadership behaviors from mentoring to
applying sound fundamentals of business. Some of the items identified as essential by the leaders were using sound processes and procedures, recognition and reward, and careful resource management.

**Research Question 2**

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

Following the qualitative interviews, each exemplary technology leader was asked to provide the names and e-mail addresses of 12 of their closest followers. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to the followers via e-mail. The electronic correspondence contained a brief introduction to the study and a link to the leaders behavior survey on SurveyMonkey. A total of 36 surveys were deployed and 31 were completed. A participant bill of rights and informed consent were enclosed in the survey. Prior to starting the survey, each participant had to complete the informed consent documentation. The data from the survey were reported separately in each of the five individual leadership domains. Table 9 reports the total mean score for each of the variables presented in the survey. While there are differences in the mean scores, it should be noted that the differences are not statistically significant, and all the mean scores are separated by no more than two tenths of a point. Also of note is that the leadership element of wisdom was comprised of 10 questions while the other four elements had only five questions each.

The data presented in Table 9 show that the respondents to the survey selected character as the most critically important leadership variable. The mean score was 5.23
Table 9

Summary of the Number of Respondents and the Perceived Degree of How Important Each Variable Is to the Creation of Meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables total</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Marginally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Critically important</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of answers</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and 81.9% of respondents described character as very important or critically important. Character was also the only variable that did not have a respondent select it as not important or marginally important. The second highest rated variable was relationships with a mean score of 5.13. Over 90% of the respondents described relationships as important, very important, or critically important. The next highest rated variable with a mean score of 5.08 was wisdom. Wisdom had the second highest percentage of responses ranking it as a critically important variable; however, wisdom also had the highest percentage of respondents who described it as not important or marginally important. Vision, with a mean score of 5.07, was the fourth highest rated leadership variable. Over 92% of the responses indicated that vision was important, very important, or critically important. Inspiration was the lowest scoring of the five variables with a mean score of 5.01. When compared to the other variables, inspiration was ranked lowest in terms of critical importance and highest in terms of being only somewhat important.

**Character.** Next, each leadership variable was examined in depth to take a closer look at the individual responses to the questions within each variable. Table 10 contains the individual breakdown for the responses in the leadership variable of character. Five leadership behaviors were described in the area of character. Each respondent had to choose from a 6-point Likert scale. The scores were tabulated by number of responses, percentage of responses, and the mean score.

The highest mean score in the area of character was behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others. All but one response fell in the top three categories of important, very important, or critically important. This scoring was supported by the
### Summary of the Degree of Importance of the Leadership Trait of Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Marginally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Critically important</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively listens when communicating with others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to challenging situations with optimism.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions show concern for the well-being of others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
literature finding that character is an important facet of leadership behavior leading to success (Collins & Porras, 2002; Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Howard, Korver, & Birchard, 2008). The next highest score was, Actions with others shows that he can be trusted. It should be noted that the literature pointed to a variety of synonyms such as trust and values when describing the character that is essential for leadership to display (Hartnell, 2012; Klein, 2014; Sinek, 2014; D. B. Smith, 2014). The third highest score was actively listens when communicating with others; the mean of 5.26 fell above the overall mean of 5.23 with regard to degree of importance. Like the highest scoring area of character, only one respondent listed active listening lower than important on the survey scale. Responding with optimism to challenging situations was the fourth highest area in the character trait survey. The lowest score within the character variable was actions that show concern for others. Three respondents described this behavior as only somewhat important. It is worth noting that no respondent chose not important or marginally important for any of the leadership behaviors described in this section of the survey.

**Relationships.** The second highest scoring leadership trait according to the respondents was relationships. Table 11 shows the number, percentage, and mean scores of the leadership behaviors described within the variable of relationships. There were five leadership behaviors for the respondents to rank within the variable of relationships.

Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization was the highest leadership behavior according to the respondents. The mean score was 5.56. Thirty of the 31 respondents scored this behavior as very important or critically important. The literature also expressed the role of trust in creating strong
Table 11

*Summary of the Degree of Importance of the Leadership Trait of Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Marginally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Critically important</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. continues promotes our team’s moving together as one unit to serve a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common purpose.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. behaves in a way that shows she/he cares about the team members.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. communicates in a clear, meaningful way.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. encourages team members to share leadership when performing tasks.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
workplace relationships (Anderson, 2015; Henderson, 2011; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The second highest score in the relationship variable was continuously promotes our team’s moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose, with a mean score 5.30. Two respondents described this as only somewhat important, but all others felt it was important, very important, or critically important. Communicates in a clear meaningful way had the third highest score with a mean of 5.15. Only 13 respondents felt this was a critically important leadership behavior. Behaves in a way that shows she/he cares about the team members was the fourth ranked behavior with a mean score of 5.11. This score was below the overall mean of the relationship variable. Encouraging team members to share leadership when performing tasks was the lowest rated leadership behavior with a mean of 4.56.

Wisdom. The third highest scoring leadership variable was wisdom. Table 12 shows the number, percentage, and mean scores of the leadership behaviors described within the variable of wisdom. There were 10 leadership behaviors for the respondents to rank within the variable of wisdom.

The following two leadership behaviors were the most selected: When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations; and brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization. Both of these leadership behaviors had a mean score of 5.41. The second highest score in the wisdom element was considers past experiences when responding to complex situations within the organization. The mean score for this leadership behavior was 5.22. The next two highest scores both had a mean score of 5.15; those areas were showing compassion toward team members and taking
Table 12

**Summary of the Degree of Importance of the Leadership Trait of Wisdom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wisdom</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Marginally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Critically important</th>
<th>Total mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overall goals of the organization as part of conversations.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevates the quality of decision making by discussing similarities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of past situations with team members.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates compassion toward team members.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior reflects an understanding of life’s complexities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrates personal values with organizational values when</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interacting with team members.</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situations within the organization.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes action by doing the “right thing” in a variety of</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizational settings.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays expertise when working in a variety of situations within</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the organization.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considers past experiences when responding to complex situations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within the organization.</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows concern for others.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
action by doing the right thing in a variety of settings. Elevates the quality of decision making by discussing similarities of past situations with team members had a mean of 4.89. The final two behaviors in the wisdom variable with a mean score of 4.74 were behavior reflects an understanding of life’s complexities, and integrates personal values with organizational values when interacting with team members. It is worth noting that the wisdom variable had the largest number of behaviors in the study.

**Vision.** The fourth highest scoring leadership variable was vision. Table 13 shows the number, percentage, and mean scores of the leadership behaviors described within the variable of vision. There were five leadership behaviors for the respondents to rank within the variable of vision.

The number one response with a mean score of 5.37 was the leader’s ability to communicate the organization’s vision in a way in which team members support it. This idea of a leader’s ability to engage others through visioning was described in the literature (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Henderson, 2011; Lane-Schmitz, 2012). The next highest mean score was 5.26: demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions. The third highest behavior with a mean of 5.04 described the leader’s ability to promote innovation that aligns with the organization’s vision. Engagement of team members in creating a vision of the future had a mean score of 5.00, ranking fourth of the five leadership behaviors. The lowest scoring behavior with a mean of 4.67 was behavior reflects organizational vision when making decisions.

**Inspiration.** The lowest scoring of the five leadership traits was inspiration. Table 14 shows the number, percentage, and mean scores of the leadership behaviors
Table 13

Summary of the Degree of Importance of the Leadership Trait of Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Marginally important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Critically important</th>
<th>Total Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications the organization’s vision in a way in which team members support it.</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>1 3.2%</td>
<td>5 16.1%</td>
<td>8 25.8%</td>
<td>17 54.8%</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages team members in creating a vision for the future.</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>2 6.5%</td>
<td>8 25.8%</td>
<td>7 22.6%</td>
<td>13 41.9%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior reflects organizational vision when making decisions.</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>5 16.1%</td>
<td>8 25.8%</td>
<td>6 19.4%</td>
<td>11 35.5%</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes innovation that aligns with the organization’s vision.</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>7 24.1%</td>
<td>10 34.5%</td>
<td>12 41.4%</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions.</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>1 3.2%</td>
<td>3 9.7%</td>
<td>13 41.9%</td>
<td>14 45.2%</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>2 1.3%</td>
<td>9 5.9%</td>
<td>31 20.3%</td>
<td>44 28.8%</td>
<td>67 43.8%</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Marginally important</td>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>Critically important</td>
<td>Total mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works with team members in a way that generates enthusiasm within teams.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizes achievements of teams and team members.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization’s leading edge.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engages in activities that build confidence among team members.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall degree of importance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
described within the variable of inspiration. There were five leadership behaviors for the respondents to rank within the variable of inspiration.

The number one leadership behavior chosen by the respondents in the area of inspiration was encouraging team members to innovate in order to advance the organization’s leading edge, with a mean score of 5.22. Thirty of the 31 respondents felt that this was important, very important, or critically important. The need for technology leaders to create innovative organizations was mentioned in the literature (Caridi-Zahavi et al., 2016). In fact, for technology firms, innovation is seen as a key to long-term organizational performance (Makri & Scandura, 2010). Respondents selected engage in activities that build confidence among team members as the second leading behavior with a score of 5.07. The third highest leadership behavior was recognizing the achievements of teams and team members. This behavior had a mean score of 5.04. Works with team members in a way that generates enthusiasm within teams had a mean score of 5.0 and was fourth on the list. Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving was last with a mean score of 4.70.

**Summary**

This chapter focused on the research findings of this mixed-methods study. Qualitative data gathered in interviews with exemplary technology leaders were presented. The transcribed words of the leaders were analyzed through a process that involved identifying codes, categories and patterns from the words of the participating exemplary leaders. Interrater reliability was used to ensure consistency of the data analysis. As a result of the qualitative analysis, patterns were identified in each of the leadership elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. The
leaders all stated that all five elements were important and they used all five of the leadership elements in creating organizational meaning. All of the leaders identified vision as the most important of the five elements. However, they also described vision and inspiration as being closely aligned. They expressed taking an active role in developing organizational character. Similarly, the leaders explained that they are active in ensuring organizational wisdom. Each leader expressed using some procedures and/or processes to guide the organization. Finally, each coded interview identified some essentials that the leaders emphatically expressed as needed for organizational success.

The quantitative data were gathered from a survey tool that was launched immediately following each interview. Twelve followers of each exemplary technology leader were provided a link to the survey. A total of 31 responses were gathered from that survey deployment. The mean score of each of the five leadership elements was determined. Character was the highest rated leadership element identified by the highest mean score, while inspiration had the lowest mean score. The findings within each of the five leadership elements were reported out in separate sections. Correlations to findings from the review of literature were drawn to highlight the survey findings.

Chapter V reports the findings in greater details. Major findings and unexpected findings are reported. Next, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research are presented. This research closes with concluding remarks and reflections.
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V first presents an overview of the research study. Then the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, population, and sample are presented. Next, the chapter explains major findings, unexpected findings, and conclusions. After that, implications for action and recommendations for further research are followed by concluding remarks and reflections.

Summary

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study was to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. An additional purpose of this study was 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 technology leaders 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?
Methodology

A mixed-methods case study was the methodology used to describe and identify the behaviors exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning. The qualitative portion of the study was completed with three exemplary technology leaders in face-to-face interviews. The cocreated interview instrument developed for this research (presented in Chapter III) was sent via e-mail to each participant 48 hours prior to the interviews. Each interview was scheduled for 1 hour. After the interview was completed, the researcher used a web-based transcription service to transcribe the recorded interview. The researcher then checked each transcript against the actual recording to correct any errors in the transcription. The corrected and accurate transcript was then sent to each participant for an accuracy check. Next, the transcribed interview was coded for categories and patterns that explain the behaviors exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning. A peer researcher provided an intercoder reliability check during the coding process. Following each interview, the exemplary technology leaders provided the names and e-mail addresses of 12 of their closest followers. Then the researcher sent an invitation to participate in the survey cocreated for this research (presented in Chapter III). The results from those surveys were then analyzed to determine how the followers of exemplary technology leaders perceived that the behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration help to create personal and organizational meaning.

Population

The population of a study has been described as the “total group to which results can be generalized” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). Additionally, Creswell
explained that a population consists of the individuals who possess characteristics that set them apart from others. This study focused on exemplary technology leaders and their followers. The total collection of individuals selected from an overall population of a study is referred to as the target population. Survey findings are said to be generalizable to the population that is defined by the target population. Great importance is placed on clearly identifying the target population in research studies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Due to time or cost constraints, it is not typically feasible for large groups to be studied. For this reason, population samples were selected from larger groups by the peer researcher. Exemplary technology leaders and their followers in Northern California were the target population of this study. Exemplary leaders were defined for this research as being distinguished from their peers for displaying five of the following six characteristics:

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 their 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.

Sample

Creswell (2005) explained that a sample is selected by a researcher for purposes of making generalizations about the target population. The sample for this research was three exemplary technology leaders and 12 of their followers who work in Northern
California. To add, a sample is described as the group of participants from whom the data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A variety of sampling techniques are available for a researcher to consider. This study considered purposeful sampling and convenience sampling. Creswell (2005) defined purposeful sampling as the intentional selection of sites and people in order to understand the phenomenon being studied. Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) said that purposeful sampling involves the selection of particular elements of the population that inform the research topic. On the other hand, convenience sampling allows the researcher to focus on participants who have availability and willingness to participate. A convenience sample allows the researcher to find information that is useful to answering the research questions (Creswell, 2005). By using convenience sampling, the researcher was able to respond to time and cost limitations associated with the study. By selecting technology leaders in Northern California, the researcher was able to access the leader in person at minimal expense. However, it is the purposeful selection of exemplary technology leaders and their followers that informed this research.

**Major Findings**

The major findings of this research study are presented by research question. The first research question covers the major findings from the qualitative portion of this mixed-methods study. The second research question presents the major findings from the quantitative data that were gathered via survey.
Research Question 1

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

The five leadership elements. The three leaders interviewed expressed that they use all five of the leadership elements. Leader 2 suggested all five elements are necessary: “Without character the vision is not going to be bought into, without relationships no one is going to listen to us. We’ve got to inspire people and wisdom is used on a daily basis.” Similarly Leader 1 spoke of the interaction of the elements in developing an incentive plan, “It’s a small part of relationship, part of wisdom . . . also a little bit of the character piece.” Leader 3 explained that communicating “whyness” required all five of the elements working together.

Character. All three exemplary technology leaders interviewed for this study explained a process of describing and identifying character in their followers. All three also assumed an active role in developing the character of the followers and their organizations. A similar pattern emerged wherein each leader detailed attempts to use authenticity to create clarity and develop character. Leader 1 explained that authenticity was used to create a culture that was character driven. Similarly, Leader 2 offered that by providing information and being transparent, he helps teams develop character-driven teams. Also, Leader 3 mentioned the need to speak the truth in order for character to develop. Another major finding was that all three exemplary technology leaders highlighted the role of communication in developing character. To illustrate, Leader 1 suggested that actions communicate character. Leader 2 clearly identified
communication skills as necessary for the development of character-driven teams. Leader 3 detailed a process of talking about character in order to support, encourage, and develop character development. In brief, all three exemplary technology leaders cited taking an active role in the character development of their organizations through authenticity and communication.

**Vision.** Vision was the most coded response from the three interviews; 27% of the coded responses fell into the category of vision. Additionally, each leader explained that vision was the most important or co-most important of the five leadership elements presented in the interviews. Leader 3 described vision and inspiration as being of equal importance. The leaders demonstrated agreement with the idea that vision provides direction and helps establish the why of the company. The leaders described using communication to help create a vision that provides direction, strategy, and clarity with regard to the value of the organization and the work that is being done.

**Relationships.** The leaders all expressed that trust is necessary for relationships to be built and sustained within organizations. They described a process of building relationships through equal treatment. Also, the leaders cited engaging in behaviors such as team building, coaching, and using storytelling to strengthen and maintain organizational relationships. All three leaders conveyed the importance of relationships with regard to building the capacity for strong teams that are able to innovative and manage change.

**Wisdom.** All three leaders suggested that maintaining organizational wisdom is crucial. However, each leader suggested different methods to accomplish organizational wisdom. Leader 1 explained that to create a wise organization, the leader must create a
strong culture with careful alignment of core values. Leader 2 explained that transparency leads to problem solving among teams, which leads to organizational wisdom. Leader 3 suggested that ongoing mentoring builds wisdom within an organization. All three leaders described using sound business principles and processes to create organizational wisdom. Leaders 2 and 3 mentioned that processes allow for problem solving, which, in turn, leads to organizational wisdom. Finally, Leader 1 implied that creating incentives is an expression of organizational wisdom.

**Inspiration.** Each of the leaders indicated some degree of linkage between inspiration and vision. Two of the three leaders mentioned using stories to inspire their followers, while Leader 2 stated that he inspires his team by establishing a big goal, “We want to be the best in America.” Leader 3 noted that showing humility and celebrating wins are two ways of creating organizational wisdom. All three of the leaders described being actively involved in creating organizational inspiration. However, two of the leaders reasoned that teams within their organization create inspiration by their work together.

During the coding of the interviews, there were several responses that were seen as essential. All three leaders expressed the need for careful resource management and following processes and procedures that are based on sound business fundamentals. Leader 1 submitted that grit and the ability to grind are essential. Leader 2 voiced the need to be optimistic and engaging to create conditions for teams to self-correct. Leader 3 voiced the need to “Live it” with his team so they get a sense that everyone is engaged in the same struggle.
Research Question 2

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

A survey titled Leader Behaviors was shared via e-mail with a link to a survey on SurveyMonkey. The survey asked leaders to rank leader behaviors in the five leadership elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. The leaders were asked to rank each behavior as *not important, marginally important, somewhat important, important, very important*, or *critically important*. The mean score, number of respondents, and percentages were then calculated.

**Findings.** The survey findings are presented from highest mean score to lowest mean score. However, that does not suggest that a statistically significant difference exists between the scores. In fact, the closeness of the scores suggests that all five elements of leadership are considered of importance to the followers. In the area of wisdom, two behaviors were tied with the highest score. Table 15 presents a summary of the highest ranked leadership behavior reported by the followers in each of the five elements.

**Character.** The survey data indicated that the followers who completed the survey perceived that behaviors related to character are most important for a leader to demonstrate. The behaviors related to character had the highest mean score when ranked for importance. Within the character portion of the survey, the participants ranked behaving ethically with others and demonstrating actions that lead to trust the highest. This aligns with the literature review findings that trust and values were described as
important for leaders, their followers, and the organizations they serve (Hartnell, 2012; Klein, 2014; Sinek, 2014; D. B. Smith, 2014).

Table 15

*Highest Ranked Leader Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of the conversations. Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>Communicates the organization’s vision in a way in which team members support it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization’s leading edge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationships.** Leader behavior in the area of relationships was the second highest score among the five leadership elements presented in the survey. The number one leader behavior identified in the relationship section was creating an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization. Interestingly, several authors expressed that leaders build trust when they build relationships (Anderson, 2015; Henderson, 2011; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The second highest mean score of leader behavior in relationships was the ability to continuously promote the team’s moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose. The lowest scoring mean in the relationship portion of the survey was the leader behavior related to encouraging team members to share leadership when accomplishing tasks. The mean for this behavior was a full point lower than the number one scoring leader behavior.
**Wisdom.** Leader behaviors related to wisdom and vision were separated by just 1/1,000th of a point with regard to mean scores. The wisdom leadership elements, continuously keeping the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations and bringing personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations, were identified as the two most important leader behaviors. Other leader behaviors identified as important were considering past experience when taking action, showing compassion, and doing the right thing.

**Vision.** The top leader behavior related to vision was the ability to communicate a vision in a way that team members can support it. The second highest was demonstrating a forward thinking orientation. Collins and Porras (2002) identified these two elements of vision when they claimed a vision must serve to bring a team together around a new future. Promoting innovation and engaging team members in the creation of a vision for the future were ranked third and fourth among the five leader behaviors.

**Inspiration.** The lowest scoring mean among the five elements of leader behavior was in the area of inspiration. The highest scoring leader behavior in the area of inspiration was encouraging team members to innovate in order to advance the organization’s leading edge. The second- and third-ranked leader behaviors in this section were engaging in activities that build the confidence of team members and recognizing the achievements of others.

**Unexpected Findings**

A comparison and contrast of the major findings identified several unexpected findings.

- The leaders all described vision as the most important of the leadership elements
presented during the interviews. However, the followers listed vision as the fourth highest rated leader behavior as measured by the mean score of responses.

- The leaders also voiced agreement that inspiration is closely tied to vision. In fact, they rated inspiration second in terms of importance as measured by the percentage of coded responses. In contrast, the followers scored inspiration as the least important of the five leadership behaviors presented in the survey. Furthermore, the followers placed character at the top of the list of leader behaviors, while the leaders scored it fourth.

   A closer examination of the leader behaviors selected by followers in the survey illustrates additional unexpected findings.

- In the leader element of character, active listening was scored above the mean of leader behaviors. In contrast, none of the leaders mentioned active listening as a strategy they use to demonstrate character. The leaders did mention engagement and communication but not listening to followers.

- The followers scored encouraging innovation to advance the organization’s leading edge, as the number one leader behavior in the element of inspiration. Each leader did address the need to lead an innovative organization, but none of them identified encouraging innovation as a tool for inspiration.

**Conclusions**

In this section, six conclusions are presented. One of the main conclusions of this research is that leaders use all five of the leadership elements presented in this research. Each exemplary technology leader described ways that each element is acted on by a specific behavior. Many of the behaviors were identified during the review of literature,
and those behaviors are associated with creating organizational meaning, which leads to the first conclusion.

**Conclusion 1.** The findings of this research identified that exemplary technology leaders use the five elements of leadership thought to create organizational meaning. During interviews, each leader remarked that character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration were important areas of behavior that they use to help their followers find organizational meaning. Similarly, the research showed that if a person could find a sense of purpose, belonging, and fulfillment, he or she could find meaning in his or her work (Mautz, 2015; Seligman, 2011; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). All three leaders described specific behaviors in each of the five elements of leadership that lead to organizational meaning. Technology leaders must understand that character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration are important to developing organizational meaning. Technology leaders must actively communicate behaviors that develop all five elements in order to enhance their potential to be makers of meaning for their followers.

**Conclusion 2.** The findings of this research further identified that exemplary technology leaders take an active role in emphasizing character in their organizations. Each leader described the importance of demonstrating personal character, while simultaneously building organizational character. The literature supported that character is essential to a leader’s success (Collins & Porras, 2002; Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Howard et al., 2008). Additionally, the literature found that character plays an important role in creating personal and organizational meaning (Chalofsky, 2010; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The leaders in this study all described behaviors that allow them to express their character. Communicating
authenticity with followers was a behavior each leader described he used to promote organizational character. Each leader described actively working to develop and express authenticity in order to build character. This is especially important because the followers surveyed in this research identified character as the number one leadership behavior among the five elements of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

**Conclusion 3.** This research concluded that exemplary technology leaders prioritize and devote themselves to developing and communicating a vision for their followers and their organizations. All three leaders identified vision as the most, or one of the most, important elements of their leadership. The leaders all expressed that a vision was essential to the development of their organizations. Similarly, the literature described that creating a vision is essential to driving commitment, growth, and innovation (Collins & Porras, 2002; Senge, 2004; Sinek, 2014). Also, the followers surveyed expressed that leaders must be able to communicate the vision in ways that allow them to support it. Engagement through visioning was also found in the literature (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Henderson, 2011; Lane-Schmitz, 2012). To ensure that their organizations have committed, inspired, and innovative organizations, technology leaders must communicate an organizational vision that followers can actively support.

**Conclusion 4.** Based on the findings of this research, technology leaders must develop trust in order to create relationships with their followers. All three exemplary technology leaders explained that trust plays a key role in developing relationships within their organizations. Throughout the literature, trust was described as a precursor to
relationship development (Anderson, 2015; Henderson, 2011; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Also, the followers identified trust as the number one leadership behavior for the development of relationships. Similarly, trust was identified throughout the literature as a way strong workplace relationships are created (Anderson, 2015; Henderson, 2011; Sinek, 2014; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Mautz (2015) explained that meaning is greatly enhanced by quality relationships. Strong trusting relationships enable technology leaders to strengthen organizational meaning for themselves and their followers.

**Conclusion 5.** Based on the findings of this research, technology leaders must consider taking actions to ensure the development of organizational wisdom. The followers’ survey responses indicated that leaders should keep the goals of the organization at the forefront of all conversations. Both the leaders and the followers agreed that learning from experience plays a part in developing organizational wisdom. Throughout the literature, the link between wisdom and leadership was evident (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Mautz, 2015; Najoli, 2012; Spano, 2013; Sternberg, 1998; Suarez, 2014). Leaders who are able to share wisdom create an opportunity to impact their followers and create organizational meaning (Mautz, 2015). The use of storytelling to share milestones and turning points was one technique the leaders mentioned using to develop organizational wisdom. One leader expressed that all senior leaders are required to have mentors. The leaders also expressed that following sound business practices allows for the development of organizational wisdom. Technology leaders must take action to share experiential wisdom and develop organizational wisdom.
Conclusion 6. The final conclusion, based on the findings of this research, is that technology leaders must inspire their followers to innovate. All three exemplary technology leaders identified inspiration as being closely linked to organizational vision. Also, the followers expressed that the number one leadership behavior that they found inspiring was being encouraged to innovate in order to advance the organization’s leading edge. Technology leaders must inspire followers with a vision that promotes organizational growth that is tied to innovation. The literature expressed that followers are inspired by a challenge, which is articulated in the form of organizational purpose (Collins & Porras, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Mautz, 2015). Also, current research described the role of inspiration and leadership in creating an atmosphere conducive to innovation and high performance (Dronnen-Schmidt, 2014; Webb, 2014). Technology leaders must share a vision that inspires their followers and encourages them to innovate.

Implications for Action

This research illustrates how exemplary technology leaders use character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration to create organizational meaning, drive innovation, manage change, and build strong teams. The data gathered in this research led to conclusions that, if acted upon, could serve to help technology leaders and followers experience greater organizational meaning. The implications for action will specify those steps needed to create greater organizational meaning in technology companies.

Implication 1. First, leaders need to develop an understanding of how meaning making within their organizations can be impactful. By combining each of the five leadership elements into a leadership framework of meaning making, technology leaders will have a clear route to creating organizational meaning. Technology leaders are called
on to inspire their organizations to a product vision that requires teams of passionately inspired individuals to collaborate on innovation that compels deep expertise (Cagan, 2014; Yukl, 2012). It is recommended that the Association for Information Technology Professionals (AITP) and the Technology Leaders Association (TLA) develop a specific training program for technology leaders in the use of a meaning-making framework that focuses on behaviors related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. In addition, it is recommended that these technology professional associations award a certificate to leaders completing the training and demonstrating those skills in their organization.

Implication 2. It is recommended that technology leaders administer a survey instrument based on the five elements of meaning to identify perceptions of followers. Second, the survey data should be used to align the leaders’ use of the five elements of meaning with their followers perceived needs. Mautz (2015) summarized, “All in all, promoting an atmosphere of authenticity and creating caring environments help yield norms of behavior that forge strong, meaningful bonds and produce vastly stronger results” (p. 164). By carefully aligning the use of character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration, technology leaders may be able to build more meaningful workplaces.

Implication 3. It is recommended that each technology leader work with followers in identifying their five highest values and use that data to develop an organizational purpose. It is recommended that the organizational purpose be supported by a moral and ethical code for guiding leader and follower behaviors. As Howard et al. (2008) stated, “We need to know how to clarify the ethical issue, create alternatives, and
choose not just the right action, but the best action to build character and strengthen relationships” (p. 88). Character has been shown to play an important role in creating personal and organizational meaning (Chalofsky, 2010; Mautz, 2015; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). The follower surveys pointed to character as the number one leadership behavior they desire from their leaders. By developing and acting on a moral code, technology leaders will strengthen the character of their organizations.

**Implication 4.** It is recommended that leaders conduct an annual story telling session that encourages all followers to share outstanding experiences in the organization. It is recommended that the leader use the shared experiences to build the organizations culture through story telling. The leaders in this study all mentioned the use of storytelling and using the vision to inspire. It is suggested that technology leaders focus storytelling and inspiration on a compelling and innovative future. Denning (2011) expressed, “Storytelling can translate those dry and abstract numbers into compelling pictures of a leader’s goals” (p. 19). Additionally, innovation is a way that value is added to an organization and quality of life for workers is improved (Slimane, 2015). Through a focus on inspiring via stories of innovation, technology leaders will inspire greater organizational meaning and promote innovation within their organizations.

**Implication 5.** It is recommended that each leader develop an action plan for leadership growth based on feedback from a 360-degree instrument. It is further recommended that leaders conduct debriefing sessions with followers to share data and solicit ideas for growth. In addition, it is recommended that leaders report at regular intervals to stakeholders on organizational growth and direction. Then, the leaders will create an action plan based on stakeholder feedback. It is the use of all five elements of
meaning-making leadership that will lead to increased organizational meaning. In order to foster meaning, leaders are called on to create workplaces rich in authenticity, teamwork, and caring (Mautz, 2015). Developing an awareness of how their followers experience the leader’s use of the five elements will help technology leaders create meaning-centered workplaces.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The following recommendations for future research are designed to continue the important work of building workplace meaning. Ongoing research will allow leaders to diagnose, understand, and develop solutions that create greater workplace meaning. By creating meaningful work environments, leaders can help others find a sense of purpose, belonging, and fulfillment (Mautz, 2015; Seligman 2011; Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). When people are engaged in work they find meaningful, the organizations they work in are strengthened (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Therefore, the following recommendations for research are intended to guide other researchers in uncovering the ways that leaders and followers create and experience organizational meaning through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

It is first recommended that this study be replicated with a different sample of technology leaders. All of the participating leaders in this study were male. Research could be conducted with female technology leaders to assess the behaviors they use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

Secondly, this study was confined geographically to Northern California. It is possible that the closeness of this research to the Silicon Valley impacted the technology
leadership behaviors. Research could be conducted in other geographical regions of the United States to assess how technology leaders in other areas behave in order to create personal and organizational meaning.

Third, the exemplary technology leaders who participated in this study were from the baby boomer generation. This study could be replicated with leaders from Generation X or the millennial generation to see if there are differences in the behaviors those leaders use to create organizational meaning using character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

A fourth recommendation is for researchers to seek opportunities to do a qualitative organizational study with a technology leader. Researchers could conduct a similar interview with a single technology leader. Next, the researchers could conduct observations and collect artifacts to identify the behaviors that technology leaders use to create organizational meaning using character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. Identifying alignment between the leaders’ perceptions of behavior with observations could add to the understanding of how technology leaders use character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration.

The fifth recommendation is for researchers to focus on how technology leaders gain personal meaning from leadership behaviors that call on them to use character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration. A technology leadership questionnaire could be developed to assess leaders’ perceptions of the influence of each of the five elements of leadership presented in this study. A deeper understanding of how technology leaders extract meaning from leadership behaviors could further guide the development of meaning making as a leadership tool comprised of the five elements of
leadership. Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) explained that technology leaders are faced with the demand to innovate and create organizational meaning. A better understanding of how technology leaders experience meaning from their leadership efforts would help further the body of knowledge on meaning-centered leadership.

A seventh recommendation would be to replicate this study with technology companies in different stages of development. Research on the leadership behaviors and follower perceptions of start-up technology companies versus the leadership behaviors and follower perceptions of companies that have been in existence for 20 or more years would provide information valuable to technology leaders in those roles. Understanding how technology leaders use character, vision, relationships, wisdom, and inspiration in these different environments could potentially be beneficial to understanding elements that drive the early success of technology companies.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

As a leader your role in enabling and framing meaning is irrefutable.

—Scott Mautz, *Make It Matter*

During my research, and the preparation leading to it, I discovered that leadership is about serving others. The five elements of leadership presented in this research provide an exciting framework for viewing leadership through a meaning-centered lens. The literature review for this research detailed the impact of worker disengagement and lack of organizational meaning. The meaning-centered framework provides an opportunity for leaders to apply the five elements of leadership that create organizational meaning and drive high performance. It is my hope that technology leaders will gain insights from this research into how meaning-centered leadership can impact their
organizations. The meaning-centered leadership paradigm is in its infancy and needs continued research and application.

I plan to continue to research and write on the impact of meaning-centered leadership and to apply meaning-centered practices in my leadership. The search for meaning in life is one of humanity’s primal drives. The movement to create leaders who understand the meaning-making process in the workplace represents a possible quantum leap forward in creating a more purpose-driven society. It is my hope that the movement toward meaning-centered leadership will grow through continued research and enlightened application and that I will continue to have the opportunity to contribute to this noble pursuit.
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APPENDIX A

Informational Letter

Date
Dear Technology Leader,

We are a group of doctoral candidates in Brandman University’s Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership program in the School of Education. We are conducting a thematic, mixed method case study that will identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, relationships, vision, inspiration, and wisdom.

We are asking for your assistance in the study by participating in an interview which will take approximately 60 minutes and will be setup at a time and location convenient for you. If you agree to participate in the interview, you can be assured that it 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 employer will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. You are also encouraged to ask any questions that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. Further, you may be assured that the researchers are not in any way affiliated with the University of Laverne.

The research investigator, Ed Jackson, is available at cjackso9@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX, to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ed Jackson, MA.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.
APPENDIX B

Researcher’s Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB Adopted November 2013
APPENDIX C

Invitation to Participate

DATE:
Dear …
My name is Ed Jackson and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Brandman University. I am participating in a thematic dissertation with 11 other researchers. This letter serves an as an invitation for you to participate in a research study.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this thematic, mixed method case study is to identify and describe the behaviors that exemplary technology leaders use to create personal and organizational meaning for themselves and their followers through character, relationships, vision, wisdom and inspiration. Further, this study will survey followers to assess their perceptions of the leader’s behaviors in relation to character, relationships, vision, inspiration, and wisdom and how these traits create personal and organizational meaning. Results from this study will be summarized in a doctoral dissertation.

PROCEDURES: If you choose to participate in this study, you will be invited to a 60 minute, one-on-one interview. I will ask a series of questions designed to allow you to share your experience as an exemplary technology leader. The questions will assess the specific variables of character, relationships, vision, wisdom, and inspiration. The interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes.

RISKS, INCOVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are no major risks to your participation in this research study. The interview will be at a time and place which is convenient for you.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participating; nonetheless, a potential benefit may be that you will have an opportunity to identify future best practices for using the five variables of exemplary leadership. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers and leaders of the behaviors used by exemplary leaders to create organizational meaning.

ANONYMITY: If you agree to participate in the interview, you can be assured that it 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 employer will have access to the interview information. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. You are also encouraged to ask any questions that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. Feel free to contact the principle investigator, Ed Jackson, at cjackson9@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX, to answer any questions or concerns you may have. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or your rights as a participant, you 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.

Sincerely,

Ed Jackson, MA.Ed.
Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D.
APPENDIX D

Thematic Interview Protocol

“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
If “Yes”

“Realizing that they are all important, do any jump out as being absolutely essential?”

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?”

“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 E

Informed Consent

INFORMATION ABOUT: The behaviors of exemplary leaders related to character, vision, relationships, wisdom and inspiration to help create personal and organizational meaning.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Ed Jackson, MA Ed.

PURPOSE OF STUDY:
You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ed Jackson, 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 study is voluntary and will include an interview with the identified student investigator. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will be scheduled at a time and location of your convenience. The interview questions will pertain to your perceptions and your responses will be confidential. Each participant will have an identifying code and names will not be used in data analysis. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

I understand that:
 a) The researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes safeguarded in a locked file drawer or password protected digital file to which the researcher will have sole access.
 b) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide not to participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.
 c) If I have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Ed Jackson, ejackso9@mail.brandman.edu, or phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX, or Cindy Petersen, Chair Cpeterse@brandman.edu
 d) No information that identifies me will be released without my 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, I will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.
 e) 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.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_________________________________________________________ Date: __________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_________________________________________________________ Date: __________________________
Signature of Principle Investigator, Ed Jackson, MA Ed.
APPENDIX F

Audio Release Form

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** Meaning Centered Leadership: How Exemplary Technology Leaders Create Organizational Meaning

**BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY**
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** Ed Jackson, MA Ed.

I authorize, Ed Jackson, MA Ed. Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University, and all persons or entities associated with this study, permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the identifier-redacted information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal or presented at meetings and/or presentations. I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any rights and royalties or other compensation arising from or related to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

_________________________________________  Date: ______________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_________________________________________  Date: ______________________
Signature of Principle Investigator – Ed Jackson, MA Ed.
APPENDIX G

Leaders Behavior Survey and Electronic Consent

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: Ed Jackson, MA Ed.

THE FOLLOWING WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ed Jackson, MA Ed. 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 safeguarded 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 Ed Jackson at
cjackso9@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX; or Dr. Cynthia
Petersen, Advisor, at cpeterse@brandman.edu

**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 R
ights.” 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.

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<tr>
<th>LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Continuously promotes our team’s moving together as one unit to serve a common purpose. (relationships)</td>
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<td>2. Creates an environment of trust among leaders and team members in the organization. (relationships)</td>
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<td>3. Behaves in a way that shows she/he cares about the team members. (relationships)</td>
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<td>4. Communicates in a clear, meaningful way. (relationships)</td>
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<td>5. Encourages team members to share leadership when performing tasks. (relationships)</td>
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<td>6. Behaves in an ethical manner when dealing with others. (character)</td>
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<td>7. Actively listens when communicating with others. (character)</td>
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<td>8. Responds to challenging situations with optimism. (character)</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Actions with others shows that he/she can be trusted. (character)</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Actions show concern for the well-being of others. (character)</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Works with team members in a way that generates enthusiasm within teams. (inspiration)</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Recognizes and honors achievements of teams and team members. (inspiration)</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Encourages team members to innovate in order to advance the organization’s leading edge. (inspiration)</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>Engages in activities that build confidence among team members. (inspiration)</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Empowers team members to take reasonable risks when problem solving. (inspiration)</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Demonstrates thinking toward the future through conversations and actions. (vision)</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Communicates the organization’s vision in a way in team members enthusiastically. (vision)</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Engages team members in creating a vision for the future. (vision)</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Behavior reflects organizational vision when making decisions. (vision)</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Promotes innovation that aligns with the organization’s vision. (vision)</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>Elevates the quality of decision making by discussing similarities of past situations with team members. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Demonstrates compassion with team members. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Behavior reflects an understanding of life’s complexities. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Integrates personal values with organizational values in decision making. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Brings personal knowledge to the table when responding to complex situations within the organization. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Considers past experiences when responding to complex situations within the organization. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>Displays expertise when working in a variety of situations within the organization. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Shows concern for others in a variety of organizational settings. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>When working with teams and team members, continuously keeps the overall goals of the organization as part of conversations. (wisdom)</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>Takes action by doing the “right thing” in a variety of organizational settings. (wisdom)</td>
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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 H

Brandman University Institutional Review Board Approval

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
IRB Application Action – Approval

Date: 12/10/2016

Name of Investigator/Researcher: Ed Jackson

Faculty or Student ID Number: 900048087

Title of Research Project:
Meaning Centered Leadership: How Exemplary Technology CEOs Create Organizational Meaning

Project Type: ☑ New ☐ Continuation ☐ Resubmission

Category that applies to your research:
☑ Doctoral Dissertation EdD
☐ DNP Clinical Project
☐ Masters’ Thesis
☐ Course Project
☐ Faculty Professional/Academic Research
☐ Other:

Funded: ☑ No ☐ Yes

Project Duration (cannot exceed 1 year): Six Months

Principal Investigator’s Address: 228 Garden Common, Livermore, CA 94551

Email Address: cjackson@brandman.edu Telephone Number: 209-410-3493

Faculty Advisor/Sponsor/Chair Name: Dr. Cindy Petersen

Email Address: cpetersen@brandman.edu Telephone Number: 916-275-0512

Category of Review:
☑ Exempt Review ☐ Expedited Review ☐ Standard Review

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
IRB APPLICATION ACTION – APPROVAL
COMPLETED BY BUPIRB

IRB ACTION/APPROVAL

Name of Investigator/Researcher:

☐ Returned without review. Insufficient detail to adequately assess risks, protections and benefits.

☐ Approved/Certified as Exempt form IRB Review.

☑ Approved as submitted.

☐ Approved, contingent on minor revisions (see attached)

☐ Requires significant modifications of the protocol before approval. Research must resubmit with modifications (see attached)

☐ Researcher must contact IRB member and discuss revisions to research proposal and protocol.

Level of Risk:  ☐ No Risk  ☐ Minimal Risk  ☐ More than Minimal Risk

IRB Comments:

________________________________________________________________________

IRB Reviewer:  Doug DeVore

Telephone:  Email:

BUPIRB Chair:  Doug DeVore  Date: 12/22/2016

________________________________________________________________________

REVISED IRB Application  ☐ Approved  ☐ Returned

Name:  ________________________________

Telephone:  ________________________________  Email:  ________________________________  Date:  ________________________________

BUPIRB Chair:  ________________________________

Brandman University IRB Rev. 11.14.14  Adopted  November 2014
APPENDIX I

Synthesis Matrix
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<th>#</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Wisdom</th>
<th>Character</th>
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<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Inspiration</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Followership</th>
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<th>Innovation/technology</th>
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